



# PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF LOCAL CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

## **The Easter Message of the Heads of Churches of Jerusalem**

We the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, Convey our Easter greetings to all humanity and all creation, in the name of the Risen Lord- Jesus Christ.

Throughout our Lenten pilgrimage, the church invites us to join a journey of 'joyful sorrow'. During this time we travel a path of reflection, conversion, and preparation while we stand at the foot of the cross in anticipation of the light bursting forth, and turning sorrow into joy. This is the spiritual paradox of Holy Week, which draws us closer to God, and one another. Human suffering and agony are transformed into joy through the cross of Christ, where the divine and human realities meet and where Jesus overcomes death and suffering. Therefore the empty tomb here in Jerusalem is the embodiment of divine hope for all creation.

The Easter message is not exclusive to a specific race, people or nation. The day of the resurrection belongs to God because it is God's triumph over death offered to all creation, through the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This universal act of salvation invites our world today to look upon the suffering and pain of many people across the globe with compassion and mercy. This approach will not be achieved through building walls of alienation, intolerance, or rejection. Rather our world needs to build bridges so that acceptance, friendship and hospitality can become true realities for those who suffer and those whose human dignity is denied and are exposed to so many calamities.

These expressions of our faith need to become realities for millions of refugees around the world today who are strangers in foreign lands, people who are victims of violence, intolerance, and discrimination, while others live under oppression and injustice in their own homelands. The power of the radiant light of Easter we pray must shine in all these places, and opens the eyes and hearts of the whole world to these realities. Living the risen life, we are called to be light and hope in these dark places.

Easter like many other Biblical events, has a special resonance for the people of this region. The empty tomb and its surroundings become the omphalos ('navel of the world'): reminding us of the permanent connection between God and his creation. The city of Jerusalem, as the city of the Resurrection, is the city of Hope for the region, and for the whole world. Today our hope lies in a just peace for the people of the Holy Land, and the whole of the Middle East, the city of peace deserves to live in peace through living together as people of God, who respect every human person. We believe that the light of Easter must surely shine on us all. God reconciled the world to himself in Jesus Christ, and we are called to the ministry of reconciliation as ambassadors for Christ in the world.

May the joy of Easter fill our minds with gladness, and banish sorrow from our hearts and from our lives. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

- +Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Patriarch Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarchate
- +Patriarch Nourhan Manougian, Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, ofm, Custos of the Holy Land
- +Archbishop Anba Antonious, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem
- +Archbishop Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Aba Embakob, Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Joseph-Jules Zerey, Greek-Melkite-Catholic Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Mosa El-Hage, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate
- +Archbishop Suheil Dawani, Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East
- +Bishop Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
- +Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
- +Msgr. Georges Dankaye', Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

(Easter 2016)