

Palm Sunday (A) – 29.03.2026

Mt 21:1–11; Is 50,4-7; Phil 2,6-11; Mt 26,14-27,66

INTRODUCTION - before the Procession

There is a story told of a small village that once prepared a grand welcome for a visiting dignitary. The streets were cleaned, banners were raised, and people gathered early, excited to be seen and counted among the crowd. But as the procession moved through the village, something unexpected happened. The visitor did not stop at the decorated square. Instead, he turned down a narrow, muddy lane where the poorest families lived. Some followed him there; many quietly drifted away.

It was easy to cheer in the main street.

It was harder to follow when the road changed.

Today, we stand once again among the crowd. With palm branches in our hands, we remember Jesus entering Jerusalem — welcomed with joy, praised as king, surrounded by hope and expectation. But this procession

is not only a celebration of the past. It is a question asked of us today.

Are we willing to follow Christ only when the road is easy and festive — or also when it leads toward sacrifice, humility, and the cross?

As we begin this Palm Sunday procession, let us walk not only with our voices and our palms, but with open hearts, ready to accompany the Lord wherever he chooses to go.

Let us now listen to the Gospel that recalls the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem.

HOMILY 1: Matthew 21:1–11 — Before the Procession

A few years ago, a teacher asked her students to draw a picture of a king. Most of the children drew crowns, thrones, castles, soldiers, and flags. One child, however, drew a man on a bicycle — no crown, no guards — just a man pedalling through the streets, smiling and stopping to talk to people.

When the teacher asked why, the child said, “Because the best kings are the ones who come close.” That child understood something very important.

Today, as we gather with palms in our hands, the Church invites us to welcome a King — but not the kind we expect. Jesus enters Jerusalem not on a warhorse, but on a donkey. No army marches behind him. No banners announce his power. Instead, there are ordinary people — fishermen, mothers, children, the sick — spreading cloaks on the road and waving branches torn from nearby trees. This is not a display of force. It is a procession of hope.

The people cry out, “*Hosanna!*” That word does not mean polite praise. It means, “Save us!” It is the cry of people who are tired of being crushed, ignored, forgotten. They are not welcoming a celebrity. They are reaching out to someone they believe might finally understand their pain. And notice this: Jesus does not correct them. He does not silence their hope. He allows himself to be welcomed — knowing full well that the same city will soon turn against him. That tells us something about the heart of God.

I once visited a hospital ward where a man was dying alone. The nurse told me, “He hasn’t had a visitor in weeks.” When someone finally sat beside his bed, he opened his eyes and whispered, “I didn’t think anyone would come.” That moment — quiet, unnoticed by the world — was a kind of Palm Sunday. A king drawing near, not with power, but with presence.

This is how Jesus reigns. He comes close to people’s real lives. He enters cities and hearts that are conflicted, unstable, divided. Jerusalem welcomes him with joy — but it is a fragile joy. Their expectations are high, and their

understanding is shallow. They want rescue without sacrifice, victory without surrender. If we are honest, we are not so different. We carry palms today, but we also carry contradictions. We praise Christ, yet struggle to follow him when the road becomes demanding. We want blessing, but not always the cross that comes with it. And still — Jesus comes.

I once met a woman who said, “I stopped going to church because I thought God would be disappointed in me.” She returned years later, not because she felt worthy, but because she felt exhausted. She said, “I realised I didn’t need to impress God. I just needed to let him in.” That, too, is Palm Sunday.

Jesus enters Jerusalem knowing exactly what lies ahead: betrayal, suffering, death. Yet he rides forward calmly, deliberately, choosing love over safety. This is not weakness. This is courage of the deepest kind.

For the greater part of his ministry, Jesus was active. He healed, taught, reconciled, welcomed children, visited

homes, shared meals, and forgave sins. In these actions, he revealed God’s kingdom — God’s life-giving love. But from the moment of his arrest in the Garden of Olives, all his activity ceased. Things were now done to him, often cruelly, unjustly, and violently. He was betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, beaten, mocked, and handed over to be executed. Yet in this apparent helplessness, God’s love shone more powerfully than ever. The very same love that moved him to heal and reconcile now moved him to endure suffering and death — a love that is stronger than sin, stronger than fear, stronger than death. This is a message for us: we too can give to others even in moments of weakness, when our lives feel out of control, when we are vulnerable or powerless. Our presence, our patience, our prayers, our quiet love — even in small, unseen ways — can be as life-giving as grand acts of service.

And now, we are about to process. In a moment, we will move from listening to walking — from hearing the Word to embodying it. This procession is not a reenactment for

nostalgia's sake. It is a declaration. We are saying: This is the King we choose to follow.

I once saw a small child during a Palm Sunday procession holding a palm almost taller than herself. Halfway down the aisle she grew tired and began dragging it along the floor. Her parent whispered, "You don't have to carry it perfectly — just don't let it go." That may be the most honest description of discipleship there is.

As we begin this procession, carry your palm not as a symbol of triumph, but as a sign of trust. We are following a King who does not promise easy victories, but who never abandons us on the road.

As we carry palms today, let us also remember the contrast between joy and suffering that this week will bring. The crowds welcomed Jesus with hosannas, but in a few days they will cry, "Crucify him!" A week can change everything. What begins with applause may end in betrayal. What begins with celebration may end in grief. And yet, God's love remains constant. Jesus' journey teaches us that love

is most powerful not in moments of triumph, but in moments of vulnerability, weakness, and suffering. It is precisely in the wilderness of challenge, the moments when we feel powerless, that we are called to reflect God's mercy, compassion, and enduring presence.

Let us walk with him — through praise and confusion, through joy and challenge — knowing that the One who enters Jerusalem today is the same One who will carry the cross for us. And he still comes close, drawing near to the broken, the weary, the frightened, and the lonely.

HOMILY 2 (Mt 26:14–27:66) *From Hosanna to the Cross*

Many years ago, a teacher took her students on a field trip to a large theatre. Before the performance began, the children were restless. Then the curtain lifted. The lights dimmed. Music swelled. Suddenly, the crowd in the theatre erupted in applause. One little boy clapped louder than anyone else. He stood on his chair, cheering wildly, full of joy and anticipation.

A few minutes later, something unexpected happened. The scene shifted. The hero, once admired, was suddenly accused, mocked, and pushed aside. The crowd on stage turned against him. The same little boy stopped clapping. He slowly sat down, confused. Turning to his teacher, he whispered, “Why are they doing that? I thought they liked him.”

That question is Palm Sunday’s question.

Today, as we listen to the story of Jesus’ passion, we see the crowd cheer Jesus into Jerusalem with palm branches and hosannas — and then, almost without drawing breath, we hear that same city shouting, “*Crucify him!*”

They say a week is a long time in politics. Politicians who are secure at the beginning of a week may find themselves out of office by Friday. A week can be a long time in life too. What seems certain at the start can collapse in days. The situation that begins Monday can be completely different by Friday. The awareness of this leads many people to live one day at a time, giving each day its due attention and care.

And what week could be longer, more intense, more consequential than this Holy Week? The contrast is staggering. At the beginning, Jesus is welcomed with palms, shouts of “*Hosanna!*” and cries of blessing. By the end, the same voices demand his death. The same city that welcomes him with joy calls for his execution. He who entered Jerusalem humbly on a donkey, carried out after a few days to the cruellest form of Roman execution — the cross.

And yet, even though we who take up palm branches today know how the story ends, we are not spectators. This story is ours. The death of Jesus is not distant history.

It continues in our lives.

The Seduction of Applause

There is something intoxicating about applause. We all know it. We crave it. We want to be on the winning side, the popular side, the side that is safe. It is easy to cheer when it costs nothing.

Anecdote after anecdote from daily life shows this. A politician promises integrity but compromises it to stay in power. An employee speaks boldly about ethics until promotion is at stake. A teenager knows what is right but follows the crowd because standing alone feels too risky. The crowds in Jerusalem loved Jesus as long as he met their expectations. They wanted a king — but not this kind of king. They wanted a saviour — but not one who would speak of suffering. They wanted miracles — but not conversion. They wanted palms — not a cross. Isn't that uncomfortably familiar?

Judas: The Disciple Who Did the Maths

Judas does not storm out dramatically. He calculates. *"What will you give me?"* Thirty pieces of silver — the price

of a slave. Often betrayal is not dramatic, but practical. We trade faith for convenience. We sell silence for security.

