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Palm Sunday Homily

Pope Francis

With a small procession down the vast and empty central nave of St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis began the first of a series of Holy Week liturgies celebrated without the presence of the faithful from the general public. Palm Sunday Mass, the liturgy that begins with a commemoration of Jesus entering Jerusalem among a jubilant crowd, was celebrated April 5 without the usual outdoor procession and blessing of the faithful's palm fronds. A small number of pews were set out, with 13 people — each holding a woven palm frond — sitting one per pew; just eight people sang in the choir. The basilica was decorated with a potted olive tree and greenery. Also displayed were the "Salus Populi Romani" (health of the Roman people) icon and what Romans call

"We were put in this world to love him and our neighbors. Everything else passes away, only this remains."

the "Miraculous Crucifix," normally housed in the Church of St. Marcellus; over the centuries both the icon and crucifix have been associated with miraculous interventions to save the city and its people. Broadcast and livestreamed over a wide range of media, the pope preached in his homily about the betrayal and abandonment Jesus experienced before and during his passion. He was betrayed by a disciple who "sold him" and one who denied him, betrayed by people who sang hosanna to him and then shouted "crucify him," betrayed by "the religious institution that unjustly condemned him and by the political institution that washed its hands of him," the pope said. Pope Francis spoke in Italian; a Vatican translation of his homily follows, copyright © 2020 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Jesus "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil 2:7). Let us allow these words of the apostle Paul to lead us into these holy days, when the word of God, like a refrain, presents Jesus as *servant*: On Holy Thursday he is portrayed as the servant who washes the feet of his disciples; on Good Friday he is presented as the suffering and victorious servant (cf. Is 52:13); and tomorrow we will hear the prophecy of Isaiah about him, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold" (Is 42:1).

God saved us by serving us. We often think we are the ones who serve God. No, he is the one who freely chose to serve us, for he loved us first. It is difficult to love and not be

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