

## MARCH 28 2026 FATHER JOHN BERTAIO

Thank you for joining us on this literally the last day of Lent. Tonight, at the Vigil Mass, parishes around the world will celebrate Palm Sunday, and then, on Sunday, tomorrow, they will go into the most solemn time of the year, Holy Week.

Last year, I was able to watch a number of series of the well-known production of *The Chosen*. The scene stands out for me in one of today's readings, when Jesus encounters Caiaphas, the high priest. The actor playing Caiaphas displayed a man dealing with great struggles, one of leaving everything behind, including his position as high priest, the comfortable life that he was living, and his wife, all of this to follow Jesus.

I do, I sincerely hope that one day you have a chance to watch the series. It's very educational and thought-provoking, at least I think it is. It also gave me a good understanding of the New Testament in various parts.

For example, let's reflect on some of the events of those last days of Jesus' life on Earth before his crucifixion. First, today's Gospel reading takes us really to the aftermath of the raising of Lazarus. Scholars tell us that it is typical of John's Gospel to contrast the gift of life to Lazarus, who brings death to Jesus. And, it is in reaction to this miracle and the large crowd gathering that the high priest holds this meeting just before the arrest of Jesus.

Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem, knowing what awaited him there. On the other side, it was Jewish belief that when a high priest asked for God's council for the nation, that God spoke through him, as a prophet, as high priest. What dramatic irony that Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus must die for the nation, and then the prophet Ezekiel announced that

God would establish one people, one land, one prince, one sanctuary forever.

And then, look at Caiaphas' prophecy that Jesus would, and I quote, "Gather into one the children who are scattered abroad," all over the place. Jesus came to lay down his life for the many, but not in a foolish, reckless manner so as to just throw away everything before his work of salvation was done. Jesus waited until the time had come, when nothing would stop his coming to Jerusalem to fulfill his father's mission.

St. Augustine of Hippo stated, and I quote: "The passion of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ is the hope of glory and a lesson in patience. He loved us so much that, sinless himself, he suffered for us sinners the punishment we deserved for our own sins." He continues, "How then can he fail to give us the reward we deserve for our righteousness? For he is the source of righteousness himself." And then he finishes, "How can he, whose promises are true, fail to reward the saints when he bore punishment for sinners though without sin himself?"

And then he finished by stating, "Brethren, let us then fearlessly acknowledge and even openly claim that Christ was crucified for us. Let us confess it. Not in fear, but in joy. Not in shame, but in glory." End quote.

On the way to glory and victory for us through the cross, Jesus Christ gave us, forgive us, and brought us into the presence of the Lord because of everything he suffered so that we wouldn't have to suffer as much.

The question I have for you is, are you ready to take up your cross and follow Christ in his way to victory? Remember, he will never, ever give us more, he will never give you more than you can handle. Give it a try. Whatever you're going through, whatever you're suffering, whatever,

you say, "Lord, but why me?" So many people ask. Why not me? Why not us?

This time of the year, as we enter during this most holy Holy Week, let us give it all to the Lord, who will help you and me carry that little cross that is fit just for you, it's custom-made for you, and just say, "Jesus, thank you for uniting me to you in this beautiful journey on this earth."

And so, I pray this little prayer for you.

Lord Jesus, may we, your disciples, be ever-ready to lay down our lives in conformity to your will, to willingly suffer and die for you. That we may also share in your victory and glory one day, with all the saints and angels in Heaven. Amen.