There is a story of a man who said, "I never denied God." Someone replied, "No — you just ignored Him every day of your life." Judas did not stop following Jesus physically. He stopped trusting him in his heart. And that can happen to any of us. We may attend Mass, use the right words, but inwardly, we have begun negotiating our faith, holding back our hearts.

Peter: The Disciple Who Meant Well

Then there is Peter — so sincere, so confident, so human. *"Even if everyone else abandons you, I will not."*

We have all spoken Peter's words in various forms: "I'll always be faithful. I'll never fall again. I'm stronger now." Yet fear can dismantle courage in a single moment. Peter denies Jesus before a servant girl, not a soldier. Small fears, small compromises, bring collapse.

There is an anecdote of a priest visiting a prison. One inmate said, "Father, I didn't wake up one day planning to

ruin my life. I just kept making small compromises.” Peter teaches us this truth: collapse rarely begins with hatred. It begins with fear, hesitation, and compromise.

Yet Peter will weep, and because he weeps, he will be restored.

Jesus: Silent, Suffering Love

At the centre of this long Passion narrative stands Jesus — mostly silent. He does not defend himself before Pilate. He does not curse those who mock him. He does not come down from the cross.

There is a story of a mother whose son was killed in a violent crime. Years later, she met the man responsible. Instead of shouting, she said, “I will not let your hatred have the last word in my life.” That moment changed both of them.

On the Cross, Jesus does the same — on an infinite scale. He absorbs hatred and answers it with mercy. He receives violence and returns forgiveness. This is not weakness. This is the strongest love the world has ever seen.

Jesus’ Passion as Active Love in Weakness

For the greater part of Jesus’ ministry, he was active. He healed, preached, forgave, welcomed, and reconciled. In these actions, God’s presence was made manifest. But from the moment of his arrest, Jesus’ activity ceases. Things are now done to him, often cruelly and unjustly.

Yet this is not a time when love stops. It becomes, instead, a deeper, more radical service. The love that moved him to heal, teach, and forgive now drives him to endure suffering, betrayal, humiliation, and death. In his helplessness, God’s life-giving love is more evident than ever.

Shakespeare called suffering the “*slings and arrows of outrageous fortune*.” Jesus suffers them all. And in his suffering, he reveals that we too can give in times of weakness as much as in times of strength. Our presence, our prayers, our compassion, our solidarity — these too are acts of love that proclaim God’s Kingdom.

Where Are We in the Passion?

Palm Sunday invites a dangerous question:

Where am I in this story?

- Am I in the crowd — praising God when it is easy, abandoning him when it costs?
- Am I Judas — calculating, compromising, keeping one foot in safety?
- Am I Peter — loving Jesus, yet frightened of what faith demands?
- Am I the soldier — “just doing my job,” avoiding responsibility?
- Am I one of the faithful women — present, grieving, but unwavering?

The truth is: we are all of them at different moments. And still, Jesus walks the road to Calvary for every one of us.

Holy Week: From Hosanna to Resurrection

As we enter this Holy Week, we are invited to slow down, to pay attention, to let the story of Jesus' Passion touch our hearts. The week moves from the tumultuous welcome of palms to the deepest darkness of suffering and death. But we know the story does not end in death. Paul reminds us:

“Christ, though he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross, God raised him high.”

The Easter Triduum — Holy Thursday to the Easter Vigil — is the sacred culmination of God's redemptive work. The Passion is not a story of loss, but a story of love. The palms we take home today are not simply mementos. They are reminders that we are called to walk in this love, faithfully and courageously, even when it costs us.

Closing Story

Let me end with a final story.

A man once carved a wooden crucifix. When it was finished, someone asked, “Why is the face of Jesus so gentle, even on the cross?”

The carver replied, “Because if He looked angry, I would be afraid to come back to Him when I fail.”

Palm Sunday does not end with applause. It does not end with condemnation. It ends with a crucified Lord whose arms remain open.

As we walk through this Holy Week — through betrayal, denial, mockery, fear, and grief — may we remember: Jesus walks with us. His love is stronger than our failure, our fear, and even our sin. And when the palms are long gone, when the cheering fades, may we have the courage to stay. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE LORD’S PRAYER

At the beginning of this Holy Week,
we stand beneath the Cross of Christ —
a Cross carried freely by the One
who entered Jerusalem not in power,
but in humility and love.

Jesus taught us this prayer
so that we would never forget
that we are children of one Father,
bound to God and to one another.
Here, no one walks alone.
Here, no one is left to carry their burden by themselves.
Here, even fragile faith is held together in hope.
And so, trusting in the God who comes close,
with one heart and one voice,
let us pray as Jesus himself taught us:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially from the fear that makes us turn away
when the road of faith becomes difficult.
Free us from the desire for easy victories
and from the temptation to choose applause over truth,
comfort over courage, palms without the cross.
Grant us peace in our days —
a peace that does not flee from suffering,
a peace that remains faithful in confusion,
a peace born from trust in you.
As we walk with your Son from the joy of his welcome
to the darkness of his Passion, keep us from despair
and protect us from becoming indifferent or afraid.
Help us to stay with him
when the crowd thins,
when silence replaces cheering,
and when love demands more than words.
Strengthen our hope as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

SIGN OF PEACE

Jesus entered our world gently,
and he carried its violence, fear, and suffering
into his own body upon the Cross.
In him, love is stronger than hatred,
mercy stronger than revenge,
and peace stronger than fear.
Yet we know how easily our hearts are troubled
and how fragile peace can be within us
and between us.
And so we ask the Lord now
to give us his peace — the peace of the Cross,
the peace that remains faithful even in suffering.
You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Good and faithful God,
today we have received the Bread of life
given by your Son who walked the road of trust
even when it led to suffering.
Sometimes our hearts are full of joy and hope; sometimes
they are weighed down by fear, confusion, or doubt.
In all things, Jesus placed his life in your hands.
Teach us, through him, to walk our own path in trust,
even when we do not fully understand the way.
Never let us be separated from you. When our faith is
fragile, hold us fast. When we stumble, lift us up.
Keep us always within your love.
Teach us, through your Son, not to judge or condemn,
but to see each person with eyes of compassion.
Give us the courage to offer new beginnings,
to encourage the good in others,
and to remain faithful even when it costs us.
For Jesus stands for life — life stronger than death,
love stronger than the cross — now and for ever. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Through this celebration,
we have passed through the gate of Palm Sunday
and entered together into Holy Week.
Only one week now remains
until we celebrate the joy of Easter.
Let us mark these coming days
with small signs of prayer, silence, and reflection,
so that they do not pass like any other week.
The God who comes close
walks with us through the joy of welcome
and through the darkness of the cross.
Let us also walk with his Son —
through the intimacy of Holy Thursday,
through the suffering of Good Friday,
and into the hope and new life of Easter.
I warmly invite you to celebrate with us
the liturgies of Holy Week:

- on Holy Thursday, on Good Friday,
- and at the Easter Vigil.

FINAL BLESSING

As we begin this sacred week,
let us ask God for his blessing:
God who is wholly other,
yet chose to draw near;
God who is free, yet allowed himself to be bound;
God who is strong,
yet revealed his power in humility and love:
Teach us, through your Son,
how the world can be transformed —
not by force, but by mercy;
not by fear, but by faithfulness.
Show us how love can overcome hatred,
how hope can rise from suffering,
and how life can emerge even from the cross.
May this good and faithful God
bless us, guide us, and remain close to us,
as friend, companion, and brother:
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

The palm branches with which we welcomed Christ today
we now take home with us
and place near our cross or prayer space,
as a reminder that we belong to him —
not only in moments of joy,
but also in times of trial.
May you and all your loved ones
enter deeply and prayerfully
into the mystery of Holy Week,
and may this journey with Christ
lead you to renewal, hope,
and new life on Easter morning.
Let us go now in the peace of Christ.

Monday of Holy Week – 30 March 2026

Is 42:1–7; Jn 12:1–11

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, I visited a friend who was caring for an elderly neighbour. Each morning, she would knock on the woman's door, help her tidy the house, bring her breakfast, and spend a little time just talking. One day I asked her, "Why do you go to so much trouble every day? She hardly notices." She smiled and said, "I do it because she matters. That's enough."

This quiet, uncalculated generosity reminds us of the scene in Bethany in today's Gospel. Mary, having already received the love and mercy of Jesus, pours out a whole pound of costly perfume on his feet. It is an extravagant act, done freely, without concern for cost or judgment. The house fills with fragrance — a silent proclamation of love.

