



PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF LOCAL CHURCHES OF JERUSALEM

Easter Message (2020) of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches of Jerusalem

“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!” (Luke 24.5-6 NKJV)

We, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches of Jerusalem, greet all our communities and faithful Christians around the world with the blessings of our Risen Lord and Liberator. The Feast of the Resurrection is a time of renewal of hope, restoration and victory over all forms of death and destruction. The whole world at this time lives in a state of fear, anxiety, and ambiguity as it faces the COVID-19 pandemic. Many countries are facing so much loss and grief, and infected cases are on the rise. Jerusalem, the City of the Resurrection and the Empty Tomb, is empty from pilgrims and churches are awaiting worshippers to return to proclaim the Easter message and the Alleluias.

The observance of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter this year is surrounded by so many questions, complexities, and uncertainties, especially in light of the suffering, illness, and death of so many people around the globe, resulting in the current lockdown. What does this coronavirus challenge mean to our people, communities, and institutions? What does this mean for our world economy and global health? We believe that our God is the God of the living and not of the dead. The Resurrection is our assurance that even in the midst of death and suffering, God is there and Christ's death gives us the victory. The Resurrection calls upon our human family toward a time of renewal and a way forward into the future, away from oppression, discrimination, hunger, and injustice.

This is not the first time that our world has experienced a pandemic. However, our present responsibility as people of faith and goodwill is to offer consolation for those who grieve, restoration and healing to those who are sick, and assistance to those who are in need. The Easter message this year coming from Jerusalem, is a reminder of the Resurrection itself: “He is not here, but is risen!” Our mission as Christians and as human beings is to support each other and to continue to pray for all people during this pandemic. Our human weakness is empowered by the Cross of Christ in the power of God; Saint Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians (13.4) writes: “For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God...” The mighty power and grace of the Resurrection offer us hope, healing, and victory over this pandemic and all dark situations.

Let us remember this Easter and remind all those around us that nothing will hinder the Good News of the Resurrection from resounding in Jerusalem and any other part of our world, even if this year there are no loud Alleluias. The Church is the Body of Christ, our Risen Lord, and we are the people of his pasture.

As Christians let us join together in proclaiming our Risen Lord: **“Christ is Risen! (Al Maseeh Qam! Christos Anesti! Christos harjav i merelotz! Pikhirstof aftonf! Christ est Ressuscité! Cristo è risorto! Meshiha qam! Christos t'ensah em' muhtan! Christus ist auferstanden!) He is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!”**

- +Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Patriarch Nourhan Manougian, Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator, Latin Patriarchate
- +Fr. Francesco Patton, ofm, Custos of the Holy Land
- +Archbishop Anba Antonious, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem
- +Vicar General Father Gabriel Daho, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Aba Embakob, Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Yaser AL-Ayash, Greek-Melkite-Catholic Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Mosa El-Hage, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate
- +Archbishop Suheil Dawani, Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East
- +Bishop Ibrahim Sani Azar, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
- +Father Ephram Samaan, Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
- +Rt Rev. Joseph Nersès Zabarian, Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate