

# GOOD FRIDAY: CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S PASSION

## LECTIONARY #40

READING I Isaiah 52:13—53:12

### A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

See, my servant shall prosper,  
he shall be **raised** high and **greatly exalted**.  
Even as many were amazed at him—  
so marred was his look **beyond** human semblance  
and his appearance beyond that of the sons of man—  
**so shall** he startle many nations,  
because of him **kings** shall stand speechless;  
for those who have **not** been told shall **see**,  
those who have **not** heard shall ponder it.

**Who** would believe what **we have heard**?

To whom has the arm of the **LORD** been revealed?  
**He** grew up like a sapling before him,  
like a shoot from the **parched earth**;  
there was in him **no** stately bearing to make us **look** at him,  
**nor** appearance that would attract us to him.  
He was spurned and **avoided** by people,  
a man of suffering, **accustomed** to **infirmity**,  
**one** of those from whom people hide their faces,  
spurned, and we held him in no esteem. >>

Isaiah = Ī-ZAY-uh

Proclaim with high energy.

You are asking two questions. Pause after each one.

Proclaim with emotion in your voice and in your facial expression. Take your time.

**READING I** On Palm Sunday we heard the third of the poems from Isaiah commonly referred to as "servant songs," prophecies that describe an unidentified servant of God. Though righteous, the servant suffers and remains faithful no matter how harshly he is treated. Today's reading is the fourth and final of these "servant songs." In the opening and closing parts of the poem, we hear the voice of God, both times speaking of "my servant." The repeated designation

emphasizes the personal and abiding relationship between the servant and God.

The opening Hebrew word of the prophecy is *hinneh*, "behold," or "see," a term that urges everyone to give careful attention to what follows. "See, my servant shall prosper." This is God's own servant who will ultimately flourish and be greatly exalted even though his appearance suggests just the opposite. Such a startling paradox will require careful attention and leave people speechless. God's concluding words expand the initial portrait of one

marred in appearance, adding to the enigma. The very suffering of the servant will be a source of justification and pardon for others. Such an interpretation of anguish runs counter to the commonly held notion that suffering was the result of personal sinfulness. Yet it is the sin, injustice, and wickedness of others that is inflicted on God's servant; it is their guilt, not his own, that he bears—another paradox to be pondered.

God's words frame those of the community that relate what has been revealed to them. While the initial words of God

Let your voice build as you tell the intensity of his suffering.

Say slowly "makes us whole" and "the guilt of us all."

Clearly pronounce each word ending. Emphasize the words in bold.

Yet it was our infirmities that he bore,  
**our sufferings** that he **endured**,  
 while we thought of him as stricken,  
 as one smitten by God and **afflicted**.  
 But **he** was pierced for our offenses,  
**crushed** for our **sins**;  
**upon** him was the **chastisement** that **makes us whole**,  
 by his **stripes** we were healed.  
 We had all gone astray like **sheep**,  
 each following his own way;  
 but the **LORD** laid upon him  
 the **guilt** of us all.

Though he was harshly treated, he **submitted**  
 and **opened** not his **mouth**,  
 like a lamb **led** to the **slaughter**  
 or a sheep before the **shearers**,  
 he was silent and opened **not** his mouth.

Oppressed and condemned, he was taken **away**,  
 and who would have **thought** any **more** of his destiny?  
 When he was cut **off** from the land of the **living**,  
 and smitten for the **sin** of his people,  
 a grave was assigned him among the **wicked**  
 and a burial place with **evildoers**,  
 though he had done **no** wrong  
**nor** spoken any **falsehood**.

But the **LORD** was **pleased**  
 to **crush** him in infirmity.

**If** he **gives** his life as an **offering** for **sin**,  
 he shall **see** his **descendants** in a **long life**,  
 and the **will** of the **LORD** shall be accomplished  
**through** him.

referred only briefly to the marred appearance of his servant, the community develops the portrait in detail. The people begin with questions that express their own grappling with their experience of this mysterious servant, using first person plural pronouns. They admit that we held him in no esteem and thought of him as stricken. It is incomprehensible that he bore our infirmities, endured our sufferings. Coupled with the servant's physical suffering is his total rejection by the people for whom he

suffered. Yet, he never retaliated, submitting like a lamb led to the slaughter.

There is nothing in the servant songs that made the servant's identity clear, nor was it obvious if the servant referred to an individual or stood for a whole group, such as the Jewish people in exile. Only in light of Christ's redemptive suffering, his surrendering of himself to death for the sake of others, has the identity of the unnamed servant been able to shine forth with clarity. Jesus is God's servant, the one who took upon him-

self the guilt of us all, taking away our sins, and winning pardon for our offenses.

**READING II** Jesus is a great high priest and Son of God! In the reading from Hebrews, this twofold proclamation not only offers insights into Jesus' identity but is also the basis for steadfast faith in him. The author of Hebrews exhorts us to hold fast to our confession, probably referring to baptismal faith and commitment.

A central theme in Hebrews is Jesus' role as high priest, first described as "a

What wonderful news! Proclaim with a tone of gratefulness.

### Because of his affliction

he shall see the light in fullness of days;  
through his suffering, my servant shall justify many,  
and their guilt he shall bear.

Therefore I will give him his portion among the great,  
and he shall divide the spoils with the mighty,  
because he surrendered himself to death  
and was counted among the wicked;  
and he shall take away the sins of many,  
and win pardon for their offenses.

