



The Holy See

***URBI ET ORBI MESSAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II
EASTER SUNDAY 1999***

Easter, 4 April 1999

1. *"Haec est dies quam fecit Dominus".*

"This is the day that the Lord has made".

In the Book of Genesis we read that in the beginning

there were the days of creation,

during which God brought to completion

"the heavens and the earth and all their host" (2:1);

he shaped man in his own image and likeness,

and on the seventh day he ceased from all his work (cf. 2:2).

During the Easter Vigil

we listened to this evocative account,

which takes us back to the origins of the universe,

when Yahweh made man the steward of creation,

and made him a sharer in his own life.

He created man to live the fullness of life.

But sin intruded and with sin

death entered human history.

With sin, man became separated as it were from the days of creation.² Who could unite earth to heaven once more,

and man to his Creator?

The answer to the unsettling question

comes to us from Christ,

who, breaking the chains of death,

made his heavenly light shine upon men.

That is why this morning we can cry out to the world:

"This is the day that the Lord has made".

It is a new day: Christ has entered

human history and changed its course.

It is the mystery of the new creation,
of which the liturgy of these days
has made us the astounded witnesses.

By his sacrifice on the Cross

Christ has annulled the condemnation of the ancient sin,
and brought believers close to the Father's love once more.

"O happy fault that gained for us so great a Redeemer!",
sings the Easter Proclamation.

Accepting death, Christ has conquered death;
by his death he has destroyed Adam's sin.

His victory is the day of our redemption.³ *"Haec est dies quam fecit Dominus"*.

The day that the Lord has made
is the day of wonder.

At dawn on the first day after the Sabbath,

"Mary Magdalen and the other Mary
went to visit the tomb" (Mt 28:1)

and were the first to find the tomb empty.

Privileged witnesses of the Lord's Resurrection,
they brought the news of it to the Apostles.

Peter and John ran to the tomb,
they saw and they believed.

Christ had wanted them as his disciples,
now they become his witnesses.

Thus their calling is complete:

they are witnesses of the most extraordinary event in history,

the empty tomb and the encounter with the Risen One.⁴ *"Haec est dies quam fecit Dominus"*.

This is the day when, like the disciples,

every believer is invited to proclaim

the amazing newness of the Gospel.

But how can this message of joy and hope be made to resound
when many parts of the world are submerged in sorrow and tears?

How can we speak of peace,

when people are forced to flee,

when they are hunted down

and their homes are burnt to the ground?

When the heavens are rent by the din of war,

when the whistle of shells is heard around people's homes

and the ravaging fire of bombs consumes towns and villages?

Enough of this cruel shedding of human blood!

When will there be an end to the diabolic spiral

of revenge and senseless fratricidal conflicts?⁵ From the Risen Lord I invoke the precious gift of peace

above all for the devastated land of Kosovo,
 where tears and blood continue to mingle
 in a tragic spectacle of hatred and violence.

I think of those who have been killed, of those made homeless,
 of those who have been torn from their families,
 of those who being forced to flee.

Let the solidarity of everyone be mobilized,
 so that finally brotherhood and peace may begin to speak once more!

How can we be insensitive to the sorrowful flood
 of men and women from Kosovo
 who are knocking at our door, begging help?

On this holy day, I feel duty bound
 to make a heartfelt appeal
 to the Authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,
 to allow a humanitarian corridor to be opened,
 in order for help to be brought to the mass of people
 gathered at the border of Kosovo.

There can be no frontiers to impede the work of solidarity;
 corridors of hope are always an imperative.⁶ My thoughts go then to the regions of Africa,
 where the distressing fires of war are slow to disappear;
 to the countries of Asia where dangerous social tensions
 are far from abating;
 and to the countries of Latin America,
 committed to advancing on their labourious and uneven path
 towards goals of greater justice and democracy.

In the face of persisting evidence of war,
 and the countless grievous defeats of life,
 Christ, the conqueror of sin and death,
 urges us not to surrender.

Peace is possible, peace is a duty,
 peace is a prime responsibility of everyone!

May the dawn of the third millennium see the coming
 of a new era in which respect for every man and woman
 and fraternal solidarity among peoples
 will, with God's help, overcome

the culture of hatred, of violence, of death.⁶ On this day the Church throughout the world
 exhorts us to joy:

"Today has come the happy day, awaited by each of us.

This day Christ has risen, Alleluia, Alleluia!"

(17th century Polish song).

"Haec est dies quam fecit Dominus:

exultemus et laetemur in ea”.

“This is the day that the Lord has made:

let us rejoice and be glad”.

Yes, today is a day of great exultation.

Mary rejoices, after being associated on Calvary,

with the redeeming Cross of her Son:

“Regina caeli, laetare”.

Together with you, Mother of the Risen One,

the whole Church gives thanks to God

for the marvel of new life

which Easter offers each year,

to Rome and to the entire world, *Urbi et Orbi!*

Christ is the new life:

He, the Risen One!