



Doc. 629/24

Message for the Palm Sunday Procession
Saint Anne's, March 24, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May the Lord give you peace!

Despite the war and everything going on around us this year, we have once again chosen to celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into the Holy City. We have joined voices with those who sang in Jerusalem two thousand years ago: "Hosanna Filio David," Hosanna to the Son of David. Yes, especially now, it is even more important and necessary to shout strongly that Jesus is our Messiah, He is our Lord, He is the Kyrios. It may be that in these past months we have felt lost or alone and without reference points. We have felt crushed by so much hatred. This war, which is so terrible and seems never-ending, sometimes leads us to fear for the future of our families. Yet, today we are here again, even if few in number, without pilgrims and without so many of our brothers and sisters from so many parts of our diocese, who could not join us. It does not discourage us! Few or many, it is important to be here, and to shout with strength and faith that we have a point of reference, Jesus Christ. We are not alone, we are not abandoned, and above all we are not afraid!

By entering with Him into Jerusalem, we renew our commitment to follow him, to go with Him wherever He goes. We know that following Jesus also means accepting the way of the cross. It is a way that we unfortunately know well, because our ordinary life is often a *Via crucis*, a painful road, marked by many obstacles, misunderstandings, rejections and hostilities of all kinds. Yet this does not discourage us.

In fact, we are here to reaffirm once again our love for Jesus, our love for His city, to which we belong and which we love, for His Land, which is also ours. A Land that is Holy, but wounded because it is invaded by so much hatred and resentment. Woe to us if we allow ourselves to be contaminated by all of this. Today, we want to ask God to preserve our hearts from these feelings of enmity. For we cannot remain friends of Jesus if we cultivate enmity in our hearts. We cannot love Jesus, if we do not love one another, and if we do not have the courage to be close to all, even in the present tragic circumstances in which we live in. We want to live, suffer, and act with Him and for Him.

Our thoughts go first to this Holy City, Jerusalem. It is the sacred City to all, but often desecrated by us, its inhabitants. In fact, it is the Place, where serving God and serving man should coincide. Instead, these two dimensions seem like two extremes that never meet. It is the city where the light of the Lamb should enlighten everyone's eyes, so that we may see reality freely, with the eyes of people who have been redeemed. Instead, our relationships are often marked by possession and exclusion. Let us pray then for our City, and for the peace of Jerusalem. A peace, which is a cordial and sincere welcoming of the other, a tenacious willingness to listen and to be in dialogue, that opens roads on which fear and suspicion give way to understanding, encounter and trust, where differences are opportunities for companionship and not an excuse for mutual rejection.

Our thoughts are with those who cannot be here with us today, and especially with our brothers and sisters in Gaza. Dearest brothers and Sisters, you are not alone. The whole Church in Jerusalem is united with you, embraces you and appreciates your testimony of strength and courage. Together with us, all the churches, all our brothers and sisters around the world, pray for you and with you. We know well how difficult it is, after almost six months, to stand amidst this terrible dark night that never seems to end, to stand united and steadfast, amidst the hunger and violence that surrounds you. But we assure you that we are doing and that we will continue to do all we can to support you and, together with you, we pray that this night will pass as soon as possible. Do not be discouraged. For you, too, as for all, will come the dawn of the third day, the news of the resurrection.

My thoughts go also to the many pilgrims from all over the world, who perhaps would have liked to be with us today but were unable to. We are waiting for you. Do not be afraid, return to Jerusalem and to the Holy Land! Your presence is always a presence of peace, and we sincerely need peace today, may you come and bring us your peace.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we begin the week of the Passion. We will join Jesus' passion and death and await His resurrection. These days shall be intense, but also very beautiful. They shall give us strength. We want to live these days with serene confidence in God's intervention in history, our history, our life. Yes, He does not leave us alone. For we know that He who has raised Christ from the dead shall also give life to all of us through His Spirit (*cf. Rom. 8:11*). We believe this, even for us, here today, and we confirm it with joy and determination!

Happy Holy Week!

+Pierbattista Card. Pizzaballa
Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem