

**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. – APRIL 13, 2025**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We begin Holy Week with this goal: We want to align ourselves with the Victorious One and with the victory that He has won over sin and death.

The victory remains the same. We have our Messiah. His name is Jesus, even though many self-proclaimed messiahs came before Him, have come after Him, and continue to come, promising their own kind of victory. All of them fail, because the best they can inspire is either idolatry or ideology, of one kind or another.

The call from the one true Messiah is unique. His call is not to opt for idolatry, which looks for salvation from a creature. Nor to choose ideology, which seeks to control society according to a simplistic idea, without considering the full reality.

The call, rather, is to follow Christ, who is true God and true man, and whose way of the Cross leads to the victory of the Resurrection.

Idolatry and ideology both cause suffering, first of all for those who are designated as “opponents” or “unfaithful” to the cause. The suffering that results is a tragedy, because it comes from domination by the powerful, and it is felt the most by those who are already marginalized.

But the suffering of the Cross is different. Cruciform suffering is the result of love: the offering of oneself for the sake of the other. Unlike the rule of idolatry or ideology, the “other” is conceived, not as an “enemy”, but rather, as a person with infinite value and dignity.

Jesus died with his arms stretched out wide, in an everlasting sign of his desire to embrace all of humanity and to give himself to the very limit of his life. He did so precisely for those whose actions led to his death, or who were powerless to prevent it. His suffering was not because of an idea. Nor did he pray, while on that

cross, to an idol. He prayed to One who demonstrated divine power by forgiving sinners and raising his Son from the dead. Because Christ Himself was obedient to this true God, He suffered in total openness and gift, for the sake of everyone who wanted to receive that gift.

In front of Pilate, the people had been given a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. They took the expedient choice. They chose to release a man who had been charged with rebellion and murder. Such crimes they could deal with; they were accustomed to criminals. What they could not deal with was a man whose message would require that all of them change their lives and pattern their society and their relationships on the radical love that Jesus had shown them. Instead of this, better to crucify him. “Crucify him!”

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We enter Holy Week with the same choice that those people had. Shall we align ourselves with the most “expedient” idol or idea? Shall we choose our favorite philosophy or movement that promises freedom from our “enemies”... whoever we might choose to designate as such?

Or, shall we choose Christ, and follow his way of love and truth wherever it leads... even if it leads to the self-sacrificing love of others?

When we choose Christ, what we find is the only way to a suffering that has meaning—to a death that gives way to life.

For this reason, the world needs Christ, and only Christ, to be its Savior. May we confess today what every tongue shall confess at the end of time: that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.