

Fifth Sunday of Lent
Passion Sunday (Latin Mass)
April 6, 2025
Year of the Holy Spirit

“Judge me, O God, and distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy: deliver me from the unjust and deceitful man.” (Psalm 42:1)

This weekend, our liturgical calendars differ concerning the Sunday celebration. In the older Rite, today is Passion Sunday as opposed to the Fifth Sunday of Lent in the newer Rite. It can be quite complicated trying to prepare a reflection because the readings for both are different. Passion Sunday reflects upon the Gospel of Saint John (John 8:46-59) where Jesus is judged by the Jewish listeners as being either possessed or mentally unwell after He speaks of witnessing the days of Abraham. The Fifth Sunday of Lent, although using Saint John’s Gospel (John 8:1-11), has the Jewish listeners demanding a judgment upon the woman who was caught in the act of adultery. Since both Gospels have “judgment” as a central point of their story, I would like us to focus upon “judgment,” however, we will do so by reflecting upon another selection from the Gospel of Saint John. The instance, will be when He is presented by Pilate to the citizens of Jerusalem with the words: “*Ecce Homo — Behold the Man!*” (John 19:5).

In his work, “The School of Jesus Crucified,” the Passionist priest, Father Ignatius of the Side of Jesus, presents this scene in these words:

“He is so deformed and disfigured as scarcely to preserve the semblance of a man. His face is pale and bruised with the blows He has received, and defiled with the spittle—His adorable head is bending beneath the painful weight of the sharp thorns, which pierce His brow and form a crown of sorrow and ignominy—His torn, mangled, and bleeding frame is clothed with a garment of scorn and derision. He suffers in every part of His sacred Body, and His position is one of the deepest degradation.” (Pp.127-128).

This sight, one of not only Jesus, but any person in such a pitiable condition should have touched the hearts of those present that day. Many pleas are made to alleviate the sufferings of men, animals and other aspects of nature, through images of their suffering. It is a powerful tool used to see suffering. It stirs many to action. Yet, not all are moved. If we consider those present that day, their desire for blood was not satisfied by this sight. They wanted more. Only His death would suffice.

As tempting as it might seem to make a judgment concerning the Jewish people present that day, let us remind ourselves of our own actions with one question: “What effort have I made toward my relationship with God, my salvation which was purchased that day at so great a price?” Into what excesses have my own sinful desires led me which would see me joining the multitude demanding His death. It is not a pleasurable thought when you or I consider how far we may have journeyed away from Him when we chose to follow our own self-seeking desires. Desire can be a powerful motivation. It can move a sinner to become a saint. It can move a saint to become a sinner. This week take time to reflect upon this scene in your heart. See the Man beaten and broken standing before you. As He stares at you with eyes filled with love, consider the response of your life. Have we lived a life deserving of so great a price paid by Him? If not, should we not consider starting one?