

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD
Mk 21:1-11; Is 50:4-7; Mt 26:14-27:66

02 APRIL 2023

We began our liturgy this morning with the highly anticipated entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, where the crowds greeted him exuberantly because he was thought to be the Messiah who would be their liberator and king. In the reading of the Passion of the Lord that we just heard, things had changed. Jesus hadn't changed, but the people did.

This time of the Passion of Jesus was anticipated from the beginning of time – not from the time of the public ministry of Jesus, not even from the time of his birth, some 30 years before. Jesus' death on the Cross is the critical moment that begins in our awareness of what was deemed necessary following the fall of Adam and Eve from grace. It is a time that culminates in what God found indispensable from the beginning of time: to send His only begotten Son, Jesus, to redeem us from the stain of Original Sin, and from all future sin in the lives of those He created who seek His mercy. And that took place, first, in the horrific crucifixion of the Son of God on the Cross, and, then three days later in the glorious Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Christ conquered sin for our salvation.

What we commemorate today is what we encounter in our praying of the Stations of the Cross, or the Way of the Cross, a devotion in Catholic Churches throughout the world, with 14 Stations typically surrounding the Church walls as we see here – beginning with Jesus being condemned to death, and ending at the crucifixion, the death, and burial of Jesus.

In his 2002 book, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, Pope Benedict XVI reflected on this devotion. He said, "The Way of the Cross is not only a great testimony to an inner depth and maturity, but it is in fact a school for interiority and consolation." He said, "It is also a school for the examination of conscience, for conversion, for inner transformation and compassion—not as sentimentality, as a mere feeling, but as a disturbing experience that knocks on the door of my heart, that obliges me to know myself and to become a better person."

In the depth of our sorrow today, may we, too, encounter on this day of the Passion of the Lord, a disturbing experience that knocks on the door of our hearts, and obliges us to know ourselves and to become better persons. The Cross of the Crucified Jesus Christ remains with us now as a constant reminder of the extent of God's love for us, in that He sent His only Begotten Son to come among us, and to die, and rise from the dead – *all for our salvation*.