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 31:2, 6, 12–13, 15–16, 17, 25 (Luke 23:46)

#### R. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

In you, O LORD, I take refuge;  
let me never be put to shame.

In your justice rescue me.  
Into your hands I commend my spirit;  
you will redeem me, O LORD,  
O faithful God.

For all my foes I am an object of reproach,  
a laughingstock to my neighbors,  
and a dread to my friends;  
they who see me abroad flee from me.  
I am forgotten like the unremembered dead;  
I am like a dish that is broken.

But my trust is in you, O LORD;  
I say, "You are my God.

In your hands is my destiny; rescue me  
from the clutches of my enemies  
and my persecutors."

Let your face shine upon your servant;  
save me in your kindness.

Take courage and be stouthearted,  
all you who hope in the LORD.

### READING II Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9

#### A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

Brothers and sisters:

Since we have a great high priest who has passed through  
the heavens,

Jesus, **the Son of God,**

let us **hold fast to our confession.** >>

This Scripture reading is all good news.  
Proclaim with clarity and reverence.

merciful and faithful high priest" (2:17), two qualities that characterize Jesus' priestly ministry. The portrait of Jesus as high priest in Hebrews draws on the Jewish tradition, where the high priest was regarded as the mediator between God and the people. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest would pass through the veil of the temple to enter the holy of holies, the very presence of God. There, he would sprinkle the blood of a sacrificial animal as expiation for sin. The designation "great high priest" presents Jesus as one greatly exalted, even

more than the Jewish high priest who only passed through the curtain of the temple, while Jesus passed into the heavenly presence of God. Not the blood of a sacrificial animal, but the pouring out of his own blood was the means of mercy. Though high priest is a lofty title, ordinarily suggesting a distance from those who are sinful and weak, Hebrews emphasizes that Jesus the high priest is intimately connected with us. He sympathizes with our weakness, having similarly been tested in every way.

His high priesthood is ever exercised in mercy and grace.

The second part of the reading (heard also on the Fifth Sunday of Lent) brings together Jesus' divine sonship and his humanity, the "days when [he] was in the flesh." Like the designation "high priest," that of "Son" is an exalted title. Yet Jesus' sonship is exercised in lowliness, in suffering, and obedience. As Son, he shares with us our human condition, remaining faithful even as he cries out to God in his agony. Our response to Jesus, the Son of God, is to

For we do **not** have a high priest  
 who is **unable** to **sympathize** with our **weaknesses**,  
 but one who has **similarly** been **tested** in **every way**,  
 yet **without sin**.

So let us **confidently** approach the throne of grace  
 to receive mercy and to **find** grace for timely **help**.

In the days when **Christ** was in the flesh,  
 he offered prayers and supplications with loud **cries** and **tears**  
 to the **one** who was able to save him from death,  
 and he was **heard** because of his reverence.

Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered;  
 and when he was made **perfect**,  
 he became the **source** of **eternal** salvation for **all** who obey him.

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GOSPEL John 18:1—19:42

### The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

Jesus went out with his disciples across the **Kidron** valley  
 to where there was a garden,  
 into which he and his disciples **entered**.

**Judas** his **betray**er also knew the place,  
 because Jesus had **often** met there with his disciples.

So Judas got a band of **soldiers** and **guards**  
 from the chief **priests** and the **Pharisees**  
 and **went there** with **lanterns**, **torches**, and **weapons**.

**Jesus**, **knowing** everything that was going to **happen** to him,  
 went out and said to them, "Whom are you looking for?"

They answered him, "**Jesus the Nazorean.**"

He said to them, "**I AM.**"

**Judas** his **betray**er was also with them.

When he said to them, "**I AM,**"  
 they turned away and fell to the ground.

Kidron = KID-ruhn

Proclaim with a loud voice in an informative  
 tone. High energy is needed throughout.

Pharisees = FAYR-uh-seez

Always pause before you read Jesus' words.

Nazorean = naz-uh-REE-uhn

live in similar lowliness, obedience, and  
 reliance on God.

#### GOSPEL

Each of the Gospel accounts has a long passion narrative that tells of Jesus' betrayal, mock trial, suffering, and death. While it is clearly the same story, the portraits of Jesus are somewhat different in each version, developed along the same lines that the four evangelists already began to sketch in the earlier parts of their accounts. For example, in Luke's Gospel, Jesus began his ministry by

announcing his release to captives and liberty to prisoners; from the cross, he offers release and liberty in the form of forgiveness to a thief crucified with him, and even asks for mercy on those who crucified him. In John's Gospel, the narrative we hear on this Good Friday, Jesus knows everything that is about to happen, displaying the same knowledge that was his throughout the Gospel. His portrait displays a king, majestically lifted up on the cross, just as he had told Nicodemus early in the Gospel: "So must the Son of Man be lifted up"

(3:14). As we listen to John's account, we will hear and see Jesus moving deliberately and serenely to fulfill what he knows must happen. All of Jesus' words and actions throughout the passion account flow from his having loved his own, and loving them to the end (13:1). Beginning with the betrayal in the garden and concluding with his handing over the spirit from the cross, Jesus shows compassion and infinite love for those who are his disciples.

Our reading begins with Jesus and his disciples going to a garden, a place familiar