

Palm Sunday Shut Down? Historic Move Impacts One of Jerusalem's Most Sacred Sites

The world is in for quite a shock this Palm Sunday.

For the first time ever, a true shutdown of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is taking place, with Palm Sunday celebrations being completely canceled. While closures have taken place before, nothing like this has ever happened.

In a statement by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Pierbattista Pizzaballa, he shared the purpose behind this year's cancellation of Palm Sunday festivities and what that included. He wrote:

Due to the war, this year we were unable to experience the traditional Lenten journey in Jerusalem, with the solemn celebrations at the Holy Sepulcher and in the Holy Places of the Passion. Though we were able to pray and prepare personally, we felt the loss of the community journey towards Easter. Now we ask ourselves about the celebrations of Holy Week, the beating heart of our faith, in Jerusalem and at the Holy Sepulcher.

The restrictions imposed by the conflict and the events of recent days do not bode well for any imminent improvement. In constant dialogue with the competent authorities, together with the other Christian Churches, we are evaluating how, in the ways to be agreed upon, we can celebrate the central Mystery of our salvation in the heart of our Churches. The situation is constantly evolving, and it is not possible to provide definitive indications for the days to come; we will therefore be forced to coordinate on a day-to-day basis.



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Some of the specific celebrations for Palm Sunday that will not take place this year include:

- *The traditional Palm Sunday procession, which goes up to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, to Jerusalem is canceled. It will be replaced by a moment of prayer for the city of Jerusalem, at a location to be determined.*
- *The Chrism Mass is postponed to a date to be determined, as soon as the situation allows, possibly within the Easter season. The Dicastery for Divine Worship has already granted the necessary approval.*

Pizzaballa also noted that this separation in the Christian community at Easter “is a wound that adds to the many others inflicted by the conflict.”

This comes right as closures at the Western Wall and Al-Aqsa Mosque also occurred.

As the streets of Jerusalem fall silent on a day that has echoed with praise for centuries, this moment becomes more than a disruption—it becomes a sobering sign of the times. The very place that proclaims Christ's victory now stands still, reminding believers that faith is not confined to buildings or processions, but tested and refined in seasons of shaking. Scripture warns that Jerusalem would be a city of tension and trembling in the last days, and moments like this stir deeper questions about what is unfolding in our world.

Right now, we must choose to pray, to discern and to stand firm in the unshakable hope of Jesus Christ.

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