As we enter Holy Week, we are invited to reflect: how often do we allow fear, caution, or calculation to limit our generosity? Are our lives filled with gestures of love that, though small or unnoticed, honor Christ and bring light to

the world? Today, we prepare our hearts to receive God's mercy, so that we too might love with abandon and gratitude.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus Christ, you accepted the loving devotion of Mary and revealed the beauty of a grateful heart:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you poured yourself out for us on the Cross without counting the cost: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to follow you in generous and self-giving love: Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God,

whose Son poured himself out in love for our salvation, forgive us for the times we have measured our love and withheld our generosity.

May he cleanse our hearts of selfishness, fill us with the fragrance of Christ, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and ever-living God,
in our weakness we often measure and calculate
where you call us simply to love.
Look upon the devotion of your Son,
who gave himself without reserve,
and kindle in us the same generous spirit.
Grant that, strengthened by your grace,
we may follow Christ faithfully in word and deed,
offering our lives as a fragrant sacrifice of love,
that our hearts may overflow with mercy and compassion
for those in need.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY

When I was a child, I remember watching my grandmother
prepare for family visits. She would lay out her best linen,
light the good candles, and cook far more food than

anyone could eat. Once I asked, “Why all this for just a few
hours?” She smiled and said, “Love is never wasted.”

That simple wisdom echoes in today’s Gospel.

“Love is the only thing that grows when we waste it,” wrote
Ricarda Huch. In Bethany, at the beginning of Holy Week,
Mary seems to understand this instinctively. She has
already received extraordinary love from Jesus. She
listened to His teaching. She witnessed Him call her
brother Lazarus out of the tomb. Her home had been
touched by His life-giving power.

Having received such love, she does not measure her
response.

At the dinner in Jesus’ honour, Mary takes a whole pound
of costly nard — not a token drop — and anoints His feet,
wiping them with her hair. The house fills with fragrance. It
is an act of extravagance, humility, and devotion.

Judas objects. From a practical standpoint, he sounds
reasonable: the perfume could have been sold and the
money given to the poor. But different categories are being

confused. Love is not a ledger entry. Honor cannot be calculated in coins. What Mary does cannot be measured in money.

Jesus defends her.

He sees not waste, but preparation. “She kept it for the day of my burial.” At the beginning of a week marked by betrayal and violence, one person offers Him uncalculated love. While others will distance themselves, Mary draws close. While others will humiliate Him, she honours Him.

The Gospel already points toward the cross. The fragrance in the house anticipates the spices of burial. The tenderness of Mary contrasts with the brutality to come. In a week when Jesus will wash His disciples’ feet, Mary first washes His. She mirrors His self-giving love.

Holy Week reveals many responses to Jesus: hostility, fear, calculation — and love. Mary’s love is born of gratitude. She knows she has been graced. Lazarus lives because of Jesus. True gratitude is rarely moderate. When

we know we have received mercy and life, how can our response be stingy?

Saint Paul says, “We are the aroma of Christ.” The house in Bethany was filled with scent; our lives are meant to carry the fragrance of Christ into a world that often smells of suspicion and harsh judgment.

How often do we think more like Judas than like Mary — measuring, questioning, reducing goodness to efficiency? The Gospel invites us to see with the eyes of Jesus, to recognize and defend love wherever it appears.

Mary also strengthens Jesus for what lies ahead. Before He walks into suffering, He is upheld by human kindness. We all need such moments. And we are called to be that presence for one another — bringing light into someone’s darkness.

At the end of my grandmother’s life, we found unused candles and carefully folded linens in her cupboard, along with notes about meals prepared for neighbours in hard times. Much of what she gave had long been forgotten by

those who received it. But the love had not been wasted. It had shaped us. It lingered, like a fragrance.

Mary's perfume filled the house. Christ's love fills the world. And when we dare to love without calculation — when we “waste” love for Him and for one another — that fragrance remains.

Love is never wasted. It is the one gift that grows when we give it away.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary placed at the feet of Jesus
what was most precious to her,
let us now place upon this altar
not only bread and wine,
but also our gratitude, our love,
and even the small sacrifices of our daily lives.

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that my sacrifice and yours
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands
for the praise and glory of his name,
for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look graciously, O Lord, upon these offerings,
and grant that, as Mary honored your Son with costly
perfume,
so we may offer you the fragrance of devoted hearts.
May the love and gratitude we bring
be sincere, abundant, and unmeasured,
flowing from hearts awakened to your mercy.
Transform our lives into acts of generosity and
compassion,
that what we celebrate at this altar
may bear fruit in service to others,
and bring joy and healing to your Church and the world.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in these holy days you reveal the depth of your love:
your chosen Servant does not break the bruised reed
nor quench the wavering flame,
but walks faithfully the path of suffering
to bring light to the nations.

At Bethany he was anointed in love
as he prepared to offer himself in sacrifice.
The fragrance of that devotion
announced the greater gift of the Cross,
where he would pour himself out for the life of the world.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:
Holy, Holy, Holy...

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

The fragrance of love filled the house in Bethany.
Through his Passion and Resurrection,
Christ has filled the world with the fragrance of divine
mercy.

As children of a Father who gives without measure
and forgives without counting the cost,
let us pray with trust and gratitude:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially from the fear that keeps us from loving
generously.

Free us from narrowness of heart
and from the temptation to measure what should be given
freely.

Grant peace in our days, that, sustained by your mercy,
we may be always free from sin
and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
in the house of Bethany
you accepted a gesture of tender and extravagant love,
and you yourself became peace for us
by surrendering to the Father's will upon the Cross.

Look not on our sins — on the times we have judged,
calculated, or withheld love —
but on the faith of your Church,
which desires to honour you with sincere hearts.

Fill us with your peace,
that our homes, our communities, and our world
may be marked not by suspicion or division,
but by the quiet strength of self-giving love.
Make us channels of reconciliation and hope,
so that others may be drawn to you by the fragrance of
Christ within us.

Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who accepted loving devotion
and gave himself completely for us.

Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Mary's gift filled the house with fragrance.

Christ's gift now fills our hearts.

May the love we have received here
not remain enclosed within us,
but spread quietly and generously
wherever we are sent.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Nourished by these sacred gifts, O Lord,
may we follow the example of loving devotion
shown in your Son's Passion.

As Mary poured out her perfume in gratitude,
may we pour out our lives in service, kindness, and mercy,
bringing hope to the weary, comfort to the sorrowful,
and courage to those who struggle.

Grant that the fragrance of Christ we have received in this Eucharist may continue to fill our hearts, our homes, and our communities, so that through our words and deeds, others may encounter your love, be uplifted in hope, and drawn ever closer to you. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May God, who strengthened his Son through the loving devotion of faithful friends, strengthen you in every trial with the courage to love without measure. Amen.

May he make your lives a fragrance of hope, mercy, and generous love in the world. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

Love is never wasted.

What is given generously for Christ and for one another will linger like a fragrance long after the moment has passed.

Tuesday of Holy Week – 31 March 2026

Is 49:1–6; Jn 13:21–33.36–38

INTRODUCTION

“A friend, a good friend, is the best thing there is in the world,” says a familiar song. And we know how true that is. Life without friendship would be empty and cold. Yet friendship is not truly measured in easy moments. It is tested when things become uncertain — when reputation is threatened, when fear rises, when expectations are disappointed.

There is an old saying: “A sure friend is known in uncertain times.” When everything is going well, many stand beside us. But when shadows lengthen, only a few remain.

In today’s Gospel, we enter the Upper Room. The atmosphere is heavy. Jesus is troubled in spirit. One of His own will betray Him. Another will deny Him. And yet one disciple leans close to His heart. Three responses to the same love: betrayal, denial, fidelity.

Holy Week asks each of us a gentle but searching question: What kind of friend am I to Christ? When faith costs something — when it becomes inconvenient, unpopular, or demanding — do I remain? Do I drift away? Do I promise much but falter in fear?

The Good News is this: even when we fail, He does not deny us. He washed the feet of Judas. He washed the feet of Peter. His love is steady, patient, and faithful.

As we begin this Eucharist, let us ask for the grace to remain near His heart — and, when we fall, to have the humility to return.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Way to the Father and to one another. Lord, have mercy.

You are the Truth that shines upon us in our darkness. Christ, have mercy.

You are the Life that remains faithful even when we falter. Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God,
who does not turn away from us when we falter,
but patiently calls us back like Peter after his denial,
have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
heal the wounds of our infidelity,
and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God,
help us to celebrate the memorial of Christ's Passion
in such a way that we may obtain your forgiveness
and learn to remain faithful to your Son
even in times of trial and uncertainty.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

HOMILY

During a time of public scandal, a well-known leader noticed that many who once praised him quietly disappeared. Only a few remained at his side. When someone asked one of those loyal friends why he stayed, he answered, "It is when things become uncertain that you discover who your true friends are." Cicero once wrote, "A sure friend is known in an uncertain matter."

