



28. March 2026
LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT
Day 39: “On the way to Holy Week”

Today we take the final step on our Lenten journey before entering Holy Week. I warmly invite you to continue following us. We will be using the texts for Holy Week 2024. Individual passages will be explored in a more meditative way. You are also welcome to follow along via video on YouTube¹.

At the beginning of today’s Gospel (John 12:10–36), we already encounter Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, which we will reflect on more deeply tomorrow, on Palm Sunday.

For a brief time, everything in Jerusalem was as it should be. The people welcomed the true King of Israel and rushed to meet Him. This event revealed the truth, and one could see what Israel was meant to do for all humanity. It was not merely a human king but the heavenly King who came to earth to redeem His people. He enters the “*city of the great King*” (Mt 5:35), namely Jerusalem, chosen by God. What joy and what grace the Eternal Father bestows upon His people! He is coming—the One to whom all honor, praise, and glory are due (Rev 5:12).

And how does He enter? This King renounces all outward splendor and pomp to emphasize His significance and position before mankind. No, the heavenly King comes to the Daughter of Zion on the colt of a donkey, as foretold in Scripture (Zech 9:9). The cry of joy was never meant to fall silent, but to resound for all eternity: “*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*” (John 12:13).

All this took place before the eyes of His disciples. But it was only later, when Jesus was glorified, that they could truly understand it. Later, when the Holy Spirit descended upon them and they were able to discern in His light many things that had previously remained hidden from them, they realized: Scripture had been fulfilled!

Yet light and shadow lay close together. Faith in the Messiah, so necessary for salvation, is growing; the people are rushing to the true King of Israel. Actually, the way should be wide open for His people, so that the Lord may gather His own “*as a hen gathers her brood under her wings*” (Luke 13:34). What would have happened if the entire people had been seized by grace? With Saint Paul, we can only imagine what a blessing that would have been for all humanity: “*For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the*

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9Pqk6jgpXs&list=PLQ38K-XkWVpI9SoLXn0TqSYulBdqIFYUN>

world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?” (Rom 11:15).

Unfortunately, however, many of the religious leaders of that time turned against the Lord—and remained so. This also had an effect on the people.

The hour of the Lord is drawing near. He Himself says: *“The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified”* (v. 23). The hour in which He reveals His unfathomable love for His Father and for us humans. The hour in which He *“became obedient unto death, even death on a cross”* (Phil 2:8). The hour in which He is slain as the Lamb of God to pay for the sin of the world (cf. John 1:29).

Jesus speaks of a different kind of glorification than people often imagine. It is not glittering victories on the battlefield, not medals for great athletic achievements, and not cutting-edge scientific successes that glorify a person, but deeds of true love for God and neighbor. This is what Jesus sets before our eyes: love for God, for His and our Father; love for us humans, who become Jesus’ brothers and sisters and for whom He gives His life.

“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24). This is what our Lord does, and thus He is glorified.

With these words, spoken by Jesus in the face of His approaching death, He gives all who sincerely wish to follow Him a profound lesson about true life. The Lord emphatically makes it clear that human life is not exhausted in this earthly existence. Therefore, one should not strive to cling to this transitory life in order to enjoy it. By doing so, a person closes himself off from the higher dimension of existence and becomes, as it were, dull and increasingly impervious to the spiritual dimension—to life in God. This dimension opens only to those who set their minds on things above and not on earthly things (Col 3:2)—that is, when they seek God and the deeper purpose God has intended for them. Above all, the gates to the Kingdom of God open to the one who desires to live in unity with the Heavenly Father.

With these reflections, I would like to conclude our journey through Lent, and I am grateful to everyone who has walked this path with us, even if only for part of it. Now, together with our beloved Lord, we enter Holy Week, which is a time of grace for all humanity. Here in Jerusalem, the Lord accomplished everything, and it is now our task to live in this grace and to bear witness to people that the heart of our Heavenly Father is open to all and that Jesus is the way to Him.

Today's "Flower":

We accompany the Lord through Holy Week.

In the appendix, we have compiled the bouquet of flowers we have gathered over these 39 days.

I would like to conclude with the words of the Lord Himself, found at the end of today's Gospel:

"While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light" (Jn 12:36).

Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2022/04/09/>