

Palm/Passion Sunday A + 29 March 2026 + Isa 50:4-7 + Phil 2:6-11 + Mt 6:14-27:66

One of the parts of our Lord's passion that has for years fascinated me is the Agony in the Garden. I think this is partly because when I was a child, Heinrich Hoffman's painting of this event hung in a mysteriously dark, seldom-used bedroom in my grandparent's house. That image has always stuck with me, and I even chose it for the remembrance card of my ordination. It's fitting that it hung in a bedroom, because if you look really closely in the background of the painting, you can just make out Peter, James, and John—fast asleep. Jesus is clearly in agony, gazing into a mysterious light that seems so far away from Him. And yet, there are his disciples, His closest friends, offering no comfort. They are asleep.

How could they sleep, we might wonder? Well, we too were present with the Lord, as we just walked through the incredible account of our His passion: the Last Supper, the agony in the Garden, the mock trial, the crucifixion, His death, and His burial. And as gripping as the account is, I think if we are all honest, we would have to admit that our minds probably wandered more than once. It is part of the human condition, really, that even with the best of intentions, we struggle to keep our eyes focused on what really matters. In our case, to focus on the most important events in human history; the most important events in the life of the One who defines our deepest identity as Baptized Catholics.

When we think about the suffering, humiliation, and death of our Saviour—God in the flesh—words can never come close to doing adequate justice. It is a mystery that can never be fully explained; but must rather be experienced, and lived. This experience is what the Church offers us in Her Liturgical celebration of Holy Week. It is unfortunate that Holy Week always seems to line up with spring break. Because we all need a break. But we need Lent and Holy Week even more. Because even with the best of intentions, we can so easily fill our days with so much activity that we hardly pause to ponder the fact that the Lord of the Universe, in Whom and for Whom all things were made, was killed at *our* hands when all He ever did wrong was love us. His only desire was to save us!

So today I would simply like to invite all of you to do everything you can to participate, even if only in the chapel of your heart, in the Sacred Triduum—Holy Thursday at 7pm, Good Friday at 3pm, and the Easter Vigil on Saturday at 8:30pm. Especially if you haven't attended these liturgies in the past, please come to as many of them as you can. Because we know it is so easy to glide through this life half asleep, and so we need this reserved time to help us stay awake to what really matters.

The events and meaning of Holy Week are the fullest revelation of who Jesus Christ is: the very Son of God, our Savior, and Lord. Which means that they are the most important days in our lives too, for our communion with Him is also our deepest identity: it is our meaning, it is our purpose, it is our goal in this life and our only hope of eternal life.