

Wednesday March 20th for Palm Sunday

OPENING PRAYER: Father, we once again prepare to celebrate the holiest week in our Church year, the celebration of Jesus' passion, death and Resurrection. Through his blood you established a new covenant with your people. May your Holy Spirit give us new and fresh insight and appreciation of those events in your Son's life. Bring us one day to the glory of his resurrection.

- In the words of Saint Benedict, "Listen with the ears of your heart."
- Please note a word, phrase, or verse that seemed to really catch your notice.
- A volunteer slowly read aloud today's passage Afterwards, we have a few minutes of silent reflection.

READING OF THE ASSIGNED GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Mark 14:1-15:47

1* The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread* were to take place in two days' time.^a So the chief priests and the scribes were seeking a way to arrest him by treachery and put him to death.

2 They said, "Not during the festival, for fear that there may be a riot among the people."

The Anointing at Bethany.*

3 When he was in Bethany reclining at table in the house of Simon the leper,^b a woman came with an alabaster jar of perfumed oil, costly genuine spikenard. She broke the alabaster jar and poured it on his head.

4 There were some who were indignant. "Why has there been this waste of perfumed oil?

5 It could have been sold for more than three hundred days' wages and the money given to the poor." They were infuriated with her.

6 Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you make trouble for her? She has done a good thing for me.

7 The poor you will always have with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them, but you will not always have me.

8 She has done what she could. She has anticipated anointing my body for burial.

9 Amen, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed to the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

The Betrayal by Judas.

10^c Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went off to the chief priests to hand him over to them.

11 When they heard him they were pleased and promised to pay him money. Then he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

Preparations for the Passover.

12^d On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb,* his disciples said to him, “Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?”

13 He sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water.* Follow him.

14 Wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, “The Teacher says, “Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?””

15 Then he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there.”

16 The disciples then went off, entered the city, and found it just as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

The Betrayer.

17^e When it was evening, he came with the Twelve.

18* And as they reclined at table and were eating, Jesus said, “Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.”

19 They began to be distressed and to say to him, one by one, “Surely it is not I?”

20 He said to them, “One of the Twelve, the one who dips with me into the dish.

21 For the Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him,* but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born.”

The Lord’s Supper.

22* While they were eating,^f he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, “Take it; this is my body.”

23 Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

24 He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed* for many.

25 Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

26 Then, after singing a hymn,* they went out to the Mount of Olives.^g

Peter’s Denial Foretold.*

27 Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will have your faith shaken, for it is written:

‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be dispersed.’^h

28 But after I have been raised up, I shall go before you to Galilee.”

29 Peter said to him, “Even though all should have their faith shaken, mine will not be.”

30 Then Jesus said to him, “Amen, I say to you, this very night before the cock crows twice you will deny me three times.”

31 But he vehemently replied, “Even though I should have to die with you, I will not deny you.” And they all spoke similarly.

32* Then they came to a place named Gethsemane,ⁱ and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.”ⁱ

33 He took with him Peter, James, and John, and began to be troubled and distressed.

34 Then he said to them, “My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch.”

35 He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass by him;

36 he said, “Abba, Father,* all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will.”

37 When he returned he found them asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?

38* Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test.^k The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.”

39 Withdrawing again, he prayed, saying the same thing.

40 Then he returned once more and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open and did not know what to answer him.

41 He returned a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough. The hour has come. Behold, the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners.

42 Get up, let us go. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

43^l Then, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs who had come from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.

44 His betrayer had arranged a signal with them, saying, “The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him and lead him away securely.”

45 He came and immediately went over to him and said, “Rabbi.” And he kissed him.

46 At this they laid hands on him and arrested him.

47 One of the bystanders drew his sword, struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his ear.

48 Jesus said to them in reply, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs, to seize me?”

49 Day after day I was with you teaching in the temple area, yet you did not arrest me; but that the scriptures may be fulfilled.”

50 And they all left him and fled.

51 Now a young man followed him wearing nothing but a linen cloth about his body. They seized him,

52 but he left the cloth behind and ran off naked.

Jesus Before the Sanhedrin.

53^{* m} They led Jesus away to the high priest, and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together.

54 Peter followed him at a distance into the high priest’s courtyard and was seated with the guards, warming himself at the fire.

