Study Notes for the Sunday Mass

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"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:5

Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for Palm Sunday. This week we open with the first reading, which is the procession of the palms. Then we move to the Old Testament reading that gives us a glimpse of the Suffering Servant, the Messiah. The New Testament reading shows the humility of Jesus, who came to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy of the Messiah having to suffer. Finally, we conclude with the Gospel account of Jesus' passion, our Messiah, Who paid the penalty for our sin.

Procession of the Palms:

The Gospel reading of the procession of the palms is from Matthew 21. This is Saint Matthew's telling of the preparation and Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. As you read, imagine that you were a believing Jew among the crowd and spread your own palm branches on the road for the King.

> *1 When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." 4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 5 "SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, 'BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.'" 6 The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, 7 and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats. 8 Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. 9 The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!" 10 When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" 11 And the crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee." (Matthew 21:1-11)*

The time around Passover was a season of messianic expectancy, and there were many pilgrims in the city for the celebration. Certainly, Jesus' raising of Lazarus from the dead that we read last week would have played into His sudden popularity and for the people's desire to see Him. In messianic form, Jesus directed His disciples with exact precision, and when they followed His orders, everything worked out exactly as Jesus had said. Jesus asserted His authority over Jerusalem by riding into the city on a donkey, not a might stallion as would have been done by kings. Notice how precisely Jesus fulfilled the Prophet Zechariah's prophesy, that called for both a donkey and the colt of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). Evidently, according to Saint Matthew's narrative, Jesus rode on the colt and the donkey (it's mother) walked alongside.

The procession of the palms dealt with Jesus' first coming. As we look forward to the celebration of Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday, let's study Jesus' second coming. The Book of Revelation revealed some of the details about Jesus' physical return to the earth at the end of the Great Tribulation period. Jesus entered Jerusalem during His First Advent on a donkey. Read what the Scripture says about how He will return the second time.

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Revelation 19:11-16).

Jesus came the first time as a humble, unblemished Lamb (Revelation 13:8). However, Jesus will return the second time as the glorious Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5). He will return as the Almighty Warrior on a white horse, not a donkey as happened the first time. At His First Coming, many people missed His appearance. According to John, at His Second Coming He will not be missed. John said, "BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen" (Rev 1:7). When the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (v.16b) returns, He will come in judgment to a people living "as in the days of Noah" (Matthew 24:37) expecting things to continue as they always have in the past. Since God has given us this warning, we must ask ourselves "How now shall we live?" While ignorance seems to be bliss, it does not lead to eternal life.

This Sunday as we celebrate Jesus' triumphal entrance in Jerusalem at His First Advent, we can celebrate that we are among those that did, in a sense, welcome Jesus to Jerusalem as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We can celebrate that we are not among those who missed His first coming. As we hold our palms, we can proudly celebrate our belief that King Jesus will one day return to the earth he created. In our waving of the palms, we can lift them up as white flags of surrender to the King who deserves our whole lives.

Introduction to the First Reading:
The Old Testament reading at the Mass is from Isaiah 50. We see that God judged Israel's sinfulness, but then also provided a way for salvation in this prediction of the Messiah.

First Reading:

1 Thus says the LORD, "Where is the certificate of divorce By which I have sent your mother away? Or to whom of My creditors did I sell you? Behold, you were sold for your iniquities, And for your transgressions your mother was sent away. 2 Why was there no man when I came? When I called, why was there none to answer? Is My hand so short that it cannot ransom? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, I dry up the sea with My rebuke, I make the rivers a wilderness; Their fish stink for lack of water And die of thirst. 3 I clothe the heavens with blackness And make sackcloth their covering." 4 The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. 5 The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not disobedient Nor did I turn back. 6 I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. 7 For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed. 8 He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me. 9 Behold, the

Lord GOD helps Me; Who is he who condemns Me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; The moth will eat them. 10 Who is among you that fears the LORD, That obeys the voice of His servant, That walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God. 11 Behold, all you who kindle a fire, Who encircle yourselves with firebrands, Walk in the light of your fire And among the brands you have set ablaze. This you will have from My hand: you will lie down in torment. (Isaiah 50:1-11)

The first section talks about God's discipline on the northern tribes of Israel (verses1-3). The picture that these verse paint is one of temporarily setting aside this group of God's chosen people until they come to believe in God's sending of the Messiah. The prophecy shifts to the personalization of the Messiah's suffering, which is known as Good Friday (verses 4-9). The proper response is seen in verse 10: "Who is among you that fears the LORD, That obeys the voice of His servant, That walks in darkness and has no light? **Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God**." This is the crux of the matter that all people will have to resolve. In what or in whom do we trust? Our own fires that we ourselves kindle or the fire that God sets in our heart to believe in Jesus the Messiah?

Later in the Gospel lesson, we will read about the fulfillment of the suffering of God's servant (Is. 50:6 "scourged" and "spat upon") in great detail. The predicted suffering from Isaiah is also the backdrop for the New Testament reading, which was probably sung as a hymn in the early Church about the great lengths that Jesus went to in order to fulfill the Father's plan for our salvation.

