

Palm Sunday- April 2 2023

Acknowledgment of Land, Seas, Skies and Waterways

As you read this reflection today, I invite you to reflect on the land where you are reading this reflection. If you are reading in the Cairns Diocese, I invite you to call to mind the Islands in the Torres Strait to our rich farmland in the south, the coast in the East and to the rural communities in our West and Northwest. Today, you are invited to honour the ancient lands, seas, skies and waterways of the First Nations peoples of the area we now call Cairns Diocese. We acknowledge Elders, past and present and the deep spiritual attachment and relationship of First Nations peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

Context - Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday is the culmination of our Lenten journey as we transition into Holy Week and what a tumultuous ending it is! We begin Holy Week with a sense of triumph as we enter Jerusalem with Jesus. The triumph soon dissolves, however, and is replaced by anguish as we wait in the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus and the Apostles, unsure of what is happening. Finally, we arrive at Calvary. In utter disbelief and then devastation at the outcome. The rollercoaster of emotion mirrors the ups and downs of life. We do not always live in triumph, nor do we always live in anguish. In times of triumph, it can be easy to connect with God and feel God's presence. However, in times of anguish, to use the words of Fr Richard Leonard SJ, we can find ourselves asking [where the hell is God?!](#)



Figure 1 Entry in Jerusalem. Fine Art. Britannica ImageQuest. Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016. [quest.eb.com/search/163_2975083/1/163_2975083/cite](https://www.britannica.com/search/163_2975083/1/163_2975083/cite). Accessed 3 Apr 2023.

Scripture: Responsorial Psalm 21 (22) :8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

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

All who see me deride me.

They curl their lips, the toss their heads.

'He trusted in the Lord, let him save him:

let him release him if this is his friend.' *Response*

Many dogs have surrounded me,

a band of the wicked beset me.

They tear holes in my hands and my feet,

I can count every one of my bones. *Response*

They divide my clothing among them.

They cast lots for my robe.

O Lord, do not leave me alone,

my strength, make haste to help me! *Response*

I will tell of your name to my brethren

and praise you where they are assembled.

'You who fear the Lord give him praise; all sons of Jacob,

give him glory. Revere him, Israel's sons. *Response*



Crucifixion Psalm 22. Wayne Forte, 2004. Available at https://www.eyekons.com/art_and_psalms/wayne_forte_psalms_22

Reflection by Kirby Will Project Officer Identity and Outreach.

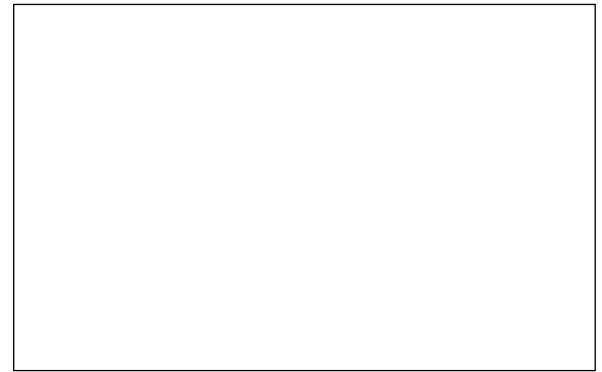
The Psalms encompass the whole range of human emotions: joy, praise, celebration, sorrow, lament, and even depression. St Augustine wrote about the Psalms saying: *for everything which is written here is a reflection of us.*

Psalm 22, as a reflection of us, is very important. Whilst it is primarily a lament, it concludes with praise and we too must remember that the two should go hand in hand. How often when we lament at our misfortunes do we remember to praise God in the midst of it? Jesus cries out '*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*' as he hangs upon the cross: 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?' It is hard to comprehend that Jesus felt abandoned by God in his time of need.

Both the Psalmist and Jesus are experiencing the feeling that God is not close to them in their time of need but that God has abandoned them completely. Jesus feels the distance with God as he is on the Cross because he is about to fulfil the burden of our sins. Sin contradicts Jesus' life that he spent in union with God, and this is why he feels as though God is not close at this time. Sin causes distance with God and even though it may not have been our personal sin, the existence of sin in the world can lead us into situations where we struggle to feel God's presence.

Sr Hilda Scott provides us with comforting wisdom for when we find ourselves feeling abandoned, or distant from God. She reminds us that real love never disappears. Many of us know the experience of having family and friends who do not live close by; they are distant from us but their love for us and our love for them remains the same. The Psalmist feels distant from God but remembers to praise God at the end of the Psalm for he knows that love remains in the absence of closeness. On the cross, God is distant from Jesus- separated by sin- but Jesus knew that he was loved and that he loved God and all of us so much so that he was able to bear the burden of our sin.

We can become distant with God and feel abandoned when things are not going our own way. Once we let go of our own notions about these things and give ourselves over to God, we can find the distance erased. We are called to remember even in the most trying of times when we feel least close to God, that we are loved by God and by Jesus. Jesus' love for us was so great that he sacrificed himself to bear the burden of our sin; there is nothing, not even being crucified, that Jesus would not do to ensure the good and happiness of us all and we must have the humility and courage to accept that God's view of good and happiness for us, God's love is enough to get us through even the most trying of times.



What is your image of a God who never abandons you?

Prayer:

Loving God,
We lay our daily crosses before you,
confident that you are present and hear us even when we do not feel your closeness.
Strengthen our resolve to surmount the barriers of ego
to open our hearts and eyes to You and others.
As we, and others, endure difficult times,
we place our prayers before you so that we may feel the love that never abandons us.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Call to Action:

- watch Matt Maher's [Palm Sunday, Breathing through Lent](#).
- use this guide from [Loyola Press](#) to read the Passion narrative as a family this week.
- choose some activities from this [list](#) for Holy Week.

