

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE REFLECTION



As we enter into the solemn mystery of Palm Sunday, the Church places before us the Passion of our Lord, Jesus Christ—His suffering, His cross, and His total self-gift for the salvation of the world. It is a day marked by a striking contrast: we begin with palms and cries of “Hosanna,” yet we soon hear the proclamation of His suffering and death. In this liturgy, we are drawn deeply into the mystery of salvation.

Each year, reflecting on the Passion, I cannot help but recall not only the Gospel itself but also the great prayers and hymns of the Church that have contemplated this mystery across the centuries. Among

these, one stands out in particular: the ancient sequence *Dies irae*, once sung in the pre-conciliar funeral liturgy. Its vivid imagery of judgment, trembling, and mercy resonates profoundly when placed alongside the suffering of Christ on the cross.

At first glance, the *Dies irae* may seem like a hymn filled with fear: it speaks of the “day of wrath,” of a world shaken, of hidden things brought to light. Yet when we read it in the light of the Passion, we begin to see more clearly what it truly reveals. The “day” it describes is not only the end of time—it is also present in the mystery of Calvary.

For on the cross, the judgment of the world has already begun. Sin is exposed in all its seriousness, yet it is not met with condemnation alone. Instead, justice is fulfilled in mercy. The Judge Himself takes the place of the guilty. The One before whom all must stand chooses first to stand in our place and bear the weight of our sin.

This is why the *Dies irae* moves again and again from fear to hope: “Remember, merciful Jesus... let not such labor be in vain.” These are not the words of despair, but of a soul that knows it has been redeemed at great cost. The hymn, though often associated with funerals, is ultimately about Christ—Christ who judges with justice, and Christ who saves with mercy.

As we begin Holy Week, we are invited to place ourselves within this mystery. We are not merely observers of the Passion—we are its cause, and yet also its beneficiaries. The cross reveals both the gravity of sin and the immeasurable depth of God’s love.

The Dies irae reminds us that one day we will stand before the Judge. Palm Sunday reminds us of something even more consoling: we already know who that Judge is. He is the one who entered Jerusalem in humility, who carried the cross in love, and who gave His life so that we might live.