

THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER

THE COLLECT

Almighty and everlasting God, who, of thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility; Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMENTARY

The content and meaning of Holy Week are brought before us as we fervently and meditatively pray this Collect. Its moving content takes themes from the Epistle and Gospel in order to lead us to God the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We have learned from the regular reading of the Gospel lessons through the Christian year of the great love, mercy and compassion of God the Father for the world, even for those who, being his creatures, still rebel against his authority and goodness. Thus we remember, as we address the omnipotent and eternal Father, that it is of his tender love towards mankind that he sent his only-begotten Son into the

THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER

world to be the Saviour of the world and to care for us in our sinfulness.

We also remember, from hearing the Christmas message, that the same Son of God took to himself human flesh and nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary—that is, a complete human body and soul. Thus he became by his incarnation (to use the language of the Church) one Person made known in two natures (divine and human). And having become the Incarnate Son, he assumed the vocation of the Suffering Servant of God, set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, and took upon himself suffering, crucifixion and death in a representative and substitutionary capacity for the world—for us and for our salvation.

From the Epistle, we learn of the great humility of the eternal Son of God, who, being equal with the Father in divinity and Godhead, nevertheless took upon himself our human nature and became a servant, so as to save us from our sins and bring us into a right relation of love with the Father. Thus we also remember before God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, his Son, that (by his help and grace) we are called to follow the example of his great humility in life, which we see especially in the

THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER

narrative of his suffering and manner of death in Holy Week.

From the Gospel, we learn of the patience of the Lord Jesus so that our petition, 'Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of his patience', has solid meaning for us. In Matthew 26–27 (which was the older, longer Gospel for the Day in the Sarum use), we learn of the patience of Jesus under the agony (26:42); patience towards Peter (26:40); patience towards Judas (26:50); patience towards those who arrested him (26:52); patience when being mocked and spat upon (26:67; 27:29–30); patience before the high priest (26:62–63); patience before Pilate (27:13–14); patience before revilers (27:29–30); and patience when abandoned by God (27:46). By imitating his patience, we learn humility, and in being humble before God, we believe that by his grace we shall be made partakers of the resurrection from the dead and life eternal with the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.

We pray this Collect daily until Good Friday, even as we also read further accounts of the Passion from the other Gospels for the next five days, as provided in a printed lectionary of The Book of Common Prayer.

THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER

This Sunday is called Palm Sunday because it was on the first day of the week in which Jesus was crucified that he entered Jerusalem, and there were placed on the way in front of him branches of palm. This event can be commemorated at the beginning of the Sunday service by the reading of a Gospel account, by the blessing of the palm branches/crosses provided for distribution to the congregation, and by the singing of an appropriate hymn on the theme.

THE EPISTLE. Philip. 2. 5-11

LET this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every name; that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER

THE GOSPEL. S. Matth. 27. 1-54

WHEN the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus, to put him to death. And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governour. Then Judas who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. (Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.) And Jesus stood before the governour; and the governour asked

THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER

him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word, insomuch that the governour marvelled greatly. Now at that feast the governour was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him. When he was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governour answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governour said,

THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER

Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus he delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews. And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. And as they came out they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to bear his cross. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar

THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER

to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there; and set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself: if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save: if he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama*

THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER

sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

Commentary by the Revd. Dr. Peter Toon.

Extracts from The Book of Common Prayer, the rights in which are vested in the Crown, are reproduced by permission of the Crown's patentee, Cambridge University Press.