

Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem

Easter Message 2009

“All I want is to know Christ and the power of His Resurrection.”

Philippians 3:10

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As we greet you all for Easter we would remind you that the Resurrection is not something tacked on to the end of our Christian Faith. Jesus and the Resurrection were at the very heart of our religion. Moreover, our knowledge of the Resurrection should encourage us to demonstrate hope even in our seemingly hopeless situations.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus had much to tell us about the Father's love and care – sometimes through His talking with vast crowds and sometimes in a more intimate gathering with the disciples or one or two friends. On other occasions He showed that love and care through the act of healing or miracles like feeding the multitude.

However, one aspect of His teaching which was very important was the fact that though life may have its problems and hardships nevertheless He would be with us to the end of time. So, belief in the Resurrection should be demonstrated daily in the way we relate to God and the way we live our lives.

The “power of the Resurrection” as St. Paul puts it when writing to the Church in Philippi must be demonstrated by each one of us – as far as possible, every day of our lives. For us, Jesus is not a figure from history but a living reality.

Whilst many were distressed by the recent suffering of the people of Gaza (and the many problems that remain) we as Church Leaders would want to express our profound gratitude to the thousands of Christians across the world who have expressed their solidarity with our people through prayer, gifts and financial support. That help has come from whole Churches, congregations and individuals. Now we would appreciate the support and encouragement of our fellow Christians and their Leaders, around the world, in working for justice in Gaza.

That support which gives hope to many serves to remind us that we can demonstrate our belief and love for our Living Lord by helping others in His name.

St. Peter spells this out for us in his first Epistle when he proclaims “Blessed be God the Father... who in His great mercy has given us a new birth... by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, so that we have a sure hope and the promise of an inheritance that can never be spoiled, or soiled and never fade away...” 1 Peter 1:3,4

As Christians we need to share the victory of Jesus in His Resurrection daily by the way we turn our back on temptation, pray daily to God and offer real penitence when it is needed.

In our care and concern for our people in this Holy Land we would express concern regarding the demolition of homes in areas of Jerusalem and express the hope that the Palestinians will be able to find a way to unite in order to work together for the future. Moreover, we as Heads of Churches would remind everyone of our vision of a Jerusalem shared by all Palestinians and Israelis – be they Christians, Muslims or Jews.

Naturally we are not unaware of other areas of the world where there is discord and need (very often food and medical supplies) believing that the Resurrection of Jesus should challenge us, not only in the way we live daily but in a readiness to demonstrate God's wish for all His people.

So, to local Christians as well as to congregations and their Leaders across the world we wish a truly Happy Easter and encourage all to demonstrate through their daily prayers and the way they live that:

Christ is risen; He is risen indeed!

Heavenly Father,

In the Resurrection of Jesus and the subsequent outpouring of your Holy Spirit you showed the disciples they had power and authority to conquer in your name; convince your people today of the gifts you have entrusted to them and so help them to transform the world to your great glory for Jesus sake. Amen.

April 2009

Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem
Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox
Patriarch Fouad Twal, R.C. Latin
Patriarch Torkom I Manoogian, Armenian Orthodox
Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, ofm, Custos of the Holy Land
Archbishop Anba Abraham, Coptic Orthodox
Archbishop Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian-Orthodox
Archbishop Abouna Matthias, Ethiopian Orthodox
Archbishop Paul Sayyah, Maronite
Bishop Suhail Dawani, Anglican
Bishop Mounib Younan, Lutheran
Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian-Catholic
Bishop Joseph Jules Zreyi, Greek Catholic
Fr. Rafael Minassian, Armenian Catholic

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