55 The chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death, but they found none.

56 Many gave false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree.

57^{*} Some took the stand and testified falsely against him, alleging,

58 “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands and within three days I will build another not made with hands.’”^u

59 Even so their testimony did not agree.

60 The high priest rose before the assembly and questioned Jesus, saying, “Have you no answer? What are these men testifying against you?”

61^{*} But he was silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him and said to him, “Are you the Messiah, the son of the Blessed One?”

62 Then Jesus answered, “I am; and ‘you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.’”^o

63 At that the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further need have we of witnesses?”

64 You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” They all condemned him as deserving to die.

65 Some began to spit on him. They blindfolded him and struck him and said to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards greeted him with blows.^d

Peter's Denial of Jesus.

66^a While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the high priest's maids came along.

67 Seeing Peter warming himself, she looked intently at him and said, "You too were with the Nazarene, Jesus."

68* But he denied it saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." So he went out into the outer court. [Then the cock crowed.]

69 The maid saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them."

70 Once again he denied it. A little later the bystanders said to Peter once more, "Surely you are one of them; for you too are a Galilean."

71 He began to curse and to swear, "I do not know this man about whom you are talking."

72 And immediately a cock crowed a second time. Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice you will deny me three times." He broke down and wept.^f

Mark 15:1-47

1^a As soon as morning came,^b the chief priests with the elders and the scribes, that is, the whole Sanhedrin, held a council.* They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate.

2 Pilate questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"* He said to him in reply, "You say so."

3 The chief priests accused him of many things.

4 Again Pilate questioned him, "Have you no answer? See how many things they accuse you of."

5 Jesus gave him no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

The Sentence of Death.*

6 Now on the occasion of the feast he used to release to them one prisoner whom they requested.^c

7 A man called Barabbas* was then in prison along with the rebels who had committed murder in a rebellion.

8 The crowd came forward and began to ask him to do for them as he was accustomed.

9 Pilate answered, "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?"

10 For he knew that it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed him over.

11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead.

12 Pilate again said to them in reply, “Then what [do you want] me to do with [the man you call] the king of the Jews?”

13* They shouted again, “Crucify him.”

14 Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” They only shouted the louder, “Crucify him.”

15* So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas to them and, after he had Jesus scourged, handed him over to be crucified.

16* ^d The soldiers led him away inside the palace, that is, the praetorium, and assembled the whole cohort.

17 They clothed him in purple and, weaving a crown of thorns, placed it on him.

18 They began to salute him with, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

19 and kept striking his head with a reed and spitting upon him. They knelt before him in homage.

20 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him out to crucify him.

21 They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian,* who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.^e

22^f They brought him to the place of Golgotha (which is translated Place of the Skull).

23 They gave him wine drugged with myrrh, but he did not take it.

24* ^g Then they crucified him and divided his garments by casting lots for them to see what each should take.

25 It was nine o’clock in the morning* when they crucified him.

26* The inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.”

27 With him they crucified two revolutionaries, one on his right and one on his left.^h

[28]*

29* Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying,ⁱ “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days,
30 save yourself by coming down from the cross.”

31 Likewise the chief priests, with the scribes, mocked him among themselves and said, “He saved others; he cannot save himself.

32 Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also kept abusing him.ⁱ

33 At noon darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

34 And at three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*”^{*} - which is translated, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”^k

35^{*} Some of the bystanders who heard it said, “Look, he is calling Elijah.”

36 One of them ran, soaked a sponge with wine, put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to take him down.”

37 Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

38^{*} The veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom.

39^{* 1} When the centurion who stood facing him saw how he breathed his last he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

40^{*} There were also women looking on from a distance.^m Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the younger James and of Joses, and Salome.

41 These women had followed him when he was in Galilee and ministered to him. There were also many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

42ⁿ When it was already evening, since it was the day of preparation, the day before the sabbath,

43 Joseph of Arimathea,^{*} a distinguished member of the council, who was himself awaiting the kingdom of God, came and courageously went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

44 Pilate was amazed that he was already dead. He summoned the centurion and asked him if Jesus had already died.

45 And when he learned of it from the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

46 Having bought a linen cloth, he took him down, wrapped him in the linen cloth and laid him in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb.

47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses watched where he was laid.

Notes Mark 14

* [[14:1](#)–[16:8](#)] In the movement of Mark’s gospel the cross is depicted as Jesus’ way to glory in accordance with the divine will. Thus the passion narrative is seen as the climax of Jesus’ ministry.

