

Passion Sunday and Holy Week 2020

A reflection

Reflection on Easters past and present by Rachel McLean, Leader Formation, Catholic Education Services, Cairns.

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

This week, Catholics around the world will enter Jerusalem with Jesus, riding on the back of a donkey. The story that has shaped our faith will be shared several times throughout the week for those who are joining the Holy Week and Easter Liturgies online or at home with their Missal. There will be crowds and festivities. There will be confusion, anger and hurt.



Figure 1 Jesus rides into Jerusalem, [Lippi Memmo](#)

For me, Holy Week and Easter have always been a time for family and faith. As a primary school child, my classmates and I would retell Palm Sunday and the Passion through plays, prayers and performances. As a teenager I questioned the relevance and length of the Holy Week liturgies and tried to find alternate ways of making meaning through retreats, poetry and music. As a young adult I relished the opportunity to immerse myself in new communities and make meaning of the scripture through their liturgies, Lenten programs and Social Justice endeavours.

As we negotiate new way of living and being in a pandemic, we are also having to find new ways of living our faith. I have found solace in the online retreats that are being offered for those in isolation, the daily prayers of my favourite spirituality centres and music. It was music I leaned into when I suffered loss as a young adult and I would while away my grief listening to the playlists of my parents, the Top20 songs of the day and any Broadway and Westend musical CD I could get my hands on. When I was particularly low, I would recall the hymns we sang at Mass on Sundays, *Strong and Constant*, *Here I am Lord*, *A Trusting Psalm*, *Were you there when they crucified my Lord?* Over the last week, I have been listening to Matt Maher. As we lead into Easter, his song [Lord, I need you](#) seems particularly pertinent. Our God has not abandoned us; our God is with us in our pain, isolation and loss. This week I will listen to Matt sing *Lord, I need you* and I will recall all those moments I sang the song in community physically and spiritually connected with others who were sitting or standing next. When I listen now, I will pray for all those who might be listening to Matt through their screens or on their headphones and I will pray that they know they are not alone; they have not been abandoned.



Figure 2 [Lord I Need You](#)

Something to Ponder

[Holy Week – a poem by Fr. John McKenna, C.S.S.R. 9 April 2017](#)

Palm Sunday joyful hosannas
Morph into hate-filled shouts
“Crucify him, crucify him”

The powerful are threatened;
Jesus has seen behind their facades,
Seen their superficial piety
With evil at the core.
A friend loses heart
Makes a deal
To betray the one he loved

And who loved him.
Tension, like the static crackling
Before a terrible storm.

A Passover Meal.

They jostle for the places of honor,
They still don't get it, or get Him.
Peter had his back, John his heart,
And Judas his betrayal bag of coins.
Bread broken and shared
Blood red wine drunk to the dregs,
Re-presenting Good Friday's holocaust



Figure 3 [Passover meal](#)

Feet are washed, a gesture beyond words
Burned into the disciples' souls.
We are to be each other's servants
People of the bowl and towel
Foot washers all.

The disobedience of Eden's Garden
Becomes in Gethsemane's garden,
An agonizing yes, "Thy will be done."
Anas, Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod
Each using Jesus for his own vile purpose;
Unknowingly doing God's holy
purpose.

Barabbas the first one saved
By the blood of the innocent Jesus
The good thief "steals" paradise,
His weapon a pain-wracked prayer,
"Jesus, remember me."
The men cower in fear,
But the women fearless
Weeping women, a caring woman Veronica
The Marys at the foot of the Cross
Magdalene and the Mother
Witnesses and midwives of the new life
Born in pain
"Into your Hands I commend my spirit."
His body broken, his blood poured out
In a final gift of love.
He is taken down, and given to his mother
Simeon's long ago words, echo within
"Your own soul a sword shall pierce."
Pietà' pain, wrenching, almost unbearable,
Pain too common in our violent world
A mother tearfully caressing her dead child
"I don't understand, God!"
"Thy will be done."



Figure 4 [Jesus on the Cross](#)

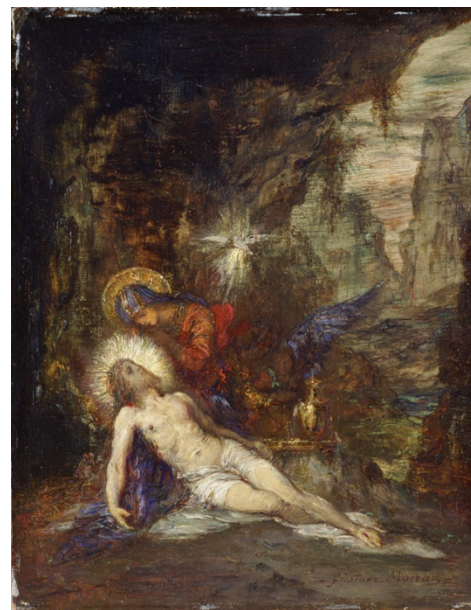


Figure 5 [Gustave Moreau - Pietà](#)

To Share

Courageous God, on our Lenten journey you showed us how to be alone and in community.
You invited us to the wilderness and to the table.
Today, as we enter into Jerusalem and this most holy of Holy Weeks,
Hold us in our hurt and loneliness, our fear and unknowingness.
When all we see is the darkness of your final hour on the Cross,
Invite us to your stillness so that we may rise with you on Easter Sunday.
We ask this prayer, through the one who died for us, our brother Jesus Christ. Amen.

Resources

- Check out what Spirituality centres suggest. For example: Ignatian Spirituality – [7 Strategies for a Time of Pandemic](#); Franciscan – [Reflection in a Time of Crisis](#); Mercy Sisters – [Post a Prayer](#); Sisters of St Joseph – [Solidarity in Prayer](#)
- Take some time to ponder what it means to [Pray through the suffering](#)
- As a family, consider how you might share a family meal – perhaps you could prepare a Seder meal for Passover – learn more here at [Franciscan Faith and Family Resources](#).
- As you settle yourself for Holy Week, why not meet Jesus on the hill...sit in his suffering, his hurt. Then listen to his hope. Eli sings – *King of the Hill* [here on YouTube](#).
- Finally, [The Stopping Points of the Cross](#) are a great resource for family with daily reflections, readings and conversationstarters. You need to visit the website ([here](#)) daily to download the new resource – there is no need to login, just download