



The Holy See

URBI ET ORBI MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II

Easter Sunday, 31 March 2002

1. *"Venit Jesus... et dixit eis: 'Pax vobis!'"*

"Jesus came... and said to them, "Peace be with you" (Jn 20:19).

Christ's blessing resounds today,

on this most solemn day: Peace be with you!

Peace to all the men and women of the world!

Christ is truly *risen*,

and brings *peace* to all!

This is the "good news" of Easter.

Today is the new day, "made by the Lord" (Ps 117:24),

which, in the glorious body of the Risen One,

restores to the world, wounded by sin,

its original beauty,

radiant with new splendour.2. *"Death with life contended;*

combat strangely ended!"

After the terrible battle Christ returns victorious

and advances upon the stage of history

announcing the Good News:

"I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25),

"I am the light of the world" (Jn 9:5).

His message can be summarized in one word:

"Pax vobis – Peace be with you!"

His peace is the *fruit of the victory*

over sin and death

which he gained at a high price.3. *"I leave you peace, I give you my peace.*

Not as the world gives it

do I give it to you" (Jn 14:27).

Peace "in the manner of the world"

– the experience of every age shows it –
 is often a precarious balance of powers,
 that sooner or later turn against one another once more.

The peace which is the gift of the Risen Christ
 is deep and complete, and can reconcile man
 with God, with himself and with creation.

Many religions proclaim
 that peace is a gift from God.

We saw this again
 at the recent Meeting at Assisi.

May all the world's believers
 join their efforts to build
 a more just and fraternal humanity;
 may they work tirelessly
 to ensure that religious convictions may never be
 the cause of division and hatred, but only and always
 a source of brotherhood, harmony, love.⁴ Christian communities on every continent,
 with trepidation and hope I ask you
 to proclaim that Jesus is truly risen,
 and to work so that his peace
 may bring an end to the tragic sequence of atrocities and killings
 that bloody the Holy Land,
 plunged again in these very days
 into horror and despair.

It seems that war has been declared on peace!

But nothing is resolved by war,
 it only brings greater suffering and death,
 nothing is resolved through reprisal and retaliation.

This is a truly great tragedy:

no one can remain silent and inactive,
 no political or religious leader!

Denunciation must be followed by practical acts of solidarity
 that will help everyone to rediscover mutual respect
 and return to frank negotiation.

In that Land Christ died and rose from the dead,
 and left the empty tomb
 as a silent but eloquent attestation.

By breaking down in himself the hostility
 the dividing wall between people,
 he has reconciled all through the Cross (cf. *Eph 2:14-16*),
 and now he commits us, his disciples,

to remove every reason for hatred and revenge.⁵ How many members of the human family are still subject to misery and violence!

In how many corners of the world do we hear the cry of those who implore help, because they are suffering and dying: from Afghanistan, terribly afflicted in recent months and now stricken by a disastrous earthquake, to so many other countries of the world where social imbalances and rival ambitions still torment countless numbers of our brothers and sisters.

Men and women of the third millennium!

Let me repeat to you:

open your hearts to Christ, crucified and risen, who comes with the offer of peace!

Wherever the Risen Christ enters,

he brings with him true peace!

May that peace enter, first of all, every human heart, the unsoundable depth, not easy to heal (cf. *Jer* 17:9).

May it permeate relations between all sectors of society, between different peoples, tongues and mentalities, bringing everywhere the leaven of solidarity and love.

6. And you, Risen Lord,

who have overcome tribulation and death, grant us your peace!

We know that peace *will be fully revealed at the end of time*, when you come in glory.

Nevertheless, wherever you are present peace is *already* at work in the world.

This is our conviction,

founded on you, who today have risen from the dead, the Lamb sacrificed for our salvation!

You ask us to keep alive in the world the flame of hope.

On this radiant day,

the Church sings with faith and joy:

"Christ, my hope, has risen!"

Yes, Christ is risen, and with him has risen our hope! *Alleluia!*