

Pope Francis' Easter prayer

| Mar. 31, 2013

Dear brothers and sisters in Rome and throughout the world, Happy Easter!

What a joy it is for me to announce this message: Christ is risen! I would like it to go out to every house and every family, especially where the suffering is greatest, in hospitals, in prisons ?

Most of all, I would like it to enter every heart, for it is there that God wants to sow this Good News: Jesus is risen, there is hope for you, you are no longer in the power of sin, of evil! Love has triumphed, mercy has been victorious!

We too, like the women who were Jesus' disciples, who went to the tomb and found it empty, may wonder what this event means (cf. Lk 24:4). What does it mean that Jesus is risen? It means that the love of God is stronger than evil and death itself; it means that the love of God can transform our lives and let those desert places in our hearts bloom.

This same love for which the Son of God became man and followed the way of humility and self-giving to the very end, down to hell - to the abyss of separation from God - this same merciful love has flooded with light the dead body of Jesus and transfigured it, has made it pass into eternal life. Jesus did not return to his former life, to earthly life, but entered into the glorious life of God and he entered there with our humanity, opening us to a future of hope.

This is what Easter is: it is the exodus, the passage of human beings from slavery to sin and evil to the freedom of love and goodness. Because God is life, life alone, and his glory is the living man (cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 4,20,5-7).

Dear brothers and sisters, Christ died and rose once for all, and for everyone, but the power of the Resurrection, this passover from slavery to evil to the freedom of goodness, must be accomplished in every age, in our concrete existence, in our everyday lives. How many deserts, even today, do human beings need to cross! Above all, the desert within, when we have no love for God or neighbour, when we fail to realize that we are guardians of all that the Creator has given us and continues to give us. God's mercy can make even the driest land become a garden, can restore life to dry bones (cf. Ez 37:1-14).

So this is the invitation which I address to everyone: Let us accept the grace of Christ's Resurrection! Let us be renewed by God's mercy, let us be loved by Jesus, let us enable the power of his love to transform our lives too; and let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish.

And so we ask the risen Jesus, who turns death into life, to change hatred into love, vengeance into forgiveness, war into peace. Yes, Christ is our peace, and through him we implore peace for all the world.

Peace for the Middle East, and particularly between Israelis and Palestinians, who struggle to find the road of agreement, that they may willingly and courageously resume negotiations to end a conflict that has lasted all too long. Peace in Iraq, that every act of violence may end, and above all for dear Syria, for its people torn by conflict and for the many refugees who await help and comfort. How much blood has been shed! And how much suffering must there still be before a political solution to the crisis will be found?

Peace for Africa, still the scene of violent conflicts. In Mali, may unity and stability be restored; in Nigeria, where attacks sadly continue, gravely threatening the lives of many innocent people, and where great numbers of persons, including children, are held hostage by terrorist groups. Peace in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and in the Central African Republic, where many have been forced to leave their homes and continue to live in fear.

Peace in Asia, above all on the Korean peninsula: may disagreements be overcome and a renewed spirit of reconciliation grow.

Peace in the whole world, still divided by greed looking for easy gain, wounded by the selfishness which threatens human life and the family, selfishness that continues in human trafficking, the most extensive form of slavery in this twenty-first century. Peace to the whole world, torn apart by violence linked to drug trafficking and by the iniquitous exploitation of natural resources! Peace to this our Earth! Made the risen Jesus bring comfort to the victims of natural disasters and make us responsible guardians of creation.

Dear brothers and sisters, to all of you who are listening to me, from Rome and from all over of the world, I address the invitation of the Psalm: "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for his steadfast love endures for ever. Let Israel say: "His steadfast love endures for ever" (Ps 117:1-2).

Dear brothers and sisters, who have come from all over the world to this Square, the heart of Christianity, and all of you joining us via communications media, I renew my wishes for a Happy Easter! Bring to your families and your nations the message of joy of hope and peace that each year is powerfully renewed on this day. May the Risen Lord, who defeated sin and death, support us all especially the weakest and those most in need. Thank you for your presence and the witness of your faith. A thought and a particular thanks for the gift of these beautiful flowers from the Netherlands. I affectionately repeat to all of you: May the Risen Christ guide you and all humanity on the paths of justice, love and peace!

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