

## Introduction to the Passion of John, 2014

The last words we hear from Jesus in Matthew's Passion, the one you heard on Palm Sunday, were "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!" Tonight, in John's account, the last words of Jesus are a triumphant cry, "It is accomplished!" Each year the Church presents us with two different stories of the Passion of Jesus, one on Palm Sunday and the other on Good Friday, each with a different point of view, presenting different facets of the same life of Jesus as if they were different facets of the same beautiful diamond.

The events of Holy Week call us to reflect on who we are, as individuals and as a community. Yesterday, we celebrated the Gospel truth that we are the body of Christ, our call to ministry as a priestly people and the command to wash each other's feet, that is, to love in deed and truth. Today we hear Jesus reveal his true identity, even as we see Peter denying his, when he says "I am not one of his disciples". We are invited to look at how each of us is called to be a disciple of Christ, to be, in our own way, Christ for each other and for the world.

As you listen to the Passion tonight, you will hear many references to "the Jews" as the ones who opposed and crucified Jesus. Was the composer of the Gospel of John somewhat Anti-Semitic? Yes, he was, but that was a part of his human attitude, formed because his community was being persecuted by the Jewish community of his time. Does that mean that this is the teaching of the Holy Spirit calling us to have that same attitude? Certainly not. The Church - on reflecting on this Gospel and its own history - has rejected any hint of anti-Semitism. We cannot imitate the sin of anti-Semitism any more than we can imitate the attitudes of Pilate, Judas, Peter, Caiaphas or the mob who called for the death of Jesus during the events of Good Friday.

As we enter into the Passion according to John today, I invite you to let yourself feel the violence and fear of Peter, the despair of Judas, the compulsion to control of Annas and Caiaphas, the blood lust of the crowd and the cynicism of Pilate who gives in to the shouts of the mob to save his own skin. Let yourself feel those feelings, so you can repent of giving in to them in yourselves and ask the Lord to heal the attitudes they reveal. And, as you listen, let yourself experience the new freedom of Barabbas, the hope of the mother of Jesus and Mary of Magdala, the compassion of the beloved disciple, and the courage of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, so you can imitate *them* and approach closer to the attitude of Jesus himself.

### Readings

First Reading: Isaiah 52:13-53:12 *He was wounded for our sins*

Psalm 31 "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Second Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9 *Jesus learned obedience*

*and became the source of salvation for all who obey him.*

Gospel verse: "Christ became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every other name.

Gospel: John 18:1 – 19:42 [The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John]