

**Homily for the Solemn Mass of Palm Sunday**

**March 25, 2018**

**The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception  
Springfield, Illinois**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Fathers, deacons, consecrated religious, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good that we are here for this celebration of Palm Sunday as we enter into Holy Week, the holiest week of the liturgical year. Over the course of the next several days we will be given the opportunity to unite ourselves with our Lord, to experience the events that ultimately led Him to Golgotha, also known as Calvary, where He offered Himself as sacrifice in atonement for our sins. In doing so, we prepare to celebrate the joy of the Resurrection of Our Lord next Sunday on Easter. This week is known as Holy Week, for these are the high holy days of our Catholic and Christian religion, these are the mysteries of our faith.

In today's celebration of the Mass of Palm Sunday, we have two quite contradictory scenes. First, in the words of the Gospel prior to our Palm Sunday procession, we heard Saint Mark's recounting of Jesus' entrance into the city of Jerusalem. Our Lord entered the city like a king, like the

Messiah that Israel had awaited for generations. The crowds welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem with zeal, hope, and great expectation. They celebrated and rejoiced, shouting to Christ and spreading palm branches on the road. In reflecting on this passage of Sacred Scripture, Pope Benedict XVI remarked that, “a tremor of Messianic hope spread through the crowd, causing many of them to ask: this Jesus, going ahead of us towards Jerusalem, could he be the Messiah, the new David?”<sup>1</sup>

But how quickly things changed for our Lord, for just a few days later, rather than being treated like a king, Jesus was mocked, beaten and crowned, not with the crown of a king, but with a crown of thorns. The Passion that we have just heard invites us to reflect not just on the suffering that our Lord endured, but also on the experience of the first disciples: those who loved Him and recognized the light of God in the darkness of His passion and death.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, when we look upon the passion and death of Jesus with such eyes, we see a divine love that is stronger than sin, a divine light that shines amidst the darkness of our lives, a divine power that brings new life out of all our deaths, a divine poverty that enriches us at the deepest level of our being.

While we have just heard the story of Jesus' final journey told in a matter of minutes, the Church invites us during this most holy week to reflect on that journey at a much slower pace. We are invited to enter into that journey through the eyes of our Blessed Mother and the other disciples, the centurion, Joseph of Arimathea and all of those who witnessed our Lord's passion. It is important for us to look beneath the surface of what is happening, so that we might recognize the love of the Good Shepherd, who laid down his life for all of us.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Palm Sunday homily, 2012, at: [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20120401\\_palm-sunday.pdf](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20120401_palm-sunday.pdf).