In today's Gospel, the cause of Jesus has become very uncertain. At the Last Supper, the atmosphere is heavy. Jesus is deeply troubled: "One of you will betray me." The shadow of the cross already stretches across the table. And in that tense moment, three friendships come into focus.

First, there is the disciple whom Jesus loved. He is unnamed, as if inviting us to place our own name there. He is reclining close to the heart of Jesus. At the beginning of the Gospel, Jesus is described as being close to the heart of the Father. Now this disciple rests close to Jesus' heart.

He remains. He follows all the way to Calvary. He represents faithful friendship — the love that stays.

Then there is Judas. Jesus washes his feet. He offers him a morsel of bread — a sign of honour and affection. Jesus' love makes no distinctions. Yet Judas chooses to go out into the night. Perhaps he was disappointed; perhaps he wanted a different kind of Messiah. Whatever his motives, when his expectations were not fulfilled, he turned away. He steps from the light into darkness.

Finally, Peter speaks with passion: "I will lay down my life for you." His intention is sincere. Yet Jesus tells him that before the cock crows, he will deny him three times.

Peter's spirit is willing, but fear will overtake him. Unlike Judas, however, Peter's failure is not the end. After the resurrection, Jesus will ask him, "Do you love me?" and Peter's wounded friendship will be renewed.

Three men. Three responses: betrayal, denial, fidelity.

Most of us probably recognize ourselves in Peter. We mean well. We promise much. Yet when the moment of

testing comes, we falter. Holy Week asks us: what kind of friend are we when faith becomes costly or uncertain?

The Gospel reassures us that the Lord's love never wavers. He washed the feet of Judas. He washed the feet of Peter. He lays down his life for both. His love is not a reward for our strength. But he does not force our response. We must choose whether to remain near his heart, drift away, or return after we fall.

There is a story of a dying man who once said to a priest, "I have denied the Lord so many times." The priest gently asked, "But has he ever denied you?" The man whispered, "No." "Then begin there," the priest said.

That is our invitation this Holy Week: to begin again, to remain close to the heart of Christ, and to trust that even when we falter, his faithful love is always waiting to restore us.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we bring bread and wine to the altar, we also bring our fragile promises, our fears, and our desire to remain close to Christ. Let us ask the Father to receive these gifts and strengthen our friendship with His Son.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look graciously, O Lord, upon the gifts we offer,
and grant that, sharing in this sacred mystery,
we may learn from your Son
to love faithfully and to trust in your mercy.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in this holy week,
you reveal the depth of your Son's love:
betrayed by a friend, denied by a disciple,

yet faithful unto death.

In Him we see that your mercy
is stronger than our weakness
and your light brighter than our darkness.

Through Him the angels praise your majesty,
Dominions adore and Powers tremble before you.
Heaven and the Virtues of heaven
and the blessed Seraphim worship together with exultation.
May our voices, we pray, join with theirs
in humble praise, as we acclaim: Holy, Holy, Holy...

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Last Supper, in the very moment when betrayal and denial were near, Jesus still spoke of the Father. Even in His anguish, He trusted.

We, too, are children who sometimes promise much and fail, yet are never abandoned. With confidence in the faithful love of God — a love that does not deny us — let us pray together in the words our Saviour gave us:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil —
from the darkness of betrayal,
from the fear that leads to denial,
and from the discouragement that tempts us to walk away.

Graciously grant peace in our days,
that, by the help of your mercy,
we may remain close to the heart of your Son,
faithful in times of uncertainty
and humble enough to return when we fall,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
on the night you were betrayed
you did not withdraw your love.
You knew the weakness of your disciples,
yet you offered them peace.

Look not on our sins —
not on the times we have denied you in word or action,
nor on the moments we have kept our distance —
but on the faith of your Church,
which desires to remain near your heart.

Graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.

This is the Lord who washed the feet of Judas,
who looked with mercy upon Peter after his denial,
who remains faithful when we are weak.

Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb —
blessed are those who choose to remain near His heart.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

The beloved disciple rested near the heart of Jesus.

Peter fell, yet was restored.

Judas walked into the night.

Today we have received the Heart of Christ in Holy Communion.

Let us remain there — not trusting in our own strength, but in His faithful love that never denies us.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Grant, almighty God,
that we who have received the Body and Blood of your Son may remain close to His heart
and, renewed by this holy sacrament,
grow in faithful love and steadfast hope.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who called you by name,
keep you steadfast in friendship with His Son. Amen.

May the Son, who loved you to the end,
restore you when you falter and strengthen you in trial.
Amen.

May the Holy Spirit,
who remains with the Church in every age,
guide you in fidelity and peace. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go forth in peace, remaining close to the heart of Christ.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

When we fail, Christ does not deny us.
Holy Week invites us simply to begin again —
and to remain near His heart.

Wednesday of Holy Week – 1 April 2026

Is 50:4–9; Mt 26:14–25

INTRODUCTION

“What is a human life worth?”

History has given frightening answers to that question. Sometimes human life has been treated as expendable, disposable, even negotiable. And yet, when we think of those we love, we instinctively say: a human life is priceless.

In today’s Gospel, however, we hear a chilling question:

“What will you give me if I hand him over to you?”

And they counted out thirty pieces of silver.

Thirty coins — the price of a slave. The price of rejection.

The price of contempt.

But the Gospel does not allow us to stand at a safe distance and simply condemn Judas. When Jesus says, *“One of you will betray me,”* each disciple asks, *“Surely it is not I, Lord?”* They do not point fingers. They look within.

Holy Week invites us to do the same.

We may never bargain away Christ for silver, but how often do we trade fidelity for comfort, silence for courage, convenience for love? How often do we distance ourselves from Him by small compromises of the heart?

Yet there is hope. The Shepherd who is rejected does not stop loving His sheep. The Servant whose face is struck does not turn away in hatred. The Lord who is betrayed still gives Himself in the Eucharist.

As we enter this sacred celebration, let us bring Him not silver, but our honest and imperfect hearts — trusting that His love is not for sale and His mercy is greater than our failures.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus Christ, you know the pain of betrayal and the sorrow of wounded love. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you remained faithful even when your friends faltered and fled. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, Good Shepherd, you look upon us with mercy and call us back to communion. Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins born of weakness and fear, restore us when we have strayed, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy and faithful God,
your Son accepted betrayal and suffering
to reveal the depth of your redeeming love.
Grant that, in these holy days,
we may examine our hearts with honesty,
cling to Christ with renewed faith,
and follow Him on the path of obedience and trust.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

HOMILY

A man once discovered an old silver coin while clearing out his attic. He imagined it must be worth something significant. But when he brought it to be examined, he was told it was of little value — a common coin, once used to pay off unwanted workers. “So little?” he asked. “Yes,” the expert replied, “but what it was used for — that is what gives it weight.”

Today we hear of thirty pieces of silver. Only Matthew tells us the exact price paid for Jesus’ betrayal. In doing so, he points us back to the prophet Zechariah, where a shepherd sent by God is dismissed for the same amount — thirty pieces of silver — a sum that expressed contempt. The shepherd had cared for the people faithfully, yet his service was met with rejection.

History repeats itself. Once again, the Shepherd sent by God stands before His people. Once again, He is not recognized. Once again, thirty pieces of silver are counted out — the price of scorn.

But the Gospel does not leave us observing Judas from a safe distance. When Jesus says, “One of you is about to betray me,” each disciple asks, “Not I, Lord, surely?” They do not accuse one another; they search their own hearts.

In Matthew’s account, the disciples address Jesus as “Lord.” Judas alone says, “Rabbi.” The others speak from faith — imperfect faith. For though only Judas will betray Jesus, the rest will soon desert Him, and Peter will deny Him. Faith and failure can exist together. The disciples are people of “little faith,” and perhaps that is where many of us find ourselves.

“Not I, Lord, surely?” is a question for us as well. We may never hand Jesus over, but whenever we fail to live according to the love we profess — whenever we neglect the vulnerable, remain silent in the face of wrong, or choose comfort over fidelity — we step away from communion with Him.

Yet betrayal does not have the final word. Judas despaired, believing there was no way back. Peter wept and

discovered mercy. That is the hope of Holy Week: if we are faithless, He remains faithful. God can bring good even from our failures. Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more.

