

REFLECTION FOR HOLY WEEK
LENT AND COVID 19

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment, he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. (See Isaiah 52-53)



EXCERPT FROM POPE FRANCIS HOMILY
DURING PASSION /PALM SUNDAY MASS

Jesus enters Jerusalem. Crowds, celebrating, praise, blessing, peace: joy fills the air. Jesus has awakened great hopes, especially in the hearts of the simple, the humble, the poor, the forgotten, those who do not matter in the eyes of the world. He understands human sufferings, he has shown the face of God's mercy, he has bent down to heal body and soul. This is Jesus. This is his heart that looks upon all of us, who sees our sicknesses, our sins. Jesus' love is great. And so He enters into Jerusalem with this love and looks upon all of us. It is a beautiful scene, full of light—the light of the Jesus' love, of his heart—joy, and celebration.

HOLY WEEK AND COVID 19

Holy week begins with Passion/Palm Sunday where we remember Jesus entering Jerusalem for the last time. As he enters the city, he is hailed as a king and savior. However, the cheers will turn quickly to jeers. As we move through Holy Week, we witness the suffering that Jesus must endure for our salvation. In Holy Week, we are reminded that Jesus paid a heavy price to save us.

While we are called to suffer with Jesus every Holy Week, this suffering takes on a new meaning this year with the Covid 19 pandemic. As we remember the

suffering of Jesus, we are also keenly aware that our whole planet is suffering, and many are dying due to the pandemic. The suffering and death of Jesus should, therefore, remind us that Jesus knows intimately what we are currently experiencing. Since Jesus suffered, he understands what we are experiencing during this pandemic. The uncertainty we are feeling was also felt by Jesus. The worry and anxiety that we are carrying was equally borne by Jesus. The loneliness that we sense was also sensed by Jesus. The tears that we are shedding were equally shed by Jesus.

Since Jesus underwent what we are feeling, we can therefore be sure that Jesus is suffering with us during this pandemic. Jesus worries with us when we worry and cries with us when we are uncertain as to what the future holds. We can be certain that we have a savior who can sympathize with us in these difficult times. We can come before Jesus with all our pain, fear, and anxiety and Jesus will have a sympathetic ear, and will give us a shoulder to cry on. Prayer can be one way that we let out the various emotions that we are feeling but do not know how to process. In prayer, we know that we will be greeted with understanding and love. With the extra time that many of us now have, let us spend some of it in prayer with Jesus whose suffering during Holy Week is a reminder to us that suffering can be endured and conquered. Sharing our sufferings over the pandemic is one way that we can carry the cross with Jesus this Holy Week.

A PRAYER TO COMBAT THE
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Most merciful God, we come to you in our weakness.

We come to you in our fear. We come with trust.

For you alone are our hope.

We place before you the disease present in our world.

We turn to you in our time of need.

Bring wisdom to doctors. Bring healing to the sick.

Protect those who are most at risk.

Give comfort to those who have lost a loved one.

Welcome those who have died into heaven.

Stabilize our communities.

Unite us in our compassion.

Remove all fear from our hearts.

Fill us with confidence in your care.

Jesus, I trust in you. Amen.

COURAGE COMES THROUGH PRAYER

How do we not worry and live lives of boldness, not fear? Jesus calls us to pray because that is where we find His presence and courage. Below, we share 10 specific intentions you can pray in these difficult times.

- Pray that God would calm fears and that His people would be reminded we have a different identity—one of hope, not of fear. Pray that the church would be a calming presence in the face of so much confusion and darkness.
- Pray that we would be people of compassion who intentionally reach out to others in our neighbourhoods and to our family.
- Pray for world leaders as they work with healthcare organizations and the medical community to develop next steps. Pray that all would be united for the common good. Pray for wisdom and insight.
- Pray with first-responders around the world who are tasked with triaging, testing, and treating increasing numbers of people. Ask God to give them patience, wisdom and a gentle spirit.
- Pray with church leaders as they offer insight and wisdom to their congregations and communities. Ask God to give them opportunities to be voices of reason, clarity and grace.
- Pray with the families of the people who have died and for those undergoing treatment. Ask God to comfort the broken-hearted and to strengthen those who are suffering physically and emotionally.
- Pray for those whose jobs or hours have been cut due to economic downturn. Pray for parents who are struggling to work and care for their children.
- Pray that we as God's people would be reminded of our hope in Christ and the truth that our Savior who died and rose for us has already overcome the world.



CARRYING OUR CROSS IN TIMES OF TRIAL

On those days when life seems too demanding with all its cares, burdens, and concerns,
Jesus, grant us strength to carry our cross.

When we experience loneliness or the pain of separation from our loved ones,
Jesus, grant us strength to carry our cross.

When we feel the pain of our world and unite in compassion with the Earth's suffering people,
Jesus, grant us strength to carry our cross.

When we struggle with decision-making and the time comes to make good choices about our lives,
Jesus, grant us strength to carry our cross.

When we are asked to go the extra mile, to be generous with our time and money,
Jesus, grant us strength to carry our cross.

When we feel weary and worn out, when it seems like all our energy has been drained away,
Jesus, grant us strength to carry our cross.

When we feel discouraged, and want to withdraw from others,
Jesus, grant us strength to carry our cross.

When we harbour old wounds and are called to offer or to receive forgiveness,
Jesus, grant us strength to carry our cross.

Crucified Jesus, help us to take up our cross day by day. Through these crosses we can grow closer to you. Help us to lean on you and to learn from you. Let us trust in your presence which strengthens us. Remind us of your resurrection. Help us to keep our vision focused on life and growth. Amen.

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