

**My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,**

**On this Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion our focus has to be on that word "Passion", which means "to suffer with". Jesus' passion was a long series of painful events. In the Gospel to have heard of Jesus' betrayal by his friend, Judas; his agony in the garden; his arrest and imprisonment; his betrayal by Peter; the flight of all but one of his apostles; his trial; the mocking and beating; crowned with thorns tearing through the flesh of his scalp, causing blood to blind his sight; his rejection by the very people who but days earlier shouted "Hosannas" in praise of him who then shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" his falling under the weight of the cross—his own death instrument; nails tearing through bone and muscle and flesh; and, finally, with his body shamefully brutalized, he gives up his spirit and dies.**

**St. Paul tells us today that this God-man, this Jesus, "though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness, and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." In other words, Jesus became one of us. He identifies with each of us in our passions.**

**With that understanding, my dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, I would like to suggest for your consideration that the passion of the millions of people who came out on Saturday to MARCH FOR OUR LIVES is the passion of Christ. The passion of our youth who are shouting "No" to death and "Yes" to life is the passion of Christ. The passion of those who are pleading "No more gun violence in our streets or in our schools" is the passion of Christ.**

**The passion of those who are screaming, "No to assault weapons of war designed and used only to kill human beings," is the passion of Christ. The passion of the brave voices challenging our political leaders who are supported by and in support of the gun lobby and Big Pharma too, who are flooding our streets and schools and homes with opioids; and their challenging us to no more support these politicians with our vote, this too is the passion of Christ. These battles we find ourselves in are our passion. They are Christ's passion in us.**

**Today we must remember that Jesus' passion was excruciating, but it ended not in death, but in life. While he was enduring his passion, it was struggle, rejection, pain, and death. But because Jesus endured to the end, he was transformed into glory in the resurrection. If you watched and listened to the passion of the purity, the honesty, the integrity of the young voices who cried out, not with hate, not with anger, but with love and respect and determination today, you have to be encouraged that our passion will also end in glory with Christ.**

**One of the most sacred words I heard spoken today was the call to all of us by a young man, himself a victim of the soullessness of gun violence "to become slaves to the pain of**

**others”. Isn’t that amazing! A young man, no more than 19 or 20, himself a survivor of gun violence, who lost a brother to gun violence, called all of us “to become slaves to the pain of others”. That is exactly what Jesus did. “He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance.” That’s what millions of our young people all across America did on Saturday. They “became slaves to the pain of others”. Dare we call ourselves Christians if we do less?**