

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion  
Matthew 21: 1-11  
Isaiah 50: 4-7  
Psalm 22: 8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24  
Philippians 2: 6-11  
Matthew 26: 14 – 27: 66  
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When, at Mass on Palm Sunday, the Passion of our Lord is read in parts, the congregation often takes the role of the crowd, and calls out, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" And, of course, that's appropriate, because by our sinfulness, each one of us plays a role in the crucifixion of our Savior. One of the ways we contribute, is by our persistence in judging other people. Despite our Lord's command to "judge not, lest you be judged," we have constantly to struggle against our tendency to condemn people who have offended us, or who have violated our standards of appropriate behavior.

When people do something we regard as hurtful or wrong, we immediately jump to the most damning conclusions about their motives and intentions. Only by an act of will, can we exert our empathy and imagination in an effort to arrive at some less sinister explanation for their actions. And, often enough, the mitigating arguments that we manage, at great cost, to formulate, turn out to be far closer to the mark than our initial instinctive condemnations -- if only we are willing to make the attempt. As in all things, our model in our efforts to make excuses for those who have hurt us, is Jesus.

Our Lord, hanging in agony on the cross, might have been tempted to pray, "Father, I drink the cup you have given me to drink. Let your will,

not mine, be done, but do your obedient servant the favor of condemning to hell these base, sub-human wretches, who dare to crucify the Son of the living God. In your justice, doom to eternal punishment those who pound nails into me as if I were a plank of wood, and those who look upon my agony, and that of my mother and friends, as if it were a cheap public entertainment.”

In fact, Jesus said nothing of the kind. Instead, he cried out, “Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.” If our Lord, in his pain, was able to make excuses for those, including ourselves, who are implicated in the greatest crime of which human beings could conceive, surely we must do the same for those who have offended us.