

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HOLY MASS FOR WEDNESDAY OF THE OCTAVE OF EASTER
THE CATHOLIC STUDENT CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND
APRIL 3, 2024**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Happy Easter! It is good to be here again on your campus. Thank you, Fr. Conrad Murphy, for your invitation. Blessings to all of the students who are here. In a special way, congratulations to those who recently entered full communion with the Catholic Church. I understand that more than 20 students either entered the Church or completed their initiation. Congratulations, and welcome! Also, congratulations to everyone who had a part in the work of evangelization which helped others to find communion with Christ in the Catholic Church. This is proof that the Gospel remains living and effective, and that you on this campus are responding to Jesus' command to make disciples. To everyone gathered here, allow me to convey to you, as the Holy Father's representative to the United States, the spiritual closeness and paternal affection of Pope Francis.

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On the day that Jesus rose from dead, but before the news of his resurrection had spread, two of his disciples were walking away from Jerusalem, "looking downcast". After recounting the Passion of Christ to their mysterious traveling companion, they said something that is very telling: "*We were hoping* that he would be the one to redeem Israel..." *We were hoping*.

What is "hope"? To those two disciples, it sounds like "hope" was a kind of "wish". To say, "We were hoping that he would be the one..." is like saying, "We entertained a wish that he might be the redeemer." Maybe even, "We were *betting* on him." They had some level of confidence, but it was a confidence in a human capacity: the capacity of Jesus to "fill the role" they wanted him to fill, and the capacity of God's people and their leaders to welcome him as their king. And now,

as they walked away from Jerusalem, they refer to their “hope” in the *past tense*. “We *were hoping*... but unfortunately, our hope has died, along with Jesus.”

My dear sisters and brothers: *This is not Christian hope!* “How foolish you are!” Jesus says to them. Even the prophets of the Old Testament had predicted that the redeemer of God’s people “should suffer these things and enter into his glory”. To a person who had truly acquired the Spirit of the Scriptures, the word of God was the foundation for hope in the resurrection. Hope, then, is not mere “wishful thinking”. It is more than a “good bet”. Christian hope – that hope which was planted by the prophets – is the *assurance* that what God has promised will be fulfilled. God promised to send a Savior to his people who would suffer and die, and by doing so would bring glory to God and salvation to God’s people. For that reason, the disciples should have seen, in the things that happened to Jesus, not a reason for despair, but part of God’s plan of salvation.

When we were baptized – some of us many years ago, and others as recently as four days ago – we were given the gift of Hope. Not merely a human capacity to “wish for the best”, but a *certain knowledge* that Christ, who has died, is risen from the dead, and that we share with him in a new kind of life. Hope *must* be more than wishful thoughts, because it must assist our faith and motivate our love during times when so much that we wish for is not being realized. We wish for a world at peace, and so many in power are committed to war. We want harmonious relations with our family members, and still some tension remains. You have a dream for your future, and realizing that dream can be a struggle. All of these things are good to desire, and to work for. In fact, being a Christian involves bringing justice and love into the world and using our talents to glorify God. But if our “hope” is only at the level of the two disciples before they recognized Jesus, then what happens when the results of our desire and work are not exactly what we expected? Do we then despair?

True Christian hope says “no”. Hope allows us to be certain of the victory that Christ has won over the world, and in our own lives. As Christians, we continue to believe in the resurrection, even when we don’t see its immediate fruits around us. Hope, therefore, gives us access to the peace that Jesus gave to his disciples

when he rose from the dead. And with peace comes joy. With hope, it is like we are given a new vision: to see through suffering and beyond disappointment to that Kingdom which, while not fully realized in this life, is on its way to being fulfilled.

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There were two turning points for the disciples on the road to Emmaus: first, when the truth of Jesus' words became like a fire burning in their hearts. In their innermost being, they recognized the truth that he spoke to them. Then came the second turning point: when they invited him to remain with them, and they suddenly recognized him in the breaking of the bread. My brothers and sisters – those of you who have been Catholic your whole lives, and those who have recently entered into the Church: let's never separate ourselves from these two "founts of hope" – the Word of God and the Eucharist. Here at this Mass – and at every Mass – we, like the disciples walking to Emmaus, feed on these sources of hope. As long as our Christian hope is alive, we will always be assured that Christ himself is alive, and that our lives and happiness are secure in him. For this reason, we can have peace and joy.