



## Monday of Holy Week



**Date:** Monday, April 14, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C

**First Reading:** Isaiah 42:1–7

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 27:1–3, 13–14 | **Response:** Psalm 27:1a

**Gospel Acclamation:** Hail to you, our King! You alone have had compassion on our sins.

**Gospel Reading:** John 12:1–11

**Preached at:** the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

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**T**he week that changed the world begins with quiet yet profound moments, like seeds sown in the soil, waiting to bear fruit. As we enter Holy Week, the readings today invite us to gaze upon the servant of God, to examine the tension between light and shadow, and to reflect on the choices that shape our hearts. They lead us deeper into the mystery of a King whose power is found not in domination but in self-giving love, whose justice is not proclaimed with a shout but through steadfast fidelity.

The words of Isaiah paint an image of the servant, chosen and upheld by God, a light to the nations, bringing sight to the blind and freedom to captives. Yet, his method is almost paradoxical: he does not raise his voice or break a bruised reed. In a world accustomed to power exerted through force, this servant introduces a new kind of justice—a justice that restores rather than destroys, that listens rather than shouts, that heals rather than wounds. The early Christians saw in this Servant the image of Jesus himself, the one who embodies perfect obedience to the Father’s will. And so we must ask: what does it mean to follow a Lord whose victory comes not by the sword but through the cross?

As we hear these words, we must also confront their challenge. The servant’s mission is universal—to be a covenant for the people, a light for the nations. This call to universal justice is deeply relevant today. In Zambia, as in many parts of the world, we face challenges of economic inequality, political corruption, and the marginalization of the vulnerable. Isaiah reminds us that the pursuit of justice must be rooted in humility, patience, and an unwavering commitment to the dignity of every person. What does it mean to be a light in a land yearning for hope? What does it mean to not break the bruised reed in a society where so many are fragile from years of injustice?

The psalmist, too, echoes this theme of light and trust: “*The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?*” These are not the words of naïve optimism but of hard-earned faith, the kind of faith that is forged in the crucible of trial. The psalmist speaks to our deepest fears—the fear of failure, the fear of abandonment, the fear of uncertainty. And yet, there is a quiet resolve in these words, an invitation to wait for the Lord with courage. For us who walk with Christ through Holy Week, the psalm reminds us that even in the darkest moments—moments of betrayal, suffering, and death—God’s light remains. This is not a light that eliminates all shadows but one that guides us through them.

And then we turn to Bethany, where the air is thick with the scent of nard. Mary, moved by love, anoints the feet of Jesus with costly perfume, filling the house with its fragrance. This act, extravagant and deeply personal, is a moment of pure devotion. Yet, it stands in stark contrast to the cold pragmatism of Judas, who masks his self-interest with words of concern for the poor. Here, we see two responses to Jesus: one of sacrificial love, the other of calculated betrayal. And while the Gospel does not delve into the motivations of their hearts, it does invite us to examine our own. Are our actions born of love, like Mary’s, or are they tainted by self-interest, like Judas’? Do we give freely, or do we hold back, clinging to what is safe and familiar?

In Mary’s anointing of Jesus, we catch a glimpse of the cross. Her gesture prefigures the burial that awaits him. It is a moment of profound tenderness, yet it also points to the cost of discipleship. To follow Christ is to pour out our lives as she poured out the perfume, holding nothing back. And in doing so, we become, like the servant in Isaiah, a light to others—a light that shines not because of our own strength but because we reflect the love of the one who first loved us.

As we reflect on this Gospel, let us also consider the world in which we live. Like Judas, we sometimes prioritize appearances over substance, speaking of justice while failing to live it. And yet, like Mary, we are capable of extraordinary acts of love when we allow ourselves to be moved by grace. In a time when authoritarianism and division threaten the fabric of our societies, we are called to embody the kind of kingdom Jesus proclaimed—a kingdom of humility, service, and compassion.

As we enter this holiest of weeks, let us ask ourselves: What kind of servant will I be? Will I, like Mary, offer all that I have in love, or will I, like Judas, cling to what I think I cannot lose? Will I trust in the light of the Lord, even when the shadows seem overwhelming? And will I allow myself to be a light for others, bearing witness to a justice that restores and a love that redeems?

Reflecting on these questions, let us pray for the grace to live this Holy Week with hearts open to God's transforming love, that we may follow the Servant-King wherever he leads.

- Where is God inviting me to be a light in my community, bringing justice and hope to those who are bruised and broken
- What holds me back from offering my love to Christ as freely as Mary did, and how might I overcome those fears?
- How can I deepen my trust in God's light, especially in the moments of uncertainty and darkness this Holy Week?

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Source: <https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2025-04apr-14-yc-hw-mo/>

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.