

On each of the first three days of Holy Week we read a passage from the prophet Isaiah. These passages, together with the First Reading on Good Friday, are called 'The Servant Songs' because they all speak of one who has been chosen by God to be his servant and bring his message of salvation to all nations. Taking their cue from words spoken by Jesus in the Gospels, Christians have seen these songs as foreshadowing his ministry and passion.

The First Song of the Servant – Isaiah 42: 1 – 7.

In the first song God speaks about his servant, who is endowed with the Spirit and works to bring justice to the nations. He is to be *a light to the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to free captives from prison and those who live in darkness from the dungeon.* And he does this quietly and patiently, making use of the weakest of helpers: *He does not cry out or shout aloud, or make his voice heard in the streets. He does not break the crushed reed, nor quench the wavering flame.*

We Christians have a share in the work of Jesus the Servant. And in this difficult time, when we cannot do much publicly to bring about justice in the world, we may feel even more like crushed reeds or wavering flames than we usually do. So give thanks that he can still make use of us – in our prayers, and in the way we treat or think of anyone we meet, or see on the TV, or read about. Every action, every word, every thought, contributes – for good or ill – to the work of Jesus the Servant in bringing *true justice to the nations.*

John 12: 1 – 11.

The Gospel Reading is John's introduction to his account of Holy Week. It shows Jesus among his friends in Bethany – probably at the Saturday evening meal which marked the end of the Sabbath and the beginning of the new week. This is the week in which Jesus will be crucified and buried. Mary anoints his feet with a costly perfumed ointment, which she had kept for the preparation of his burial. But she recognizes that this day is that preparation. Her anointing is a prophetic sign, which we understand, although those present – including Judas – do not. It shows us that everything that will happen – from the Entry into Jerusalem to the Burial – is part of God's design.