

The splendour of God

In your resurrection, O Christ, let heaven and earth rejoice!” (Liturgy of the Hours).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Rome and across the world,



Easter morning brings us news that is ancient yet ever new: Christ is risen! The echo of this event, which issued forth from Jerusalem twenty centuries ago, continues to resound in the Church, deep in whose heart lives the vibrant faith of Mary, Mother of Jesus, the faith of Mary Magdalene and the other women who first discovered the empty tomb, and the faith of Peter and the other Apostles.

Right down to our own time — even in these days of advanced communications technology — the faith of Christians is based on that same news, on the testimony of those sisters and brothers who saw firstly the stone that had been rolled away from the empty tomb and then the mysterious messengers who testified that Jesus, the Crucified, was risen. And then Jesus himself, the Lord and Master, living and tangible, appeared to Mary Magdalene, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and finally to all eleven, gathered in the Upper Room (cf. Mk 16:9-14).

The Resurrection of Christ is not the fruit of speculation or mystical experience: it is an event which, while it surpasses history, nevertheless happens at a precise moment in history and leaves an indelible mark upon it. The light which dazzled the guards keeping watch over Jesus' tomb has traversed time and space. It is a different kind of light, a divine light, that has rent asunder the darkness of death and has brought to the world the splendour of God, the splendour of Truth and Goodness.

Just as the sun's rays in springtime cause the buds on the branches of the trees to sprout and open up, so the radiance that streams forth from Christ's resurrection gives strength and meaning to every human hope, to every expectation, wish and plan. Hence the entire cosmos is rejoicing today, caught up in the springtime of humanity, which gives voice to creation's silent hymn of praise. The Easter Alleluia, resounding in the Church as she makes her pilgrim way through the world, expresses the silent exultation of the universe and above all the longing of every human soul that is sincerely open to God, giving thanks to him for his infinite goodness, beauty and truth.

“In your Resurrection, O Christ, let Heaven and earth rejoice”. To this summons to praise, which

arises today from the heart of the Church, the “heavens” respond fully: the hosts of angels, saints and blessed souls join with one voice in our exultant song. In Heaven all is peace and gladness. But alas, it is not so on earth! Here, in this world of ours, the Easter alleluia still contrasts with the cries and laments that arise from so many painful situations: deprivation, hunger, disease, war, violence. Yet it was for this that Christ died and rose again! He died on account of sin, including ours today, he rose for the redemption of history, including our own. So my message today is intended for everyone, and, as a prophetic proclamation, it is intended especially for peoples and communities who are undergoing a time of suffering, that the Risen Christ may open up for them the path of freedom, justice and peace.

May the Land which was the first to be flooded by the light of the Risen One rejoice. May the splendour of Christ reach the peoples of the Middle East, so that the light of peace and of human dignity may overcome the darkness of division, hate and violence. In the current conflict in Libya, may diplomacy and dialogue take the place of arms and may those who suffer as a result of the conflict be given access to humanitarian aid. In the countries of northern Africa and the Middle East, may all citizens, especially young people, work to promote the common good and to build a society where poverty is defeated and every political choice is inspired by respect for the human person. May help come from all sides to those fleeing conflict and to refugees from various African countries who have been obliged to leave all that is dear to them; may people of good will open their hearts to welcome them, so that the pressing needs of so many of our brothers and sisters will be met with a concerted response in a spirit of solidarity; and may our words of comfort and appreciation reach all those who make such generous efforts and offer an exemplary witness in this regard.

May peaceful coexistence be restored among the peoples of Ivory Coast, where there is an urgent need to tread the path of reconciliation and pardon, in order to heal the deep wounds caused by the recent violence. May Japan find consolation and hope as it faces the dramatic consequences of the recent earthquake, along with other countries that in recent months have been tested by natural disasters which have sown pain and anguish.

May heaven and earth rejoice at the witness of those who suffer opposition and even persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ. May the proclamation of his victorious resurrection deepen their courage and trust.

Dear brothers and sisters! The risen Christ is journeying ahead of us towards the new heavens and the new earth (cf. Rev 21:1), in which we shall all finally live as one family, as sons of the same Father. He is with us until the end of time. Let us walk behind him, in this wounded world, singing Alleluia. In our hearts there is joy and sorrow, on our faces there are smiles and tears. Such is our earthly reality. But Christ is risen, he is alive and he walks with us. For this reason we sing and we walk, faithfully carrying out our task in this world with our gaze fixed on Heaven.

Happy Easter to all of you!

Osservatore Romano