DAILY COMPASS
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HOLY EASTER

Christ is risen, the proclamation the world needs

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The following is the full text of the homily prepared by Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Patriarch of Latin Jerusalem, for the Easter Vigil (20 April 2025) in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre.

Brothers and sisters,
may the Lord give you peace!

Once again this year we have come here, to the foot of Christ's empty Tomb, to celebrate the end of Passion Week, which is also the heart of the life of the Church, of our faith. It is our only certainty that underlies our existence: Christ is risen!
We want to ask ourselves about the meaning of this celebration and this day in the dramatic historical context in which we live. What does it mean for the Church in Jerusalem today to encounter and bear witness to the Risen Christ?

The Gospel speaks of night and darkness, but these no longer cause fear, for they will soon give way to the light of the approaching morning. It speaks of mighty stone that has been overturned and no longer contains anything. Of running disciples. Of cloths - signs of death - that no longer bind anyone. Of eyes that see, of hearts that believe, and of Scripture revealed for full understanding. It is a Gospel full of vigor and life. And it speaks of us!

The Gospel invites us not to lock ourselves in our cenacles and measure our vocation against the many personal or collective fears, but invites us to read the reality, that of our Church, in the light of the encounter with the Risen Lord, even today. I would say, especially today.

We are the Church of Golgotha, that is true. However, the Crucified Christ is not only a symbol of suffering, but above all of love and forgiveness. Therefore, we want to be the Church of love, which never sleeps, which is constantly vigilant, which has the ability to forgive and give life, always, unconditionally.

We are the church that guards the Upper Room, but not the one with locked doors and disciples paralyzed by fear. The Gospel tells of Peter and John running to meet the Risen Lord. The Upper Room is the place of the Risen Christ, who overcomes the locked doors and gives the Spirit, and who first says: "Peace be with you!" And He asks us to be a church that overcomes walls and closed doors, physical and human barriers. That believes, that proclaims, that makes peace, but "not as the world gives it (John 14:27). We have seen how the world argues, thinks and evaluates. And how poor the world's idea of peace is, dare I say even offensive! We have seen too often how proclamations of peace have been betrayed and insulted. The Church will have to build the peace that is the fruit of the Spirit who gives life and confidence, again and again and tirelessly. And which counters the human logic of power, the dynamics of violence and war, with a

dynamic of life, justice and forgiveness.

The proclamation of the resurrection is not a proclamation of immortality; it does not tell us that we will not experience death in its various forms. We will be clothed with immortality at the return of Christ when he comes to judge the world (cf. 1 Cor 15:54). The resurrection that we want to proclaim today is first and foremost a proclamation of a new, radiant life that rises from the ashes of death and its stings. In other words, a death that does not escape the misery of the world, but overcomes it. The resurrection is God's "yes", even when the world cries out "no". Even and despite the many "no's" of this time, a world increasingly caught in a spiral of fear and revenge, of logics of power and exclusion, we want to be God's "yes" in this world, those who proclaim through their lives and works that they belong to the world willed and created by God, in which *"love and truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss"* (Psalm 85:11). And who know how to testify to the peace of the Upper Room because they have encountered it.

The resurrection is therefore not only joy, proclamation, gift and experience. It is also a responsibility

If we are Christian, indeed, if we believe in Christ, if we have encountered the Risen One. If we have risen with him, if we have experienced redemption and new life, then proclaiming the resurrection becomes a duty for us. It is not an optional extra. And it is our responsibility to do so, not *only* when death surrounds us, but *especially* when death surrounds us. Here and now, in this particular context, we are called to say who we are and to whom we belong. To say with strength and determination that we are not afraid, that we will continue to be the small remnant that nevertheless makes a difference: building relationships, opening wide closed doors, tearing down walls of separation. The Risen One, *"is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh"* (Eph. 2:14).

We stand here before the empty tomb of Christ, which is a powerful sign and proclamation. It reminds us that no matter how unfair our trials, how humiliating is to be on the Golgotha, how heavy and painful the cross is. The empty tomb of Christ is a sign and a proof to us that we will see justice, that hope will be fulfilled, that peace will be confirmed.

We have no illusions. We know what is happening among us and in the world, and we do not have much hope in the ability of those in power to find solutions, which unfortunately seem to be ever more distant. And we cannot but express our concern

about a possible further deterioration of the political situation and the worsening humanitarian catastrophe that is unfolding, especially in Gaza. I am thinking in particular of our small community, which for many months has become a sign and symbol of solidarity and hope, a small boat anchored to life, in a sea of pain and suffering.

We seem to be walking on a never-ending Via Dolorosa, characterized by constant trials. But I also know that on the Via Dolorosa there are the women of Jerusalem who weep for Jesus in silence. There is Simon of Cyrene, who intervenes to share the burden of the cross. There is Veronica, who wipes his face. The path of suffering is never lonely, because on this path compassion is awakened and love takes shape. So let us remember our brothers and sisters in Gaza and all those who are suffering from the war, and let us strive to be mothers, Veronicas, Simons of Cyrene, for them and for those in need, and help them to share their burden. Let us remember to offer gestures of dignity and care to those in our midst. This is our way of proclaiming life and resurrection.

It is not about being naïve and visionary. It is about having faith, firmly believing that God is guiding history. Despite the smallness of human beings, God will not allow the world to be lost. *"I did not come to condemn the world, but to save it"* (John 12:47). Even if it seems to us that we are still on the Via Dolorosa, we know that the end is here, at the encounter with the empty Tomb of Christ. And this certainty always accompanies us.

Following Jesus, even in our difficult trials, is as compelling as it gets. So let us not forget that the Gospel speaks of an overturned stone. Therefore, even though there are so many problems and difficulties that beset us, let us affirm with serene confidence and clear determination that nothing keeps us trapped in our tombs, that we are a living Church that does not give up in the face of the stones that lie before us. The Gospel invites us to open ourselves, to look out and to run, like the women and the disciples, to proclaim that there is nothing more beautiful than living with the Risen Christ, even today, everywhere and despite everything: in Jerusalem, in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, in Amman, in Nicosia and even in Gaza.

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