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Pope Leo XIV speaks at Mass at Louis II Stadium March 28 in Monte Carlo, Monaco. The day trip marks the pope's second apostolic journey and the first papal visit to the Catholic principality of Monaco in the modern era. (OSV News/Vatican Media/Simone Risoluti)



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The following is the prepared text of Pope Leo XIV's homily given March 28, 2026, at the afternoon Mass in Louis II Stadium during his papal visit to Monaco.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Gospel we have heard (cf. Jn 11:45-57) recounts the cruel sentence issued against Jesus; it tells us of the day when the members of the Sanhedrin "planned to put him to death" (v. 53). Why does this happen to him? It is because he raised Lazarus from the dead, restoring life to his friend, at whose tomb he had wept, sharing in the grief of Martha and Mary. Jesus, who came into the world to free us from the condemnation of death, is himself condemned to death. This is not a matter of fate, but a deliberate and carefully considered decision.

The verdict of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin stemmed from a political calculation based on fear: If Jesus continued to inspire hope and turn the people's sorrow into joy, "the Romans would come" and devastate the nation (v. 48). Rather than recognizing the Nazarene as the Messiah — the long-awaited Christ — the religious

leaders saw him as a threat. As teachers of the Law, their vision was so distorted that they violated the precepts of the Law themselves. Forgetting God's promise to his people, they sought to kill the innocent, and behind their fear lay a desire to keep hold of power. Although they had forgotten the Law, which commands, "Thou shalt not kill," God did not forget the promise that would prepare the world for salvation. His providence turned that murderous verdict into the means of revealing an act of supreme love: However wicked Caiaphas may have been, he "prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation" (v. 51).

We are thus witnesses to two opposing forces: on the one hand, the revelation of God, who presents himself as the almighty Lord and Savior; and on the other, the hidden schemes of powerful authorities who are eager to kill without scruples. Does this not also happen today? Where these forces converge, there lies the sign of Jesus: the giving of one's life. This sign is foreshadowed in the resurrection of Lazarus, which is the closest prophecy of the events that would later unfold in the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. At Passover, the Son would fulfill the Father's work through the power of the Holy Spirit. Just as God brought life into being from nothing at the beginning of time, so in the fullness of time he redeems every life from death, the source of destruction in creation.

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The joy and the strength of our witness come from redemption, in every place and at every time. Indeed, our own stories are encompassed within Jesus' story, beginning with the lives of the vulnerable and oppressed. Even today, how many plots are devised around the world to kill the innocent! How many excuses are made to justify their elimination! Yet, despite the persistence of evil, God's eternal justice always rescues us from our graves, as it did with Lazarus, and gives us new life. The Lord frees us from pain by instilling hope. He converts our hardened hearts by transforming power into service, revealing the true name of his omnipotence: Mercy. It is mercy that saves the world. It nurtures every human life in all its frailty, from the moment it grows in the womb until it withers away. As Pope Francis taught us, the culture of mercy rejects the throwaway culture.

As we have heard, the voices of the prophets testify to how God carries out his plan of salvation. In the first reading, Ezekiel proclaims that God's work begins with liberation (Ez 37:23) and is realized through the sanctification of the people (cf. v.

28), who are on a journey of conversion, much like our own Lenten journey. This is an invitation to become involved, rather than remaining at a private or individual level, so that our relationships with God and with our neighbors can be transformed.

First, liberation takes the form of a purification from the "idols" that defiled the people (v. 23). But what are idols? The prophet uses this term to refer to all those things that enslave our hearts, deceiving and corrupting them. The word "idol" means "small idea," that is, a diminished vision, which undermines not only the glory of the Almighty by transforming him into an object, but also the human mind. Idolaters are thus narrow-minded people who look at what captivates their gaze, ultimately darkening it. And so, the great and wonderful things of this earth become idols and bring about forms of slavery — not for those who lack these things, but those who gorge themselves on them, leaving their neighbor in misery and sorrow. Liberation from idols is thus deliverance from power understood as dominion, from wealth turned into greed, from vanity masquerading as beauty.

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God does not abandon us when these temptations come, but reaches out to those who are weak and sorrowful, to those who believe that the idols of the world can save them. As St. Augustine taught, "man is liberated from their dominion when he believes in him who has given an example of humility" (De Civitate Dei, VII, 33). This example is the very life of Jesus, God made man for our salvation. Rather than punishing us, he destroyed evil through his love, thus fulfilling the solemn promise: "I will purify them; they shall be my people, and I will be their God" (Ez 37:23). The Lord changed the course of history by calling us from idolatry to true faith, from death to life.

Pope Leo XIV arrives at Louis II Stadium in Monte Carlo, Monaco, March 28, during his second

Pope Leo XIV arrives at Louis II Stadium in Monte Carlo, Monaco, March 28, during his second apostolic journey. The multisport stadium in the Fontvieille district was completed in 1985 and seats 18,523 people. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, in the face of the many injustices that afflict peoples and the wars that tear nations apart, the words of the prophet Jeremiah, proclaimed today as a psalm, resound with strength: "I will turn their mourning into joy, I will gladden them, I will comfort them after their sorrow" (Jer 31:13). Idolatry makes people slaves of each other, but purification from idolatry sanctifies them. It is a gift of grace that makes people children of God, and brothers and sisters to one another. This gift sheds light on our present, for the wars that stain it with blood are the fruit of the idolatry of power and money. Every life cut short wounds the body of Christ. Let us not grow accustomed to the clamor of weapons and images of war! Peace is not merely a balance of power; it is the work of purified hearts, of those who see others as brothers and sisters to be protected, not enemies to be defeated.

The Church in Monaco is called to bear witness to living in peace and with God's blessing. Therefore, dear friends, bring happiness to others through your faith, by manifesting authentic joy, which is not won through a wager, but shared through charity. God's love is the source of this joy: love for new and vulnerable life, which should always be welcomed and cared for; love for the young and the elderly, who should receive encouragement through life's challenges; love for the healthy and the sick, who are sometimes alone, and are always in need of attentive accompaniment. May the Virgin Mary, your patroness, help you provide a welcoming and dignified space for the little ones and the poor, and to promote integral and inclusive development.

In the world's prolonged Lent, when evil rages and idolatry makes hearts indifferent, the Lord prepares his Easter. Human beings are the sign of this event: Lazarus, for he was called from the tomb; we, who are forgiven sinners; the Risen Crucified One, who is the author of salvation. He is "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6), sustaining our pilgrimage and the Church's mission in the world, which is to give God's life. This task is sublime and seemingly impossible, unless we give our lives to our neighbor. It is an exciting and fruitful task, and the Gospel shines a light for our steps.

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