* [[14:1](#)] The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread: the connection between the two festivals is reflected in [Ex 12:3–20](#); [34:18](#); [Lv 23:4–8](#); [Nm 9:2–14](#); [28:16–17](#); [Dt 16:1–8](#). The Passover commemorated the redemption from slavery and the departure of the Israelites from Egypt by night. It began at sundown after the Passover lamb was sacrificed in the temple in the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan. With the Passover supper on the same evening was associated the eating of unleavened bread. The latter was continued through Nisan 21, a reminder of the affliction of the Israelites and of the haste surrounding their departure. Praise and thanks to God for his goodness in the past were combined at this dual festival with the hope of future salvation. The chief priests...to death: the intent to put Jesus to death was plotted for a long time but delayed for fear of the crowd ([Mk 3:6](#); [11:18](#); [12:12](#)).

* [[14:3](#)] At Bethany on the Mount of Olives, a few miles from Jerusalem, in the house of Simon the leper, Jesus defends a woman's loving action of anointing his head with perfumed oil in view of his impending death and burial as a criminal, in which case his body would not be anointed. See further the note on [Jn 12:7](#). He assures the woman of the remembrance of her deed in the worldwide preaching of the good news.

* [[14:12](#)] The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread...the Passover lamb: a less precise designation of the day for sacrificing the Passover lamb as evidenced by some rabbinical literature. For a more exact designation, see note on [Mk 14:1](#). It was actually Nisan 14.

* [[14:13](#)] A man...carrying a jar of water: perhaps a prearranged signal, for only women ordinarily carried water in jars. The Greek word used here, however, implies simply a person and not necessarily a male.

* [[14:18](#)] One of you will betray me, one who is eating with me: contrasts the intimacy of table fellowship at the Passover meal with the treachery of the traitor; cf. [Ps 41:10](#).

* [[14:21](#)] The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him: a reference to [Ps 41:10](#) cited by Jesus concerning Judas at the Last Supper; cf. [Jn 13:18–19](#).

* [[14:22–24](#)] The actions and words of Jesus express within the framework of the Passover meal and the transition to a new covenant the sacrifice of himself through the offering of his body and blood in anticipation of his passion and death. His blood of the covenant both alludes to the ancient rite of [Ex 24:4–8](#) and indicates the new community that the sacrifice of Jesus will bring into being ([Mt 26:26–28](#); [Lk 22:19–20](#); [1 Cor 11:23–25](#)).

* [[14:24](#)] Which will be shed: see note on [Mt 26:27–28](#). For many: the Greek preposition *hyper* is a different one from that at [Mt 26:28](#) but the

same as that found at [Lk 22:19, 20](#) and [1 Cor 11:24](#). The sense of both words is vicarious, and it is difficult in Hellenistic Greek to distinguish between them. For many in the sense of “all,” see note on [Mt 20:28](#).

* [\[14:26\]](#) After singing a hymn: [Ps 114–118](#), thanksgiving songs concluding the Passover meal.

* [\[14:27–31\]](#) Jesus predicted that the Twelve would waver in their faith, even abandon him, despite their protestations to the contrary. Yet he reassured them that after his resurrection he would regather them in Galilee ([Mk 16:7](#); cf. [Mt 26:32](#); [28:7, 10, 16](#); [Jn 21](#)), where he first summoned them to be his followers as he began to preach the good news ([Mk 1:14–20](#)).

* [\[14:32–34\]](#) The disciples who had witnessed the raising to life of the daughter of Jairus ([Mk 5:37](#)) and the transfiguration of their Master ([Mk 9:2](#)) were now invited to witness his degradation and agony and to watch and pray with him.

* [\[14:36\]](#) Abba, Father: an Aramaic term, here also translated by Mark, Jesus’ special way of addressing God with filial intimacy. The word ‘*abbā*’ seems not to have been used in earlier or contemporaneous Jewish sources to address God without some qualifier. Cf. [Rom 8:15](#); [Gal 4:6](#) for other occurrences of the Aramaic word in the Greek New Testament. Not what I will but what you will: note the complete obedient surrender of the human will of Jesus to the divine will of the Father; cf. [Jn 4:34](#); [8:29](#); [Rom 5:19](#); [Phil 2:8](#); [Heb 5:8](#).

