

A photograph of three wooden crosses of varying heights on a dark, grassy hill. The largest cross is on the right, the medium one in the center, and the smallest on the left. The sky is overcast with grey and blue clouds. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting dawn or dusk.

PALM SUNDAY 2020

He became humbler yet,
even to accepting death,
death on a cross

Palm Sunday

From the Readings

The Lord has given me a disciple's tongue. So that I may know how to reply to the wearied he provides me with speech. *Isaiah 50:4*

O Lord, do not leave me alone,
My strength, make haste to help me. *Psalms 22:19*

His state was divine
yet Christ Jesus did not cling
to his equality with God
but emptied himself
to assume the condition of a slave
and became as men are;
and being as all men are,
he was humbler yet,
even to accepting death,
death on a cross. *Philippians 2:6*

Then Jesus said to them, 'My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Wait here and stay awake with me.' And going on a little further he fell on his face and prayed. 'My Father,' he said, 'if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it.' *Matthew 26:38-39*

Reflections

On Palm Sunday crowds cheered Jesus before the next wave of public opinion demanded his death. Friends deserted him. Only a small band stayed by him as he died. Thieves died beside him.

Jesus used very strong language about loving one's enemies. Perhaps he is trying to tell me that if I want to love I have to die a little — maybe a lot. Is there anything in my life that I would be willing to die for? That is a lonely question. My eyes well up with tears as I ask it. I'm not sure I know the answer. *Macrina Widerkehr, Seven Sacred Pauses, 145*





The Lord “gave up his spirit” (cf. Mt 27:50) **on a cross when he was little more than thirty years of age** (cf. Lk 3:23). It is important to realise that Jesus was a young person. He gave his life when he was, in today’s terms, a young adult. He began his public mission in the prime of life, and thus “a light dawned” (Mt 4:16) that would shine most brightly when he gave his life to the very end. That ending was not something that simply happened; rather, his entire youth, at every moment, was a precious preparation for it. “Everything in Jesus’ life was a sign of his mystery”; indeed, “Christ’s whole life is a mystery of redemption”.

Pope Francis, Christus Vivit, 23

When the moment comes to face the most unbearable suffering imaginable, we find the courage to stand our ground. We find our strength in knowing that, when our God took human form and then took on the suffering of all humanity, the presence of three women at the foot of the cross was enough to make him turn his head and take notice. We embrace wholeheartedly the upside-down reality that showing up and being present isn’t the thing we do because we can’t do anything more; it’s the thing we do because it is what he most desires of us, and it is the greatest gift we have to offer.

Colleen C. Mitchell, Who Does He Say You Are? 112.

The Church is always hung between Two Thieves

Thus, no one should be surprised or shocked at how badly the church has betrayed the gospel and how much it continues to do so today. It had never done very well. Conversely, however, nobody should deny the good the church has done either. It has carried grace, produced saints, morally challenged the planet and made, however imperfectly, a house for God to dwell in on this earth.

To be a member of the church is to carry the mantle of both the worst sin and the finest heroism of soul ... because the church always looks exactly as it looked at the original crucifixion, God hung among thieves.

Ronald Rolheiser, The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality.



For Thinking and Talking

1. **From these readings and reflections**, what words, phrases and insights stand out for you?
2. **Imagine** being among the small band who stood by Jesus in his final hours. Remember when you have remained with someone — present to them in a time of need.
3. **Express** a hope or intention for the future.

Closing Prayer

Cross-bearing Companion,
journey with me when I am in pain.
Tend to my wounds when I am hurt.
I take courage from your journey
of death on the cross to wondrous new life. Amen.

Joyce Rupp, Inviting God In, 112.



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SANDHURST

Prepared by: Adult Faith Education Sandhurst P.O. Box 201 Bendigo Vic 3552.

Acknowledgements: Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*, US: Image Books, 1st Edn 1999; Colleen C. Mitchell, *Who Does He Say You Are?* Cincinatti, Ohio: Franciscan Media, 2016; Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 2019; Macrina Widederkehr, *Seven Sacred Pauses: Living Mindfully Through the Hours of the Day*, Notre Dame Indiana: Sorin Books, 2008; Joyce Rupp, *Inviting God In*, Notre Dame Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2001.