There is a story of a child who, after speaking harshly to his mother, left a small coin on the table as if to pay for the hurt. In the morning, the coin was still there, with a note beside it: “My love is not for sale.”

Thirty pieces of silver may measure human rejection. But they can never measure the love of Christ. This Holy Week, we bring Him not silver, but our imperfect hearts — trusting that the Good Shepherd still remains faithful to His sheep.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Brothers and sisters, as Judas once placed silver in his hands, we now place bread and wine upon this altar. Let us not offer the Lord the price of indifference, but the gift of repentant and trusting hearts, asking Him to transform our weakness into faithful love.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord God,
we place before you these gifts of bread and wine,
signs of our lives — our faith and our frailty,
our loyalty and our inconsistency,
our love and our moments of weakness.
You know how easily we waver,
how often we ask, “Surely it is not I, Lord?”
while still holding back parts of our hearts.
As your Son once accepted betrayal
and transformed it into the offering of redemption,
so now transform these simple gifts
and transform us with them.
Cleanse us of hidden compromises, heal the wounds we
have caused by our failures, and teach us a fidelity that
does not depend on convenience or fear.
May this sacrifice draw us closer
to the Shepherd who remains faithful,
and make of our lives a sincere and pleasing offering to
you. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For though he was rejected and sold for a slave’s price,
your Son remained the obedient Servant,
fulfilling the Scriptures
and entrusting himself to you who judge justly.

In him we see the face of wounded love,
a love that does not retaliate but redeems;
a love that does not despair but saves.

Through him the sorrow of betrayal
becomes the doorway to mercy,
and human failure is met with divine faithfulness.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim: Holy, Holy, Holy...

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the table of the Last Supper, even as betrayal was already unfolding, Jesus still called his disciples friends and taught them to pray to God as Father.

Though our faith is sometimes small and our loyalty imperfect, we are still His children. With trust in the mercy that never abandons us, and longing to return fully to communion with Him, let us pray as the Lord Himself has taught us:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially from the subtle evils
that distance our hearts from you —
from indifference that cools our love,
from fear that silences our witness,
from compromise that weakens our fidelity.

Graciously grant peace in our days,
that, sustained by your mercy,
we may not despair when we fall
nor presume upon your grace,

but learn to trust more deeply
in the love that is stronger than betrayal.

Free us from the despair that overcame Judas,
and grant us the tears of Peter —
tears that open the door to mercy.

As we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
on the night you were betrayed
you did not withdraw your gift of peace.
Even knowing the weakness of your friends,
you loved them to the end.

Look not on our sins,
nor on the ways we have failed in love,
but on the faith of your Church —
a faith often fragile, yet still turned toward you.

Heal the divisions born of selfishness and fear.

Restore trust where it has been broken.

Strengthen us to remain with you
not only in moments of devotion,
but also in times of trial.

Grant us that peace which the world cannot give —
a peace rooted in forgiveness,
grounded in mercy,
and sustained by your faithful love.

Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who was handed over for us
and who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Thirty pieces of silver could not measure His worth.
Our failures cannot diminish His love.
In this Eucharist, the Good Shepherd gives Himself again
— not sold, but freely offered.
Let us remain with Him, faithful in little things, trusting that
His mercy is greater than our weakness.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Nourished by these sacred gifts, O Lord,
may we who have shared in the Body and Blood of your
Son be strengthened in faith and renewed in fidelity.
When we are tempted to turn away,
draw us back by your mercy,
that we may walk steadfastly with Christ
toward the Cross and the glory beyond it.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you faithful in times of trial. Amen.

May He strengthen you when your faith is weak and restore you when you fall. Amen.

May you walk through these holy days trusting in the mercy of Christ, whose love is not for sale. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

Thirty pieces of silver measure human rejection.

The Cross reveals divine love.

When you hear the question, *“Surely it is not I, Lord?”* — let it lead not to despair, but to deeper trust in the mercy that never fails.

Thursday of the Lord’s Supper – 02.04.2026

Ex 12,1-8.11-14; 1 Cor 11,23-26; Jn 13,1-15

BEFORE THE LITURGY (to be read meditatively):

Reader: This evening we have gathered to celebrate the memorial of the Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples on the night before his death.

At that time in Jerusalem, the friends of Jesus did not yet know that their Lord would die on the Cross the next day – and that this was their last meal together with him. Their astonishment at the washing of the feet is therefore very understandable. A host who washes the feet of his guests! That is quite something indeed!

At this hour, Christians throughout the world gather to remember together the Last Supper of Jesus. We too have assembled in order to be united with this worldwide remembrance.

And so I warmly welcome you to our celebration of Holy Thursday! Today we enter into a series of special liturgies: on Holy Thursday, on Good Friday, and at the Easter Vigil

we wish to make the mystery of our faith tangible – and something we can truly experience.

We are invited to immerse ourselves in our living tradition which, for nearly two thousand years, has invited people to rediscover their faith again and again.

Let us attune ourselves to this God; let us open ourselves to the words and actions of Christ, so that this hour may shape us and that faith, hope, and love may grow within us.

– *brief silence* –

Priest enters with the Altar Servers

+ In the name of the Father...

Jesus, who showed us his love to the very end and who this evening especially invites us to this meal,
be with you all!

INTRODUCTION 1

Some people write memoirs in order to guide the memory of them in the direction they desire; often also so as not to

be forgotten too quickly. Others build monuments, or monuments are built for them, in order to keep their importance alive. Jesus wrote no books and left behind no monuments. At his farewell meal he entrusted to his disciples two simple gestures which were to help them remember him, but which were also to shape their whole lives in his spirit. Like a slave he washed their feet, and like one of them he shared bread and wine with them.

With these two signs we keep his memory alive. They have become for us a holy sacrament from which we allow our lives to be formed.

As we reflect on these signs of Christ's love—the washing of feet and the sharing of bread and wine—let us recognize the ways we have failed to live fully in His spirit, and with humble hearts, let us turn to God, seeking His mercy and forgiveness.

OR

INTRODUCTION 2

With the help of key words, we can interiorize something and carry it within us. Holy Thursday gives us three key words to take with us on our journey.

First: **“Do you remember?”**

In the Letter to the Corinthians, which contains the oldest account of the Last Supper, we find the sentence: “Do this in memory of me.” That means nothing other than: “Remember me.” We are invited to remember all that Jesus has done for us. We do this in every celebration of the Eucharist. We remember Him, we think of Him, and we may be grateful that He is there for us. In German the words thinking and thanking share the same root. This remembrance protects us from forgetfulness, because it makes us aware of where the Lord has been at work in our lives — and where He still is at work. “Do you know what this Jesus does for you?”

Second: **“Take Him as your example!”**

“I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you,” says the Lord after He has washed the feet of His own. The Lord performs the service of a slave and gives us an example. He turns our thinking and acting upside down. He appeals to us that Christians should be different. “It shall not be so among you,” He says to the disciples who are arguing about the first places. Let us take Him as our example. Let us allow ourselves to be shaped by His humility, His love, His attitude of heart.

Third: **“Allow it!”**

Peter does not want to let his feet be washed. Jesus answers him: “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” Is it always easy for us to truly allow the closeness and love of God into our lives? Peter must allow Jesus to kneel before him and wash his feet. Only when he allows it does he begin to understand what Jesus means. This openness, this willingness to allow, can help us to understand God more and more deeply in our lives.

As we remember, follow, and allow Christ's love into our lives, let us acknowledge our shortcomings and approach the Lord with open hearts, ready to receive His mercy and be renewed in His service.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS 1

Lord Jesus Christ, Lord Jesus, you give yourself to us under the signs of bread and wine. Lord, have mercy. You show us love by making yourself the servant of all. Christ, have mercy. You are our Redeemer because you consented to your suffering. Lord, have mercy.

OR

KYRIE INVOCATIONS 2

Lord Jesus, you kneel before us and wash our feet, humbling yourself to serve. Lord, have mercy. You give yourself to us in the Bread and the Wine, offering your life for ours. Christ, have mercy. You call us to love and serve one another as you have loved us. Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION 1

Jesus, who humbled Himself to serve and gave His life for us in love, calls us to open our hearts to His mercy. May He cleanse us from the dust of our pride and the stains of our sins, and strengthen us to walk in His way of love and service. Amen.

OR

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION 2

Christ, who knelt to wash the feet of His disciples and gave His Body and Blood for the life of the world, pours His mercy upon us. May He forgive our sins, heal our hearts, and transform us to follow His example of humble love and faithful service. Amen.