* [\[14:38\]](#) The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak: the spirit is drawn to what is good yet found in conflict with the flesh, inclined to sin; cf. [Ps 51:7, 12](#). Everyone is faced with this struggle, the full force of which Jesus accepted on our behalf and, through his bitter passion and death, achieved the victory.

* [\[14:53\]](#) They led Jesus away...came together: Mark presents a formal assembly of the whole Sanhedrin (chief priests, elders, and scribes) at night, leading to the condemnation of Jesus ([Mk 14:64](#)), in contrast to [Lk 22:66, 71](#) where Jesus is condemned in a daytime meeting of the council; see also [Jn 18:13, 19–24](#).

* [\[14:57–58\]](#) See notes on [Mt 26:60–61](#) and [Jn 2:19](#).

* [\[14:61–62\]](#) The Blessed One: a surrogate for the divine name, which Jews did not pronounce. I am: indicates Jesus’ acknowledgment that he is the Messiah and Son of God; cf. [Mk 1:1](#). Contrast [Mt 26:64](#) and [Lk 22:67–70](#), in which Jesus leaves his interrogators to answer their own question. You will see the Son of Man...with the clouds of heaven: an allusion to [Dn 7:13](#) and [Ps 110:1](#) portending the enthronement of Jesus as judge in the

transcendent glory of God's kingdom. The Power: another surrogate for the name of God.

* [[14:68](#)] [Then the cock crowed]: found in most manuscripts, perhaps

Notes Mark 15

* [[15:1](#)] Held a council: the verb here, *poieō*, can mean either “convene a council” or “take counsel.” This reading is preferred to a variant “reached a decision” (cf. [Mk 3:6](#)), which [Mk 14:64](#) describes as having happened at the night trial; see note on [Mt 27:1–2](#). Handed him over to Pilate: lacking authority to execute their sentence of condemnation ([Mk 14:64](#)), the Sanhedrin had recourse to Pilate to have Jesus tried and put to death ([Mk 15:15](#)); cf. [Jn 18:31](#).

* [[15:2](#)] The king of the Jews: in the accounts of the evangelists a certain irony surrounds the use of this title as an accusation against Jesus (see note on [Mk 15:26](#)). While Pilate uses this term ([Mk 15:2, 9, 12](#)), he is aware of the evil motivation of the chief priests who handed Jesus over for trial and condemnation ([Mk 15:10](#); [Lk 23:14–16, 20](#); [Mt 27:18, 24](#); [Jn 18:38; 19:4, 6, 12](#)).

* [[15:6–15](#)] See note on [Mt 27:15–26](#).

* [[15:7](#)] Barabbas: see note on [Mt 27:16–17](#).

* [[15:13](#)] Crucify him: see note on [Mt 27:22](#).

* [[15:15](#)] See note on [Mt 27:26](#).

* [[15:16](#)] Praetorium: see note on [Mt 27:27](#).

* [[15:21](#)] They pressed into service...Simon, a Cyrenian: a condemned person was constrained to bear his own instrument of torture, at least the crossbeam. The precise naming of Simon and his sons is probably due to their being known among early Christian believers to whom Mark addressed his gospel. See also notes on [Mt 27:32](#); [Lk 23:26–32](#).

* [[15:24](#)] See notes on [Mt 27:35](#) and [Jn 19:23–25a](#).

* [[15:25](#)] It was nine o'clock in the morning: literally, “the third hour,” thus between 9 a.m. and 12 noon. Cf. [Mk 15:33, 34, 42](#) for Mark's chronological sequence, which may reflect liturgical or catechetical considerations rather than the precise historical sequence of events; contrast the different chronologies in the other gospels, especially [Jn 19:14](#).

* [[15:26](#)] The inscription...the King of the Jews: the political reason for the death penalty falsely charged by the enemies of Jesus. See further the notes on [Mt 27:37](#) and [Jn 19:19](#).

* [[15:28](#)] This verse, “And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘And he was counted among the wicked,’” is omitted in the earliest and best

manuscripts. It contains a citation from [Is 53:12](#) and was probably introduced from [Lk 22:37](#).

* [\[15:29\]](#) See note on [Mt 27:39–40](#).

* [\[15:34\]](#) An Aramaic rendering of [Ps 22:2](#). See also note on [Mt 27:46](#).

* [\[15:35\]](#) Elijah: a verbal link with Eloi ([Mk 15:34](#)). See note on [Mk 9:9–13](#); cf. [Mal 3:23–24](#). See also note on [Mt 27:47](#).

