

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HOLY MASS FOR PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD’S PASSION
BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 24, 2024**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am pleased to be with you once again in this National Shrine, and to be joined by so many who are following through television, radio, and the internet. I assure you of the Holy Father’s spiritual closeness as we enter together into this Holy Week. Allow me to offer special greetings to any people among us who have become Catholic in the past year, and to those who will enter full communion with the Church in the days to come.

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My brothers and sisters, we cannot overstate the significance of the events that we commemorate this week. We live in a world that can seem utterly lost at multiple levels. At the global level, there are so many wars that it is like, as the Pope says, “a third world war being fought piecemeal”.¹ Within nations, competition for political power is so fierce that, in its pursuit, the needs of the most vulnerable are neglected. For too many, even the family home is not a place of security. Precisely in this context, we as a Church enter once more into the Paschal Mystery, with this assurance that comes from faith: **the Kingship of Jesus Christ, established on the Cross, is the saving hope for all of humanity.** What, then, does the Kingship of Jesus look like? And how do we follow him as our King? Today’s readings give us the answers to these questions.

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In the first Gospel reading by which we began this Mass, Jesus chose to enter Jerusalem seated on a colt.² By doing so, he signified that he was the king whom

¹ Pope Francis, Message for Lent, 2 January 2024

² Cf. *Mark* 11:7; *John* 12:14.

the prophet Zechariah had foretold: the “just savior” who would be “humble”, and who would enter the holy city not as a warrior, but instead proclaiming “peace to the nations”.³ Upon coming into Jerusalem that day, Jesus accepted the people’s cries of “Hosanna!” and the titles “Lord” and “king”.⁴ This acceptance of kingship by Jesus contrasts with the response he made earlier in his ministry. In John chapter 6, after he had fed thousands by multiplying bread and fish, the people “were going to come and carry him off to make him king”. But on that occasion, he withdrew from them in order to be alone.⁵ The hour had not yet come for him to be glorified. And besides, the people’s understanding of “glory” was much different from his own. He knew that he could only manifest the glory of the Father’s only Son by the death he would endure for sinners, not by a display of worldly power.

When Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to his throne in heaven, his version of Kingship was vindicated. His humility had overthrown the pride of the devil. He had shown how justice for the poor and afflicted can win out over greed for power. And he opened for humanity a way of peace which brings more happiness than any victory that ever comes from war. Yet, people struggle to accept this Kingdom of Christ for the same reason that even his own disciples abandoned him: because following him to the end means sharing in his Cross. The Cross defies the logic of this world, because to live the fullness of life means that we have to die to our own limited ideas. To find true happiness in communion with our fellow man requires that we give up our personal “agenda”. We are like the people who wanted to carry off Jesus to be our king: we want him to be *our* king, but we don’t want to share his kingship with everyone. Jesus, on the other hand, is a *universal* King. He wants to be the King of our whole mind, heart, soul, and strength. And he wants to be the King of all people. To follow him, then, means involving every part of our own being, and inviting every person into communion with him.

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³ Cf. *Zechariah* 9:9-10.

⁴ Cf. *Mark* 11:9; *John* 12:13.

⁵ Cf. *John* 6:15.

Let's be concrete. The wars which plague our world: they will never cease as long as one side makes demands that another side cannot live with. The broken politics that breed frustration and contempt: we will never find unity as a people as long as profit and power are worth gaining at the expense of the poorest and the most desperate among us. The decay of family relations: reconciliation will never occur as long as we cannot see in a person of our own flesh and blood one loved and redeemed by the blood of Christ.

To belong to "King Jesus" will mean, in this world, dying to any number of agendas, ideas, or hopes upon which we were building an earthly kingdom. But it will be the most freeing thing of all, because instead of an earthly kingdom, which is bound to fall eventually, we will have our place with Jesus in the heavenly Kingdom which lasts forever. So, as we begin Holy Week, let us indeed hail Jesus with "Hosanna" as our King, but allow *him* to lead us to the true Kingdom, where dying to self has been revealed as the way to true life.