INVITATION TO GLORIA

On this night, the night of the Lord's Supper, we celebrate the gift of Jesus' Body and Blood. Let us glorify God with joy and thanksgiving.

OPENING PRAYER (or from the Missal)

Good and gracious God, with reverence we remember on this special evening the Last Supper of your Son with his friends and the final hours of Jesus.

He entrusted this meal to us for celebration.

He washed the feet of his disciples; he shared bread with them and let them drink from the cup of wine.

In Jesus, you have also given us a new commandment:

As you have loved us, so we are to be there for one another and to love one another.

Yet you know that this is not always easy for us. Be patient with us and never withdraw your love from us, even when we have sometimes failed.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord and God, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY 1 – “The Way of Love and Service”

Opening Story 1:

A traveller once entered a bustling city and saw an old man kneeling on the street, washing the feet of a beggar.

Curious, he asked, “Why do you do this for someone you barely know?” The old man looked up and said, “Because in serving others, I learn to love as I have been loved.”

That scene, though simple, mirrors what we witness in the Upper Room on Holy Thursday.

Opening Story 2:

A young boy watched his grandmother wash the dishes every evening, quietly and patiently. One day, he asked, “Grandma, why do you do all this work for us?” She smiled and said, “Love is not about doing big things; it is about serving with the heart, even in the small, unseen moments.” Like that grandmother, Jesus shows us that love is expressed most profoundly in humble service.

Main Reflection:

On that evening, Jesus shared a final meal with His

disciples, a meal that would shape the life of the Church forever. He took bread, He took wine, yet John's Gospel highlights another extraordinary act — the washing of feet. Jesus rose, laid aside His outer garment, tied a linen cloth around Himself, and knelt before His friends. He washed dusty feet, feet that had walked long roads, feet that had sometimes faltered in faith.

Peter protested, "Lord, you shall never wash my feet!" Yet Jesus responded, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." Communion with Christ is not simply about being physically near Him or following Him visibly. It is about allowing Him to transform our hearts, to wash away the dust of sin and pride, and to prepare us to live in His love.

Love is never passive. Love kneels, humbles itself, and touches where it is most needed. Jesus did not wash only the beloved disciple John's feet. He washed even Judas' feet, knowing betrayal was imminent. Love does not exclude. It reaches into darkness and refuses to leave it untouched. This teaches us that our service to others — to the weak, the sick, the lonely — is more than charity. It is

the path to genuine communion with God and with one another.

Anecdotes:

1. I once visited a hospital where volunteers washed the feet of elderly patients before Easter. Many were hesitant, proud, or ashamed, much like Peter. By the end, smiles and gratitude shone on their faces. Simple acts of love lift hearts, restore dignity, and echo the Upper Room, where Jesus showed His disciples the meaning of love through service.
2. A teacher once spent hours helping a troubled student learn to read. The boy was impatient and often frustrated. Yet, through patience and gentle care, the student finally succeeded. Later, he said, "You believed in me when no one else did." This act of service mirrored Jesus' example: love lifts the other, even when it requires humility, patience, and effort.

In our daily lives, acts of service might be smaller: a kind word to a co-worker, patience with a child learning to read, or sharing time with someone who feels forgotten. Each gesture echoes Jesus' example, transforming relationships and creating communion.

The Eucharistic Connection:

The Eucharist flows from this same principle. Christ gives Himself completely in bread and wine. Every time we receive Communion, we are drawn into the Upper Room. We witness love poured out, a love that kneels, that serves, that transforms. Communion is not only about being fed spiritually, but about being sent to serve. Every act of service becomes a living Mass when done in love.

Closing Story:

In a village long ago, a teacher set a bowl of water before her students and washed their feet. At first, the children giggled and protested, embarrassed by the gesture. But over time, they learned something unforgettable: love is not measured by grand gestures or achievements, but in bending low, in serving without expectation, in giving

oneself completely. That is the lesson of Holy Thursday. And that is the way of Jesus: love that kneels, love that transforms, love that endures. Amen.

HOMILY 2 – “The Covenant of Blood and the Promise of Life”

Long ago, nomadic tribes formed covenants of blood, cutting themselves and pressing their wounds together to seal a promise: “I will stand with you, even in danger.” This ancient ritual pointed to something deeper — a commitment of life and loyalty. On Holy Thursday, Jesus does something far greater with His own blood.

A man once told me about a time when a soldier saved the life of a stranger on the battlefield, risking his own. Afterward, he said, “Our blood is nothing if not shared to protect life.” In a way, that soldier's courage mirrors the gift Jesus gives us in His Blood: protection, life, and a covenant that cannot be broken.

In the Upper Room, Jesus took bread and wine and said: “This is my Body. This is my Blood, the Blood of the new

and eternal covenant, poured out for you and for many.” Centuries earlier, the Israelites smeared lamb’s blood on their doorposts as a sign of God’s protection. Now Jesus gives Himself — Body and Blood — as the sign of ultimate deliverance. His Blood protects, strengthens, and unites us with God in a bond stronger than any fear or betrayal.

Yet fear is present. Betrayal is near. Peter will deny, Judas will leave. Love is challenged by human weakness. But Jesus moves forward. He kneels, washes feet, and gives Himself. Love, not fear, defines the night.

Anecdotes:

1. Think of a nurse holding the hand of a patient in intensive care, offering comfort amid pain and uncertainty. Or a teacher guiding a struggling student with patience and encouragement. These acts echo that Upper Room night. Though small, they are acts of love that overcome fear and despair, creating trust and freedom in human hearts — the same freedom Christ offers us through His Body and Blood.

2. A young woman once stayed overnight with an elderly neighbour who was alone and afraid. She offered tea, companionship, and conversation. The neighbour later said, “You gave me courage to face the night.” In this, we see the promise of Holy Thursday: love reaches into fear, transforms it, and restores life.

Even in our failures, Jesus’ covenant remains. Peter wept bitterly after denying Christ, yet he was not abandoned. Judas departed, yet Christ’s offer of communion remained. Love does not retreat in the face of sin; it reaches, calls, and heals. This is the promise of the Blood of Christ: protection, reconciliation, and life.

The Power of Blood and Eucharist:

The Blood of Christ is not merely symbolic; it is a reality that transforms our lives. It recalls the Passover blood of the lamb, now fulfilled and perfected in the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. In every Mass, we are drawn into this covenant. The Body nourishes, the Blood protects, and

through both, we are strengthened to face life's fears, betrayals, and challenges.

Closing Story:

A small village gathered every year to celebrate the journey from slavery to freedom, placing bread and wine on their table. The elder reminded them: "The blood of the lamb saved our ancestors. The Blood of Christ saves us now. Let us live for one another, as He has lived for us." That is the promise of Holy Thursday: life, freedom, and protection through love, sealed in Body and Blood, given freely, and received with hearts open.

Additional Closing Reflection:

Like that village, we are invited today to step forward in trust. The covenant of Jesus' Blood is not a distant memory; it is present, active, and transformative. In the Mass, in our service, in the love we offer, Christ's covenant flows into our lives — protecting us, calling us, and giving us courage to face every fear and betrayal with hope. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

We place on this altar not only bread and wine, but our lives, our joys and our fears, our struggles and our hopes. In offering these gifts, let us open our hearts to God, asking that He may transform them into signs of love and service for the world. Let us pray that they may be acceptable to God the Father almighty

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS (or from the Missal)

Good and gracious God, what we do every Sunday we do today with special awareness: we have prepared the altar with bread and wine for the Holy Meal. And we have placed alongside them our joy, our enthusiasm, and also the sorrow and fears of our fellow human beings.

Now you share this meal with us – as once you did with your disciples. Yes, Lord, come into our lives. Transform them. Transform our thinking and our actions.

Grant that we may live more and more for one another, just as you live for us. Soon you will be present – under the forms of bread and wine. You are also present wherever we act according to your word and your example. Be with

us. We have also laid upon the altar our joy and our enthusiasm, but also the sorrow and fears of our fellow human beings. Be the power of love that enables us to approach one another. Be the power of peace that opens us to reconciliation.

Be the power of justice that allows us to do justice to one another, that helps us to see the worries and needs, the joys and talents of our fellow human beings. Be with us through Jesus, who is present to us in bread and wine today and all the days of our lives. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Good and gracious God, especially today we know ourselves to be united with those who gather all over the world in your name in memory of this evening.

We remember our parish, our diocese, and the Church throughout the whole earth. You have gathered us around this table, in memory of your Son, like a family at a meal.

And so, I now invite you, as brothers and sisters of Jesus, to pray with trust the prayer that Jesus himself taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, O Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our day.

