

PROPHETIC AND CONTEMPLATIVE

Francis tells us that Christian spirituality “encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle” (*Laudato Si'*, 222), and this pairing is found very strongly in the first reading today. Isaiah says that he has been given the prophetic tongue of a disciple, so that he “may know how to reply to the wearied”. The Lord also wakes him each morning to engage in contemplative prayer, “to listen like a disciple. The Lord has opened my ear” (Isaiah 50:4-5). This lifestyle helps Isaiah to tread a path characterised both by inner peace and outer tranquillity in the face of opposition. Francis observes that “inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life” (*Laudato Si'*, 225). This pairing of the prophetic and the contemplative helps us to understand why “the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion”. What all of us need, says Francis, “is an ‘ecological conversion’, whereby the effects of [our] encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in [our] relationship with the world around [us]. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience” (*Laudato Si'*, 217).

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Hosanna to the Son of David;
blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,
the King of Israel.
Hosanna in the highest.

ANTIPHON as the procession enters the Church
As the Lord entered the holy city, the children
of the Hebrews proclaimed the resurrection of
life. Waving their branches of palm, they cried:
Hosanna in the Highest.

When the people heard that Jesus was
coming to Jerusalem, they went out to meet
him. Waving their branches of palm, they cried:
Hosanna in the Highest.

FIRST READING Isaiah 50:4-7

PSALM Psalm 21

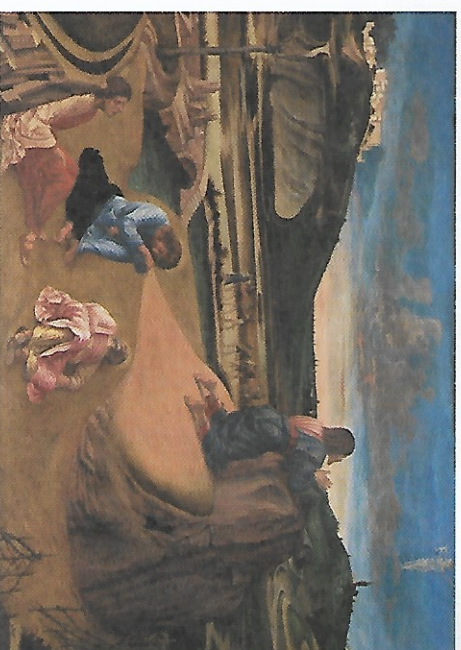
RESPONSE My God, my God, why have you
forsaken me?

1. All who see me deride me.
They curf their lips, they toss their heads.
“He trusted in the Lord, let him save him;
let him release him if this is his friend.” R.
2. 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. R.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

Whenever we read the passion according to Mark on Palm Sunday, I am struck by what happens to the voice of Jesus as the story unfolds. This is particularly clear when, as I have often done as a priest, I have taken the voice of Jesus in the narration. In the first half of the reading, Jesus is mostly speaking to his disciples and followers, making the arrangements for the Last Supper and celebrating it with them. Afterwards, he takes them to the Garden of Gethsemane, where he asks Peter, James and John to stay awake while he prays, but they are not able to do so and fall asleep. When he is arrested, he explains that what is happening is to fulfil the scriptures, but from that point on he says very little. He speaks only once to the high priest, once to Pilate and once on the cross. I have often thought, reflecting on this, that from the point of his arrest onwards, Jesus’ actions speak louder than his words.

Mark’s passion narrative begins with another action that speaks louder than words, when a woman comes into the house of Simon the leper, where Jesus is at dinner. She is carrying an alabaster jar of ointment, which she breaks, and silently anoints his head. As we read this passage in the context of our reflections on *Laudato Si'*, her action tells us, as Pope Francis puts it, that we “are always capable of going out of ourselves towards the other” (*Laudato Si'*, 208). Her action is prophetic, as Jesus points out when it is challenged: “She has done what was in her power to do: she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial” (Mark 14:8). We too are called to undertake prophetic action in our lives, “caring for things for the sake of others” and rejecting “every form of self-centredness and self-absorption”. In our time, Francis says: “These attitudes also attune us to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us” (*Laudato Si'*, 208). When the woman is challenged for wasting valuable ointment, Jesus defends her, saying that she has performed “one of the good works” (Mark 14:6). Our good works are not always as noticeable as hers, but Francis insists that there “is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions” and that learning to act in this way “can bring about real changes in lifestyle” (*Laudato Si'*, 211).



A journey

through

Lent with

Laudato Si'



Dr Martin Poulsom
SDB reflects on the
call to a prophetic and
contemplative lifestyle
that is essential to a
life of virtue.

28 MARCH 2021

**PALM SUNDAY OF THE
PASSION OF THE LORD**
YEAR B
DIVINE OFFICE WEEK II

SUNDAY BULLETIN

THINKING FAITH