Introduction to the Second Reading:
The second reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to the Philippians 2:6-11 where we learn about how Jesus came the first time as a humble Servant.

Second Reading:

6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:6-11)

This passage continues the sharp contrast that the Bible portrays between Jesus' first Advent and His second coming. The first advent He came as a humble servant. In this act of the incarnation and His death, He not only served His Father, but he served us. Humankind was in desperate need of a Savior, owing a sin debt beyond the ability to repay. So He became the suffering Servant "for the joy set before Him" (Hebrews 12:2), paying our debt on the cross. By being obedient to the Father, He will come again in exaltation and power (as we saw in Revelation earlier). The second coming will be very different from the first Advent. In addition to every eye seeing his second coming, this passage informs us that every knee will bow, voluntarily or involuntarily. The choice is ours to make. We can voluntarily bow our knee to the Messiah now, or we can harden our hearts against Him, only to involuntarily bow when He returns.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel Reading is Matthew's account of the passion, which includes the betrayal, arrest, trial, torture, humiliation, crucifixion and burial of Jesus.

Gospel Reading:

14 Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 and said, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. 16 From then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus. 17 Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" 18 And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is near; I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples."'" 19 The disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover. 20 Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. 21 As they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me." 22 Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?" 23 And He answered, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. 24 "The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." 25 And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself." 26 While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. 29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." 30 After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 31 Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.' 32 "But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." 33 But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." 34 Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." 35 Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You." All the disciples said the same thing too. 36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." 39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." 40 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? 41 "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." 42 He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done." 43 Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. 45 Then He came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 "Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!" 47 While He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priests and elders of the people. 48 Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him." 49 Immediately Judas went to Jesus and

said, "Hail, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. 50 And Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you have come for." Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him. 51 And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. 52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. 53 "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 "How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?" 55 At that time Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. 56 "But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets." Then all the disciples left Him and fled. 57 Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. 58 But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome. 59 Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. 60 They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, 61 and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'" 62 The high priest stood up and said to Him, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" 63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." 64 Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." 65 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; 66 what do you think?" They answered, "He deserves death!" 67 Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, 68 and said, "Prophesy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?" 69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." 70 But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about." 71 When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." 72 And again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man." 73 A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away." 74 Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know the man!" And immediately a rooster crowed. 75 And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, "Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly. 1 Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death; 2 and they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor. 3 Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" 5 And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. 6 The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood." 7 And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. 8 For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER, THE PRICE OF THE ONE WHOSE PRICE HAD BEEN SET by the sons of Israel; 10 AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER'S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME." 11 Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And

Jesus said to him, "It is as you say." 12 And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. 13 Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" 14 And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed. 15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the people any one prisoner whom they wanted. 16 At that time they were holding a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. 17 So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" 18 For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over. 19 While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him." 20 But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death. 21 But the governor said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." 22 Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Crucify Him!" 23 And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!" 24 When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." 25 And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!" 26 Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified. 27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. 28 They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. 29 And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. 31 After they had mocked Him, they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. 32 As they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross. 33 And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, 34 they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink. 35 And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. 36 And sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there. 37 And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS." 38 At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. 39 And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." 41 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, 42 "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. 43 "HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" 44 The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words. 45 Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. 46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" 47 And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, "This man is calling for Elijah." 48 Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. 49 But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him." 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. 51 And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the tombs after His

resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. 54 Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" 55 Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him. 56 Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. 57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. 58 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. 61 And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave. 62 Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, 63 and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.' 64 "Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first." 65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how." 66 And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone. (Matthew 26:14 - 27:66)

Let us pray. Dear God, as we move forward to the Holy Week, please pray that many would hear the message of the good news of the Gospel. Please pray that their hearts would be opened for them to be able to receive the gift of Jesus' sacrifice He made for them. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Reflection Questions

1. The week before Jesus' crucifixion, the people applauded Him as their Messiah. They probably thought that Jesus was going to overthrow the Romans and set up His earthly Kingdom. When He was arrested and tried, the people rejected the concept of a Suffering Servant (Is. 53). They had no idea the importance of His death as the payment for their sin. Instead, they wanted a Messiah who would give them political deliverance. We need to learn from their mistake, and ponder whether we want the real Messiah that God sent (the One who acts for our spiritual deliverance) or do we want a Messiah of our own making (a powerful ruler who makes our circumstances more comfortable)? He will one day set the record straight and deliver us from physical oppressors, but now He is working on our hearts to deliver us from spiritual oppressors.

The question is, will we let Him do this good work in us, or will we reject Him, as the people did before Pilate, not recognizing His rightful place in our lives?

2. What is one thing from these readings that helps you to trust in how Jesus is working in your life?

3. All of the readings from this week portray a running contrast between Jesus' first coming and His second coming. His first Advent already came, but His second coming is yet to happen. How can bowing your knee to King Jesus now prepare you for the Second coming?

Keywords: Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, Lectionary 37 and 38