By the example of your Son, who kneels to serve, and by the gift of His Body and Blood, may we be strengthened to love one another, to forgive as we have been forgiven, and to live in humble service to all.

Keep us safe from all harm, guide our steps in faith, and fill our hearts with the courage to face life's trials with hope.

Give courage to those who suffer, consolation to the lonely, and freedom to those weighed down by sin or fear.

Lead all people into your everlasting covenant of love, and unite your Church in witness, prayer, and charity.

Grant this, we pray, as we wait in hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Jesus Christ, you have reconciled the world to God through your Body and Blood, poured out in love even for those who would betray you.

As we offer one another the sign of peace, may this gesture remind us of your example: kneeling to wash the feet of your friends, humbling yourself to serve, and giving your life in covenant love.

Make us instruments of your peace in our families, our communities, and our world.

Where there is pride, let us humbly serve;
where there is fear, let us share courage;
where there is sin or betrayal, let us forgive and restore;
where there is suffering or despair, let us bring hope and comfort.

May the peace we give and receive here tonight flow outward, reaching all who hunger for love, justice, and reconciliation, and may it strengthen us to live as disciples who serve and love as you have loved us.

You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. As we approach this table, let us remember how Jesus knelt to wash the feet of His disciples, humbling

Himself in service, and gave His Body and Blood in covenant love for all.

May this holy meal transform our hearts, so that we, too, may serve one another with courage, humility, and love. Blessed are those called to share in this holy meal.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION (or from the Missal)

Good and gracious God, you send us forth to live what your Son Jesus has shown us. Make us people who serve one another. You have forgiven us.

You have accepted us. Strengthen us to pass on this love.

Give us courage to continue on the way with Jesus.

Help us to stand up for peace in the world, which once again has been pushed aside by human acts of war. Help us to see those who need our help and our care. Do not let us pass them by.

Show us where we are needed, where we can offer loving attention. Where we have power, let us exercise it in service, always with an eye to the good of our fellow human beings.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

BEFORE THE TRANSFER OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Reader: After the Supper, Jesus goes out to the Garden of Gethsemane and begins the way of suffering. Therefore, we transfer the ciboria with the Body of the Lord to a place outside the tabernacle.

Christ no longer has a human dwelling.

The legacy of his love – my Body, given up for you,
and my Blood, poured out for you and for many – is fulfilled
on the Cross.

Yes, in the end the bare stone of the tomb becomes the
place where he seals his testament of love. The bare altar,
stripped of its usual decoration, then becomes a sign of
Jesus' loving self-giving.

***Short Procession / transfer of the Sacrament to an
appropriate place...***

Tantum ergo..

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER AT THE TABERNACLE

P.: Lord Jesus Christ, you have invited us here.

We thank you for this.

Under the form of the sacred Bread you are present
among us. From you we receive life.

Through your love, transform us, that we may become ever
more united in mind and heart. May your love give us a
future.

Open our eyes to the wonder of the Eucharist,
to the wonder of your love and goodness.

Open our eyes to see hunger, the suffering of people who
hate one another – because of bread.

You give bread, and you give love.

Let us pass on what we have received: BREAD AND
LOVE!

Do not let us grow weary of helping and working
so that the plea of so many people for their daily bread
may be fulfilled. We ask this of you, Christ our Lord.

DURING THE STRIPPING OF THE ALTAR BY THE SERVERS

Reader: After the transfer of the Blessed Sacrament, we will strip the altar. The altar is a sign of Christ;

as he was stripped of his garments

and stood exposed before the eyes of the people,

so the stripped altar shall remind us:

Christ allows himself to be shamed in order to bear our shame.

After the Last Supper, Jesus said to Peter on the Mount of Olives: “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

In response to this wish of Jesus, we invite you all to remain for this hour of prayer, to watch and pray with him.

Let us watch and pray with him, so that we may better understand the great love he has shown us.

The altar is now completely stripped by the altar servers.

Friday of the Passion of the Lord – 03.04.2026

Is 52:13–53:12; Heb 4:14–16 & 5:7–9; Jn 18:1–19:42

INTRODUCTION: (Before the beginning of the liturgy)

Reader: Dear sisters and brothers!

We welcome you all to our common celebration of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ!

Only yesterday we gathered in this place to remember together the Last Supper of Jesus in the circle of His disciples. Today – on Good Friday – we remember the suffering and death of Jesus, and we listen – proclaimed by different persons – to the Passion narrative.

The Good Friday liturgy consists of the Liturgy of the Word, the Solemn Intercessions, and the Veneration of the Cross.

On this day, according to the most ancient tradition, the Church does not celebrate Mass. In this twofold fast – the bodily fast and the Eucharistic fast – the sorrow over the suffering of Jesus and the solidarity with all who suffer in this world are expressed.

The high point of our celebration today is the Veneration of the Cross, for the celebration of Communion is absent today! We miss it painfully – and we feel a certain emptiness – and through this also the gap that was torn open by the death of Jesus.

Soon the liturgical celebration of Good Friday will begin with the silent entrance of the priest and the altar servers.

When we then kneel before the Cross, we experience deeply what Psalm 22 already speaks of:

“I am poured out like water – You lay me in the dust of death.”

Let us now become still and prepare ourselves interiorly for the Good Friday liturgy ...

SILENT ENTRANCE AND BEGINNING

INTRODUCTION TO THE PASSION NARRATIVE

P: The Passion narrative that we are about to hear is much more than a mere report. The biblical account of the last hours of Jesus casts a light on His entire life.

The biblical Passion of Jesus tells us not only what happened, but also why and for what purpose it happened. The Gospel of John, whose text we will now hear, shows more clearly than the other Gospels that Jesus walks His path in full awareness and remains faithful to His convictions.

He confronts the accusers and judges and becomes inwardly free.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus dies at the hour when in the Temple the lambs are slaughtered for the Passover meal. From this comes the title of Jesus as the Lamb of God, as the true Paschal Lamb.

SOLEMN INTERCESSIONS

Introduction:

P: Jesus carried the life of humanity – their joy and hope, their grief and fear – to the Cross and, through death, into His new life.

In the Solemn Intercessions today, let us bring before Him our world and our Church and trust with gratitude that God will also fulfill our hope and the hope of all people.

VENERATION OF THE CROSS

Reader: Incomprehensible and unfathomable is what happened then in Jerusalem: Jesus was mocked, ridiculed, tortured, and killed.

- We began this service in silence; in silence we shall also end it. We hope that God will give us an answer within our speechlessness. The Bible bears witness that precisely where injustice, violence, and death seem overwhelming, God's Word gives us human beings new strength.
- With His Cross we also wish to remember all the crosses that have been raised in our world. We do this in order to

stand in solidarity with all who – like Jesus – carry their cross. For this reason, at the beginning of this celebration, we knelt before the Cross of Jesus and attuned ourselves in silence to our common remembrance of the suffering and death of Christ.

- Today, more than 2,000 years ago – on Good Friday at three o'clock in the afternoon – a man died on the Cross. He died a cruel death. He was executed publicly, and anyone who wished could watch this cruel spectacle. The priest goes with three altar servers to the entrance of the church to bring the Cross and two candles.

L2 – Introduction:

More than 2,000 years ago, a man dragged himself through the streets of a city carrying a cross, condemned to death, mocked and beaten. And yet he succeeded, in every age – and even today – in bringing people to reflection, to pondering the deepest meaning of their existence.

We have now brought the Cross into our midst. It is still veiled. It reminds us that we too would rather hide some

crosses and sufferings of our lives. Today, however, we are called to look at it and to unite our crosses with the Cross of Jesus Christ. Before Him we bend our knees in reverence and gratitude, because for our sake He took death upon Himself.

Homily 1: “Behold the Man — Behold Our Hope”

It was March 27, 2020.

The world had fallen silent.

In Rome, rain poured down upon an empty St. Peter’s Square. No pilgrims. No tourists. No children chasing pigeons. Only the echo of falling rain and the sound of one man’s footsteps.

Pope Francis walked slowly across the vast square. Alone. The cameras zoomed out to show the emptiness. He stood before the Blessed Sacrament and lifted the monstrance toward a dark, frightened world. Behind him stood a medieval crucifix — a plague cross before which people centuries earlier had prayed while death stalked their streets.

It was not Good Friday.

And yet it was.

That image travelled around the globe because it said something words could not:

God is not absent in our darkness.

God stands in it.

Today, on Good Friday, we stand again before the Cross — and we ask: Where is hope?