* [\[15:38\]](#) See note on [Mt 27:51–53](#).

* [\[15:39\]](#) The closing portion of Mark's gospel returns to the theme of its beginning in the Gentile centurion's climactic declaration of belief that Jesus was the Son of God. It indicates the fulfillment of the good news announced in the prologue ([Mk 1:1](#)) and may be regarded as the firstfruit of the passion and death of Jesus.

* [\[15:40–41\]](#) See note on [Mt 27:55–56](#).

* [\[15:43\]](#) Joseph of Arimathea: see note on [Mt 27:57–61](#).

a. [\[15:1–5\]](#) [Mt 27:1–2](#), [11–14](#); [Lk 23:1–3](#).

b. [\[15:1\]](#) [Jn 18:28](#).

QUESTIONS FOR SHARING

- 1. Which scene in the Passion stirs you the most? Why?**
- 2. Jesus' apostles and friends fall asleep and abandon Jesus when he needs them most. How did this happen today? Do you even wonder how you would have acted if you had been in the disciples' place 2,000 years ago?**
- 3. In Mark's passion story, Jesus feels abandoned by his Father. Have you ever felt that way? When? If you never felt that way, what might cause you to feel that way?**
- 4. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciple of Jesus need to heed and act on.**

Commentary

The suffering and death of Jesus is the centerpiece of Mark's Gospel. Hints of the Passion are found already in chapters 1-2, and by chapter 3, a plot against Jesus is being planned. Halfway through the Gospel, Mark has Jesus predicting three times the details of his Passion. In chapter 11, Jesus

arrives in Jerusalem for the events which this Sunday's liturgy enacts ritually. Six of the 16 chapters of Mark are devoted exclusively to the last week of Jesus' life. This has led scholars to call Mark's Gospel a "Passion narrative with an extended introduction." Two central themes to watch for in Mark's Gospel are: The contrast between Jesus' fidelity to God and his mission no matter what the cost, and the infidelity of the disciples and crowds. Jesus has no desire to die. He prays three times that God would spare him, but if fidelity to God and his mission involves embracing the Cross and death, he is willing to do that. This fidelity is expressed in his wonderful prayer of surrender, "Not my will but your will be done." In stark contrast, we notice weakness and infidelity in the disciples. They fall asleep when Jesus needs their support in the garden. Peter, the leader, denies Jesus. Judas betrays him. At the time of his arrest, they "all fled and left him." At the time of his trial, the crowds who have previously sung his praises now chant "Crucify him! Crucify him!" But not all are unfaithful. A few women remain faithful. One anoints him; others keep watch as he dies on the Cross. Mark's Passion presents us with a very human picture of Jesus. In the garden, he begs the Father three times to free him from dying. We can feel Jesus' disappointment when he finds his beloved disciples asleep not just once but three times. What must he have felt when all his disciples "fled and left him"? How painful it must have been for Jesus to hear the crowds call for the release of the criminal Barabbas and call for Jesus' crucifixion. Then consider the scourging of his body, the crowning with thorns, the crucifixion and, most of all, the sense of his Father abandoning him: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This is a cry of one steeped in human agony. Jesus pays the ultimate price for fidelity to his call.

AN EXTENDED COMMENTARY ON MARK'S PASSION

A Woman and a Betrayer Mark's Passion opens with a beautiful story of a woman showing tender love for Jesus. This story is sandwiched or bracketed by two ugly scenes: the chief priests looking for a way to arrest Jesus and Judas plotting with them for a way to hand Jesus over to his enemies. There is a strong contrast between the two scenes. The woman's extravagant act of love anticipates Jesus' extravagant act of love on the Cross. Betrayal within the Eucharist. Using his characteristic bracketing technique, Mark places a conversation about betrayal in between the Preparation for the Last Supper and the actual Last Supper. Jesus singing "songs of praise" the night before he was to die a criminal's death is

