

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion – March 29, 2026 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.
Cathedral of Saint Paul, Birmingham – 7:15, 8:30, and 11:00am Sunday Masses – 500 words

The homily on Palm Sunday is optional; I always consider the possibility of skipping it. There is a sense, at least for me, that after these readings that the Church gives us, including the Passion Narrative, not much more could or should be said. Yet then I fear that some few words might be expected. So I will again err on the side of possible expectation, though I also fear I have nothing terribly useful to add.

We are entering the most impactful week of human history, and it falls to each of us to reflect on what our Lord did for us and to participate according to our condition, our faith, our sensibilities, and our devotion. In connection with devotion, I think back to the choral Stations of the Cross that we held on Friday, March 13 last, and in which we used the short but very edifying meditations by St. John Henry Newman.

This year, the eleventh station particularly struck me, and I think it gives us something beneficial to focus our thoughts on, as we take part in this yearly devotion that is Holy Week. Cardinal Newman wrote:

Jesus is pierced through each hand and each foot with a sharp nail. His eyes are dimmed with blood, and are closed by the swollen lids and livid brows which the blows of his executioners have caused. His mouth is filled with vinegar and gall. His head is encircled by the sharp thorns. His heart is pierced with the spear. Thus, all his senses are mortified and crucified, that he may make atonement for every kind of human sin. O Jesus, mortify and crucify us with you. Let us never sin by hand or foot, by eyes or mouth, or by head or heart. Let all our senses be a sacrifice to you; let every member sing your praise. Let the sacred blood which flowed from your five wounds anoint us with such sanctifying grace that we may die to the world, and live only to you.

By becoming a man like us in all things but sin – sharing in our human nature and taking on flesh in a human body –, and by undergoing his passion and death, he truly atoned for every kind of sin we have committed and will ever commit. He carried it all to the cross and offered there the perfect sacrifice that alone secured our redemption. And he desires to apply that redemption to each and every one of us.

Through all the ups and downs of life – including the “Hosanna” of Palm Sunday and the “Crucify him” of Good Friday, we must take up our crosses and follow him. And thinking about the fortitude and resolve Christ exhibited in suffering for every kind of sin that is ours, we would do well this Holy Week to pray for a greater share of the gift of fortitude, so that we may persevere on our own way to death – and beyond death, to life.