We ask it when we see cities in Ukraine turned to rubble.

We ask it when we see bombed apartment buildings and children carried from the dust.

We ask it when we hear of mothers giving birth in subway stations, of fathers saying goodbye at train platforms, not knowing if they will meet again.

Death is constantly before our eyes. It is unbearable from a distance. How much more unbearable for those living in it.

Where is hope?

Good Friday does not avoid the question. It intensifies it.

“Behold the man,” Pilate says.

And what do we see?

A tortured body.

A crown of thorns pressed into flesh.

A purple robe meant as mockery.

A human being crushed by violence.

Throughout history, empires have been built on violence.

Domination. Subjugation. Civilization often rises on the bones of the weak. Even today we see how brutally violence is used to establish rule.

And into that world steps Jesus.

Not with an army.

Not with tanks.

Not with drones.

He steps forward and asks, "Whom are you seeking?"

And when they say, "Jesus of Nazareth," He answers, "I am he."

I am.

The divine name spoken in the garden of arrest.

For a moment, the soldiers fall back.

It is a quiet but profound revelation: the One being arrested is not powerless. He is not a victim of chance. He is God-with-us.

And yet He allows Himself to be bound.

Why?

Judas did not understand this. Perhaps he wanted a political revolution. Perhaps he wanted to force Jesus' hand. Perhaps he simply had the wrong image of who God should be.

But are we so different?

We too often want a God who intervenes dramatically. A God who crushes our enemies. A God who removes suffering immediately.

Instead, we receive a God who hangs on a Cross.

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Even Jesus enters the silence.

And here is the scandal — and the hope — of Good Friday:

God does not explain suffering.

God enters it.

I think of Djamal, a young man who fled Syria rather than take up arms. He told me how, as a boy, he learned what to do during air raids. How he still flinches at loud noises. War destroyed his childhood long before he became an adult.

I think of Halima from Somalia, who still wakes in terror from nightmares. War did not end when she crossed the border. It lives in memory.

The Cross tells them — and us — something radical:

God stands on your side.

God is not the architect of your pain.

God is the companion in it.

When Caiaphas said, “It is better that one man die for the people,” he meant political convenience. Yet hidden within

his cynical calculation was a deeper truth: Jesus dies for us.

When Pilate asked, “What is truth?” he did not recognize that Truth stood before him — bruised and bleeding.

Truth is not an abstract statement.

Truth has a face.

And on Good Friday, that face is battered.

We live in a world of “alternative truths,” propaganda, manipulation. But the Cross exposes the ultimate truth about humanity: we are capable of cruelty.

And it reveals the ultimate truth about God: He responds with love.

Look closely at the Cross. The mockery staged by the soldiers imitates a Roman triumph. The laurel wreath becomes thorns. The royal robe becomes a costume of shame. The fine wine becomes vinegar. The victory parade leads not to the Capitol but to Golgotha — the place of the skull.

They intended humiliation.

God transformed it into redemption.

Behind the disaster stands unconquerable life.

The Resurrection is already hidden in the Cross — not visible yet, but promised.

Faith is risky. Unbelief is risky too. Pain does not discriminate between believer and skeptic. Every human heart asks: Where do I find strength? What gives meaning? How do I endure suffering? How do I face death?

Good Friday does not give easy answers.

Instead, it gives us a presence.

When we venerate the Cross later and whisper, “My God,” it may sound like accusation.

It may sound like exhaustion.

It may sound like adoration.

Perhaps it is all three.

“My God.”

That cry does not explain suffering. But it binds us to the One who suffers with us.

The Pope in the rain did not solve the pandemic that night.

But he lifted Christ into the darkness.

And that is what the Church does today.

We lift up the Crucified One into a world of war, cancer wards, refugee camps, broken marriages, anxious hearts.

And we say:

Behold the Man.

Behold your God.

Behold your hope.

And somewhere — even now — beneath the rubble of our world, life is preparing to rise.

Amen.

Homily 2: “Love Never Ends”

Years ago, a father told me about the moment his daughter was born.

The midwife placed into his arms what he called “two handfuls of human.” Small. Red. Wrapped in more blanket than baby. He bent down and kissed her damp forehead.

He said, “From that moment, nothing was the same. I was afraid for her. I wanted to protect her. I loved her — just like that.”

That love did not disappear when she cried through sleepless nights.

It did not disappear when she scribbled on the white hallway wall.

It did not disappear when she forged his signature to excuse a missed class.

It did not disappear when she vomited on the stairs after her first reckless party.

Love remained.

Sometimes proud.

Sometimes angry.

Sometimes helpless.

But present.

Where does such love come from?

Is it just chemistry? Hormones?

Or does it echo something deeper — something of God?

“God is love,” writes John.

If that is true, then Good Friday must tell us something about love.

And what we see at first glance does not look like love.

We see betrayal.

“Who is Judas?” someone once asked in a sermon dialogue.

The answer came: “You and I.”

Because each of us carries expectations about how God should act. We want divine power on our terms. When God hides Himself, we grow restless.

Why does God not intervene?

Why does He not prevent war?

Why does He not stop cancer?

Why do mothers bury children?

“My God, why have you forsaken us?”

Good Friday allows us to accuse God.

That may shock us — but it is biblical.

We have become skilled at explaining suffering.

Theologians construct arguments. “Free will.” “Human responsibility.” “Greater good.” But sometimes explanations become excuses.

Good Friday silences our cleverness.

It confronts us with raw reality.

War rolls across borders.

Cyberattacks replace swords.

Cities burn in the 21st century just as they did in ancient times.

Djamal fled Syria rather than become a soldier. He left behind football games in bombed streets and the graves of relatives. Halima fled Somalia; her nights are still haunted by screams.

War destroys houses.

But more deeply, it destroys souls.

Why can we not live in peace?

The Bible insists we are created for something else.

In the beginning, God longed for connection.

Like a mother holding the earth tenderly, God created out of love — not hierarchy, not domination. No nation more lovable than another. No race more worthy than another.

We were born to share the earth.

We were born to share love.

And yet history tells another story.

Pilate asks, "What is truth?"

In our age of misinformation, we ask the same. So many voices. So many narratives. Who is right?

The Cross reveals a deeper truth.

Truth is not a slogan.

Truth is a person.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Before Pilate, Jesus stands silent. The governor does not understand that his own decision will reveal his heart.

Each character in the Passion speaks a fragment of truth.

Caiaphas unknowingly prophesies.

Peter denies out of fear.

Pilate hesitates.

The inscription on the Cross declares more than intended:
"King."

Even mockery becomes proclamation.

We see only fragments, says Paul. Like a puzzling reflection in a mirror.

We do not see the whole picture.

We see cities shattered.

We see families divided.

We see our own failures in love.

We do not see how God holds the threads.

But we hear this:

Love is patient.

Love is kind.

Love keeps no record of wrongs.

Love bears all things.

Love hopes all things.

Love endures all things.

Love never ends.

Does that sound naïve in a world of tanks and drones?

Perhaps.

But without this belief, despair would swallow us whole.

Good Friday is not naïve. It does not skip to Easter. It lingers at the Cross. It refuses to cheapen suffering.

But it insists on one radical claim:

God's love remains — even here.

Even when the daughter leaves home.

Even when she makes mistakes.

Even when humanity paints graffiti on the walls of creation.

Love remains.

When Jesus hangs on the Cross, God does not withdraw.

God reveals His deepest identity.

He hides His glory so that we can survive His nearness. If

He revealed Himself in raw power, we would collapse.

Instead, He reveals Himself in wounded love.

Where is God?

On the Cross.

That is not an explanation.

It is an answer.

When later we approach the Cross and whisper, "My God," it may carry accusation. It may carry longing. It may carry surrender.

But it is relationship.

Faith at its deepest level is not agreeing with statements.

It is trusting a person.

And today that person hangs before us.

Battered.

Bleeding.

Loving.

And because of that love, even in fragments, even in ruins, we dare to believe:

Love is greater than violence.

Love is greater than hatred.

Love is greater than death.

The father I mentioned at the beginning once told me something else. When his daughter moved into her own apartment, he helped assemble her bed. As he drove home alone, he realized: "She will live her own life now. I cannot protect her from everything."

But his love did not end.

It changed form.

It became prayer.

It became hope.

Perhaps that is how God loves us.

He does not force.

He does not coerce.

He allows freedom — even when we misuse it.

And when we crucify Love itself—

Love remains.

And that is why we can leave this place today in silence,
not in despair.

Because the Cross stands.

As question.

And as answer.

And love never ends. Amen.