extraordinary. Perhaps it says to us that as we spend our lives for Jesus, we also should sing God's praises. Gethsemane After the Last Supper, Jesus goes out to Gethsemane with Peter, James and John. Peter has just said how he will stand by Jesus no matter what. Earlier in the Gospel, James and John assert that they can "drink the cup of suffering" with Jesus. Now we see the vast difference between words and actions. They fall asleep when Jesus most needs their support. Later, they will all flee and Peter will deny Jesus. In contrast, Jesus remains faithful to God but not without a struggle. He hopes against hope for a way other than the way of the Cross. In the end, he surrenders to God's will ("Not my will but your will"). In John 4:34, the apostles offer Jesus food, to which he responds: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me." In the Passion event, it is important for us to remember that God is not demanding that Jesus die a cruel death. Rather, he 16 The Crucifixion wants Jesus to be faithful to his mission even if it means a cruel death. It is the truth the sin of humanity that brought about Jesus' suffering and death. The Arrest of Jesus In this scene, we witness further the abandonment of Jesus. We just read how Jesus is abandoned through the human weakness of Peter, James and John. Now, we have the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. He treats Jesus as a friend by kissing him and at the same time plants the kiss to point Jesus out to the authorities. Then Mark tells us, "All left him and fled." The young man who runs away naked is symbolic of us who may, in a time of crisis and fear, run away from Jesus, leaving behind our baptismal identity. Jesus is now left alone with his enemies. Not one of his friends shows faithful discipleship. In contrast, Jesus shows himself to be fearless and speaks up with dignity to those who come to arrest him. Peter's Denial and the Trail of Jesus The trial of Jesus is a farce. Trials are not allowed at night. False witnesses fail to agree with each other. During his trial, Jesus continues to show himself to be courageous and confident. When he declares himself to be the Christ, the Blessed One, he knows he is signing his own death sentence and yet he does it. Then follows the threefold denial of Peter. These two stories are another example of contrast so strong in Mark's Passion. As two examples of behavior under pressure, Jesus shows us what to do and Peter shows us what not to do. Jesus exemplifies courage, Peter cowardice. Jesus, while losing his life through steadfast witness, ultimately saves it; Peter, trying to save himself, in fact, condemns himself. Readers are called to follow Jesus. We notice that during his trial, Jesus affirms that he is the "Christ, the Son of the Blessed One." Jesus before Pilate Jesus is then brought before the Jewish and Roman authorities. Both share in the brutal humiliation of Jesus. Pilate believes Jesus to be innocent but he is too much of a crowd-

pleaser to let him go free. He shows himself to be a coward just as Jesus shows himself to be fearless and strong, the innocent sufferer who identifies with all who are unjustly and falsely accused. The crowds also fail Jesus, choosing a criminal over him. Jesus is led away to Golgotha to be crucified. A stranger named Simeon is forced to help Jesus carry his Cross. After Jesus is crucified, the bystanders mock and verbally abuse him. Darkness covers the land for three hours. In this time of darkness, Jesus even feels abandoned by God (“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”). Sin separates us from God. Having taken the weight of the sin of humanity upon his shoulders, Jesus experiences separation from God. “The veil of the temple is torn in two from top to bottom.” This is the veil that separates people from the Holy of Holies into which no one is allowed to enter except the High Priest. The veil is torn back and the way to God is now wide open to all and not just to the High Priest. Then a Gentile soldier, a most unlikely one, recognizes the true identity of Jesus: “Truly this man is the Son of God.” We notice the presence of the women who continue to follow Jesus after all his male disciples have fled. The Burial In the early days of Christianity, some may have claimed that Jesus never really died. So it is important for Mark to include an account of Jesus’ burial so that people will know that Jesus really died. Dying is an essential dimension of being a human person. Joseph of Arimathea, a devout Jew and a member of the Council, shows himself to be an admirer of Jesus by asking Pilate for his body so that he can give it a proper burial.

IS THERE A CAUSE FOR GRATITUDE THIS WEEK?

IS THERE A PRAYER REQUEST YOU HAVE?

CLOSING PRAYER - The Lord’s Prayer

Bible Sharing Room 5 and Zoom

Wednesday, March 20 6:30 – 7:30pm

Weekly on Wednesday

Zoom Meeting

Description: Blessed Sacrament is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Blessed Sacrament's Zoom Meeting

Time: March 20, 2024 06:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Weekly: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZolduisqDosE923wHRoszXqNBSkCL57ORPg/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGhpjorHtKTthCORpx5Goj4d-jwpiFdj_oPzwjNMS9AeDvnGMBxOZFTRY

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89811466699?pwd=UVdFVmo1SmJObUJqc3VqcytQOTdpQT09>

Meeting ID: 898 1146 6699

Passcode: 284618