

**HOMILY**  
**PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD**  
**MARCH 25, 2018 AT 12 NOON**  
**BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE**  
**OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

To all of you present here in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and to each of you spiritually united with us through the Eternal Word Television Network, The Catholic Channel on Sirius/XM Radio and We Are One Body Radio, especially those of you who are homebound, may the Holy Week we have just begun together be for you and for your families a precious time of grace and peace.

The Collect of today's Liturgy expresses best what is at the heart of this celebration: **the humility of Jesus**. Almighty God gave His only-begotten Son to all of us human beings "as an example of humility to follow." God's way is the way of humility. It is **the** way of Jesus; there is no other.

The words of Sacred Scripture speak of humility and teach us that there is no humility without humiliation. In the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "**I gave my back to those who beat me...my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting.**" (Isaiah 50:6) In our Responsorial Psalm: "**All who see me scoff at me; they mock me with parted lips; they wag their heads.**" (Psalm 22:8) In the words of Paul to the Philippians: "**...He humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**" (Philippians 2:8)

And, finally, the moving Passion account according to St. Mark, in which, as our Holy Father Pope Francis once noted, **“We... feel the contempt of the leaders of His people and their attempts to trip him up. We (are) there at the betrayal of Judas, one of the Twelve, who (sells) Him for thirty pieces of silver. We... see the Lord arrested and carried off like a criminal; abandoned by His disciples, dragged before the Sanhedrin, condemned to death, beaten and insulted. We...hear Peter, the ‘rock’ among the disciples, deny Him three times. We...hear the shouts of the crowd, egged on by their leaders, who demand that Barabbas be freed and Jesus crucified. We...see Him mocked by the soldiers, robed in purple and crowned with thorns. And then, as He makes His sorrowful way beneath the cross, we...hear the jeering of the people and their leaders, who scoff at His being King and Son of God.”** (Homily, Sunday, March 29, 2015)

God’s way is the way of humility. It is **the** way of Jesus, and there is no other for those who profess to be His disciples. There is, of course, the way of the world – the way of vanity, pride and self-centeredness. Don’t you recall how the devil put Jesus to the test during His forty days in the desert by presenting Him with three temptations common to all of us: the delight of material things, the seduction of human power, and the presumption of subjecting God to one’s own interests? But both then at the beginning of His public ministry and now at the appointed hour of His passion and death, Jesus is faithful and obedient to the Father’s will for our sakes.

As the Abbot, Saint Maximus the Confessor wrote: **“Indeed, God’s desire for our salvation is the primary and preeminent signs of His infinite goodness...the divine Word of God the Father, with untold condescension, lived among us in the flesh, and did, suffered, and said all that was necessary to reconcile us to God the Father...He...taught us in many different ways that we should wish to imitate Him by our own kindness and genuine love for one another.”** (Letter 11, Office of Readings, Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent)

May this Holy Week help us to follow more closely Jesus’ path of humility by emptying ourselves, by making room for God in our lives, by reaching out in thoughtfulness and kindness to someone in material or spiritual need, perhaps a sick relative, an elderly person living alone, a disabled person, a homeless person, a grieving person.

Dear brothers and sisters, near the conclusion of Mark’s Passion account, we all heard this morning the clear and strong profession of faith expressed by the Roman centurion, who saw how Jesus **“had breathed His last.”** (Mark 15:39) What he had seen prompted his witness as the first to proclaim that this crucified man truly **“was the Son of God.”** (Mark 15:39).

May I conclude my homily with a prayer offered by Pope John Paul II, now Saint, two years before he went home to the Lord:

**Lord Jesus, we too have ‘seen’ how You suffered and died for us. Faithful until the last, You rescued us from death with Your death. With Your Cross You have redeemed us.**

**O Mary, sorrowful Mother, you are a silent witness of these decisive moments for the history of salvation.**

**Give us your eyes so that on the face of the crucified One, disfigured by pain, we may recognize the image of the glorious Risen One.**

**Help us to embrace Him and entrust ourselves to Him, so that we may be worthy of His promises.**

**Help us to be faithful today and throughout our lives Amen!**

(Homily, Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, April 13, 2003, no. 6)