

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HOLY MASS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT
SHRINE OF ST. JUDE CATHOLIC CHURCH
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND
MARCH 16, 2025**

[Note: This is an English translation of the homily which was delivered in Spanish.]

My dear sisters and brothers,

As the Pope’s representative to this country, I bring you a message of the Holy Father’s spiritual closeness and affection. From the readings that we have just heard, I would like to give you a reminder of your infinite dignity as the children of God, and the reason for your hope in Christ, which does not disappoint.

Your patron, Saint Jude, is popularly invoked as the “patron saint of impossible causes”. In the first reading from Genesis, we find our father Abraham facing an “impossible cause”: How can it be that God will give him innumerable descendants, when he is so old and his wife is infertile? Yet, as the Archangel Gabriel will tell Mary at the Annunciation 2,000 years later: “Nothing is impossible for God” (*Lk 1:37*).

This is what Christian hope is about. When we say that we “hope” in the promises that God has made, we are not talking about “wishful thinking”. It’s not like, “I hope this happens, but I’m not sure.” No; for the Christian, the gift of hope makes us *certain* of life, and of resurrection, and of ultimate happiness and victory. Our certainty in these things is not based on what someone in the world has promised us. We maintain our certainty even *in spite of* the harm with which people in this world threaten us. Our certainty in good things comes, not from human beings, but from the fact that God has promised these things to us; and God cannot deceive us, nor can he fail to deliver what he promised. That is why St. Paul was able to say: “Hope does not disappoint” (*Rom 5:5*).

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I am told that your parish is one of the “jubilee parishes” in the Archdiocese. (Is it true?) Well then, you know what this Jubilee Year is all about, right? ... *Hope*. We are “pilgrims of hope” during this Jubilee. A jubilee is a time of mercy and forgiveness. It is a time to lift heavy burdens from people’s shoulders, and to help people become free from oppression. Clearly, not everyone in positions of power knows that this year is a Jubilee! But let us not waste time judging other people’s lack of faith, hope, or love. *We* are the ones who must bear God’s light in this world; and sometimes our witness to the light of Christ is the most powerful when we are living in a moment of darkness. We cannot always control whether persons and forces outside of us enact mercy and grant freedom. But if we are open to God and to the Gospel of Jesus, then the Holy Spirit is able to bring freedom to our hearts. It is the freedom that comes to us when we are led by faith in the Son of God. When we ourselves are free (in spirit), then we are able to love others in a way that helps impart freedom to them.

As St. Paul says, “our citizenship is in heaven” (*Phil 3:20*). This heavenly citizenship is not something that we have earned, and it is not something that we have to earn. It is a gift that God has freely bestowed on us in Christ. By his life, death, and resurrection Jesus has made us truly the children of God. This is what makes us free. He has taken us up into the mystery of his union with the living God, which the disciples got a glimpse of on the mountain. That means, not only that we have a glorious future awaiting us in heaven, but that even now, as we walk amid the shadow of threats, sufferings, and injustice, we need not be defined by the people and the forces that oppress us. We are, in heart and in spirit, free children of God our Father, brothers and sisters of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit, who is pleased to dwell in us.

Having first become convinced ourselves of the hope that is sure, we then become pilgrims of hope, carrying our hope forward as companions of the risen Christ. We become missionaries of hope: we share with others the gift of hope that will allow them to see their lives and their future in a new light. The light is Christ, and that is why it will not disappoint. Jesus died penniless and condemned on the cross, and nothing in that observable experience showed the promise of anything

good coming from his life and death. But an eternity of riches was still held securely in the hand of God, and he himself was in God's hands.

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Brothers and sisters, we also are in God's hands. Baptized into the death of Christ, we are also made sharers in Christ's resurrection. Because of that, we have a hope now which guarantees a life of abundant joy to come. As we share together in the Eucharist, let us be grateful that we get to have this encounter with the risen Christ by eating his body and drinking his blood. By participating in this Eucharist, we can experience what the Psalm-writer expressed: "The LORD is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid? ... The LORD is my light and my salvation" (*Ps 27: 8,1*).