

SUNDAY PLUS

Alone but not lonely

Bend the knee

by Bridie Stringer

One of the major challenges of the Palm Sunday readings is that we know we are in for a long session of narration and we think we have heard it all before. Those who are less active and athletic know that they will be standing for the entire duration, although some pastorally pragmatic Mass celebrants may invite those “those less able” to sit.

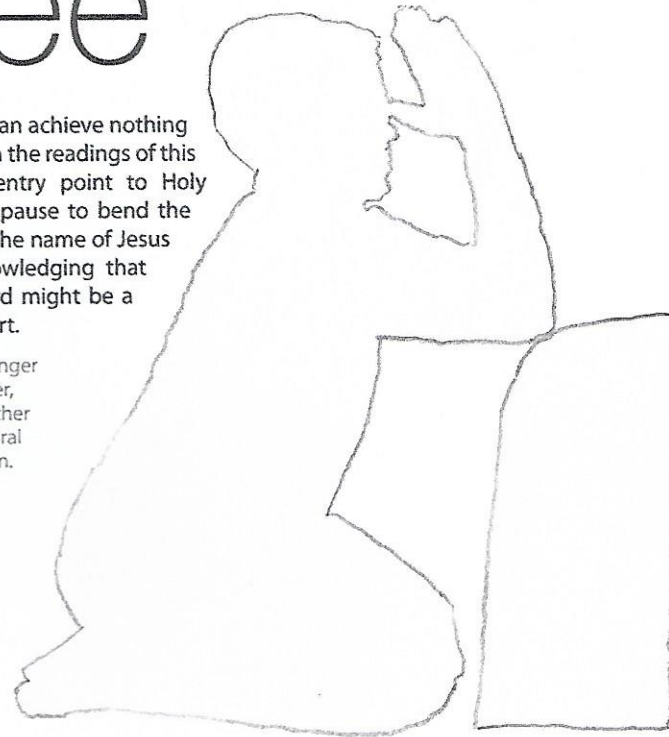
The incident which perhaps grabs our attention least in the readings is the anointing at Bethany. The fact that it took place in the home of “Simon the leper” places Jesus very much in a setting associated with those in the margins of society.

The unnamed woman, with her jar of expensive ointment, is also a controversial figure. For a start, she breaks the jar, so is clearly not trying to be economical with a product which would have cost a year’s wages for a labourer. She was not intending to save any of the ointment to take home with her afterwards. Her anointing of Jesus on his head signifies his status as Messiah and, as the rest of the story unfolds, he embraces his destiny as the suffering servant spoken of in Isaiah 50.

St Paul celebrates Jesus as Lord in his summary of the passion narrative in the second reading. He urges his listeners to bend the knee at the name of Jesus and acclaim Jesus as Lord.

If we can achieve nothing else from the readings of this special entry point to Holy Week, a pause to bend the knee at the name of Jesus in acknowledging that he is Lord might be a good start.

Bridie Stringer is a mother, grandmother and pastoral theologian.



The solitary hero

by Christine Clark

It is possible to be alone yet not be lonely. It is also possible to be with people, even friends, yet feel lonely. The people you are with may have no bearing on how you feel inside, or how isolated you feel.

On the day of the festival of unleavened bread Jesus was surrounded by people. He told his disciples, “You will all become deserters.” As usual Peter disputed this but Jesus told him that he would deny him three times. Again Peter, and indeed all the disciples, disputed this.

Jesus knew what lay ahead and that he could not rely on his friends at what would surely be a challenging time. He would have to do it alone. During those difficult

days leading to his death, more than once he might have run away from God’s plan for him. Even as he died, his despair and loneliness led him to cry out, “My God... why have you forsaken me?”

Despite that last anguished cry, he knew his loyalty lay with his loving Father, how his future would map out – and gave himself up to it.

Christine Clark is a retired member of the editorial staff of Redemptorist Publications.

Lord, I have sometimes avoided someone for the sake of my own comfort and convenience. Your apostles ran away from you. Give me the courage and patience to stay with others in their time of need. 🙏 Amen.

“Right is might”

by Br Royston Price C.Ss.R.

I imagine that Palm Sunday is one of the most popular in the Church year, with the procession, folding and waving the palms, and in one or two churches, even the appearance of a donkey! In many ways, the Christian life is quite like being the donkey ridden by the Lord as he entered Jerusalem. We’re not necessarily much to look at, our talents can be rather humble and as for our singing voices... But Jesus chooses each one of us personally for his mission and work in the world. When the Lord rode that donkey into the city, it became the bearer of the one who is the Good News itself. It achieved a dignity that far outstripped its scruffy

appearance. For each of us, when we let the Lord take the reins and direct our life through grace, we can be confident that we’re not alone, that we’re valued and wanted by Jesus, and that he’s loved us from all of eternity.

Br Royston Price is the Vocation Director for the Redemptorists’ London Province.

“Starting from our roots, let us sit around the common table, a place of conversation and of shared hopes. In this way our differences, which could seem like a banner or a wall, can become a bridge. Identity and dialogue are not enemies.”

Pope Francis

Today:
Procession: Mark 11:1-10
or John 12:12-16
Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7
Philippians 2:6-11
Mark 14:1 – 15:47

Monday:
Isaiah 42:1-7
John 12:1-11

Tuesday:
Isaiah 49:1-6
John 13:21-33, 36-38

Wednesday:
Isaiah 50:4-9
Matthew 26:14-25

Thursday:
Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper:
Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-15

Friday:
The Celebration of the Passion of the Lord:
Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9
John 18:1 – 19:42

Saturday:
The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night
Genesis 1:1 – 2:2
Genesis 22:1-18

Exodus 14:15 – 15:1
Isaiah 54:5-14
Isaiah 55:1-11
Baruch 3:9-15, 32 – 4:4
Ezekiel 36:16-28

Next Sunday:
Acts 10:34, 37-43
Colossians 3:1-4 or
1 Corinthians 5:6-8
John 20:1-9