

**Homily for April 8, 2001  
Palm Sunday Cycle C**

**By Father Charles Bowes**

**Isaiah 50:4-7  
Philippians 2:6-11  
Luke 22:14-23:56 Passion of the Lord**

## *In the spirit of Jesus, in our darkest moments, we too believe God is faithful.*

In his Passion Narrative, Saint Luke presents us with the figure of Jesus as the innocent sufferer who undergoes the agony of martyrdom. The manner of Jesus' death in Saint Luke is dramatically different from that found in the other three gospels – Matthew, Mark, and John.

The way Saint Luke presents the agony in the Garden is different from the same scene as presented in Saint Mark's gospel. Saint Luke sees no need to emphasize the drowsiness of the disciples, or even to mention any names. The action is focused on the agony of Jesus, whereby he becomes a model of one who is about to go to his martyrdom.

Most significant for us is the constant repetition of the innocence of Jesus during the trial and death scenes. Jesus dies as many of the prophets, standing in the truth of his person, innocent in his suffering. Saint Luke has Pilate make three bold ascertains that he finds no guilt in Jesus, declaring that Herod, too, found no reason to condemn him. At the moment of Jesus' death, the centurion's cry is not a confession of his identity as son of God as in Matthew and Mark, but rather, "This man was innocent beyond doubt."

Saint Luke is delivering to his community a very powerful ideal – for Jesus in Saint Luke functions as a model for that early Christian community's understanding of what it means to be a Christian. The martyrdom of Jesus becomes the norm for making sense of the struggles in that early Christian community. Christians can go to their deaths, if the occasion arises, with the confidence that they are imitating the fate of their master and that God will be faithful as God was for Jesus.

Keep in mind this was not simply a matter of following or copying Jesus' death. Rather, there was a sense, a belief, a power of the spirit of the Risen Lord so great that even in their final abandonment to death, the image of the martyred Christ was with them – really with them.

What about us? Do we truly believe that our God is reliable, especially in the darkest moments of our existence? Can we face the terror and ambiguity of our death with the confidence that we share the life of God in Jesus?

It is no accident that we follow a cross during this season of Lent in and out. As we move into the future to implement the reforms of the Second Vatican Council in Liturgy, we'll be following that cross even more frequently.

So do come to as many as you can of the services of this Holy Week. Come ready to renew baptismal promises at Easter in solidarity with those being baptized and received into Full Communion. Our Lenten fasting ends on Wednesday of this week and is replaced by the fast of anticipation – we’re just too excited to eat much – eagerly awaiting the celebration of the Lord’s resurrection throughout the days of Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Even if all the rest of Lent has been missed – don’t miss this week – we save the best for last.

Let us pray. Be not far from us, Lord, and hasten to our aid. As your son was obedient, even unto death, may we listen intently to your word and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Amen.

In the spirit of Jesus,  
in our darkest moments,  
we too believe God is faithful.