

PASSION SUNDAY

March 27, 1994

Isaiah 50:4-7

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens—wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

Philippians 2:6-11

Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Mark 15:1-39 (or Mark 14:1-15:47)

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed. Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrror; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left.

Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him. When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jesus enters Jerusalem riding a young jackass, not a war horse. What does that say about the kind of Messiah he is?
2. There is a saying that "magic good gets done when no one cares who gets the credit." Whom do you know that exemplifies that kind of "doing good?" How is that person like Jesus?
3. Share a personal experience in which you acted on your convictions and didn't care if you got credit for doing the right thing.

Katie Radford and Diane Banks □

'Truly this man was God's Son'

THE GOOD NEWS

GOD'S WORD IN EVERYDAY LIVING

By Father Paul Turner



crowd, it seems that they are only fulfilling God's plan.

IN SPITE OF God's work, Jesus becomes a terrified, lonely man. At Getsemane he is "distressed and agitated" (14:33), calling God a title Mark's Jesus has never used before: "Abba," or "Father" (14:36) -- a desperately intimate plea for help.

He has no reason to be afraid. The chief priests have already found him guilty (14:55); they're just looking for evidence, even if it's false (14:58-59). Jesus is guilty until proven guilty!

After his arrest, "all (the disciples) deserted him and fled" (14:50); Peter, who followed "at a distance" (14:54) -- both physic and physical -- denies him three times (14:66-72); and on the cross Jesus believes even God has forsaken him (15:34). Abandoned and alone, he utters a "loud cry" (15:34 and 37), an expression Mark used twice earlier to describe the voice of demons (1:26 and 5:7).

As horrible as the crucifixion is, Mark has already planted the seeds of hope in this story. Pilate calls Jesus the King of the Jews (15:2,9,12), and the soldiers mock him with a cloak and crown (15:17), kneeling (19), and calling him "king" (18). Ironically, Jesus is a king, and the cross to which they led him will be his throne. This truth will be revealed by a most surprising character, a Roman centurion, a Gentile, who, seeing Jesus die under the superscription "The King of the Jews" (15:26), proclaims, "Truly this man was God's Son" (15:39).

This truth, of course, rings out in the Passion with the clarity of a clarion at the high priest's interrogation (14:62). After dramatic silences, the high priest asks Jesus, "are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" (14:61), and Jesus says, "I am." WOW! In the question, we remember the first line of Mark's Gospel; in Jesus' brief response, we remember Moses meeting God in the burning bush: "I am who I am" (Ex 3:14).

THE PASSION ENDS with the burial, complete with a reference to the "body" (15:46), so we know Jesus is really dead. It sets the stage for the greatest news of all.

That news, the resurrection, is foreshadowed in the curious story of the young man who runs away naked after the arrest of Jesus (14:51-52). The crowd seizes him as they had just seized Jesus. A linen cloth like the one he wears will wrap Jesus' body at burial (15:46), and the one who proclaims the resurrection will also be "a young man" (16:5). But that's another story.

WHAT DOES the passion teach us about Jesus' mission? Where do you find today's Church in this story?

Father Paul Turner is pastor of St. John Francis Regis Parish, Kansas City. □

Daily Scripture Readings

Fifth Sunday of Lent Sunday, March 20

Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalms 51:3-4, 12-15
Hebrews 5:7-9
John 12:20-33

Monday, March 21

Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17,
19-30, 33-62
Psalms 23:1-6
John 8:1-11

Tuesday, March 22

Numbers 21:4-9
Psalms 102:2-3, 16-21
John 8:21-30

Wednesday, March 23

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95
(Ps) Daniel 3:52-56
John 8:31-42

Thursday, March 24

Genesis 17:3-9
Psalms 105:4-9
John 8:51-59

Friday, March 25

Isaiah 7:10-14
Psalms 40:7-11
Hebrews 10:4-10
Luke 1:26-38



Saturday, March 26

Ezekiel 37:21-28
(Ps) Jeremiah 31:10-13
John 11:45-57

Palm Sunday Sunday, March 27

Mark 11:1-10 (procession)
Psalms 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24
Isaiah 50:4-7
Philippians 2:6-11
Mark 14:1-15:47