



## Message for Holy Week

Dear brothers and sisters,

Palm Sunday is known as the Sunday of the Passion of Christ, and it should remind us of the many people who are now suffering economic difficulties and loneliness owing to the Coronavirus pandemic. It will be an unusual way to celebrate Holy Week, during which the Church re-presents the mysteries of our salvation, without being able to participate fully in the liturgies, the Way of the Cross (Via Crucis), in the traditional processions and all the manifestations of popular piety. However, we cannot give up living Easter. There is an Easter to be celebrated in the liturgy and an Easter to be celebrated in life, an Easter to be celebrated inside the church, and an Easter to be lived at home with the family. There is an Easter of sharing and solidarity, of attention to others and the needs of the weak, which in recent weeks has already been a sign of the Resurrection. I ask you to join my prayer for your parish priests, who in a multitude of ways are endeavouring to maintain their pastoral responsibility to all of you, and especially to the poorest.

This year the celebrations of Holy Week will perforce take place without the participation of the people. It will, however, be possible to take part, physically distant but spiritually close, by means of social communications, not only through spiritual communion, but by making your home a domestic church, a space of prayer, transforming a difficult situation into an opportunity for growth. This can be done with simple gestures that recall the great signs of the liturgy: a sprig of olive or palm tree, which even if this year will not have been blessed in church, will be the

first sign of our entrance to "Jerusalem" with Jesus; keep open the Bible and meditate on the relevant portions of scripture; maintain an image of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of the Church; exhibit the Crucifix in a place dedicated to prayer; light a candle on the night of the Easter Vigil; set a bowl of water in memory of Baptism; and make your daily bread and wine emblems of your symbolic participation in the Eucharistic banquet.

Holy Week summarizes the message of the Gospel: the love of God without limits which manifests itself in the paschal mystery of Christ Crucified and Risen. The good news of the resurrection of Jesus will, if we let it, help us to overcome this moment of crisis because it opens horizons on the ultimate meaning of our life and establishes the sovereignty of the love of God who conquers death. The slavery of sin is replaced by the freedom of the children of God: joy, sadness, friendship, solitude, communion, instead of arid individualism. The Risen Christ makes His presence felt among you, particularly when discouragement threatens to overwhelm us.

May this Easter become a reason for hope that we shall be governed by the only law of a life capable of changing the world for the better: Love. During this Holy Week, in the absence of a blessed palm, let us reach out especially to those who suffer from illness, loneliness, the precariousness of life. And to all the catechumens elected to the sacraments of Christian initiation which they will not be able to receive at Easter, a special blessing from the Lord with all my affection and closeness to the Church.

Happy Holy Week.

Monreale April 4<sup>th</sup> 2020. Michele Pennisi

Archbishop of Monreale