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# Holy Week with Pope Francis (2024)

Homilies from Pope Francis' liturgical celebrations during the Paschal Triduum: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday.

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## **Holy Thursday: Chrism Mass**

“The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him” (*Lk* 4:20). This passage of the Gospel is striking. It always makes us imagine that moment of silence when every eye was on Jesus, in a mixture of wonder and hesitance. We know, however, what happened next. After Jesus had unmasked the false expectations of his townspeople, they were “filled with rage” (*Lk* 4:28), got up and drove him out of town. They had indeed looked upon Jesus, but their hearts were not prepared to change at his word. They lost the occasion of a lifetime.

Tonight, Holy Thursday, will offer us *a very different exchange of looks*. It involves Peter, the first Pastor of our Church. Peter too initially refused to accept the “unmasking” words that the Lord had spoken to him: “You will deny me three times” (*Mk 14:30*). As a result, he “lost sight” of Jesus and denied him at the cock’s crow. Then, however, “the Lord turned and looked at Peter” and he “remembered the word of the Lord... and went out and wept bitterly” (*Lk 22:61-62*). His eyes were flooded with tears that, rising up from a wounded heart, liberated him from his false notions and his self-assurance. Those bitter tears changed his life.

Jesus’ words and actions in the course of those years had not altered Peter’s expectations, so similar to those of the people of Nazareth. He too was expecting a political Messiah, powerful, forceful and decisive. Scandalized at the sight of Jesus,

powerless and submitting passively to his arrest, he said, “I do not know him!” (*Lk 22:57*). How true that was: Peter did not know Jesus. He would only begin to know him when, at the dark moment of his denial, he yielded to tears of shame and tears of repentance. And he would know Jesus in truth when, “hurt because Jesus said to him a third time, ‘Do you love me?’”, he would let the Lord’s gaze penetrate his entire being. Then, from saying, “I do not know him”, he was able to say, “Lord, you know everything” (*Jn 21:17*).

Dear brother priests, the healing of the heart of Peter, the healing of the apostle, the healing of the pastor, came about when, grief-stricken and repentant, he allowed himself to be forgiven by Jesus. That healing took place amid tears, bitter weeping, and the sorrow that leads to renewed love. For this reason, I have felt the need to share with you a few

thoughts on an aspect of the spiritual life that has been somewhat neglected, yet remains essential. Even the word I am going to use today is somewhat old-fashioned, yet well worthy of reflecting on. That word is *compunction*.

The origin of the term has to do with *piercing*. Compunction is “a piercing of the heart” that is painful and evokes tears of repentance. Here, another episode from the life of Saint Peter can help us. His heart having been pierced by Jesus’ gaze and his words, Peter, now purified and set afire by the Holy Spirit, proclaimed on the day of Pentecost to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: “God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified” (cf. *Acts* 2:36). His hearers, recognizing both the evil that they had done and the salvation that the Lord was offering them, were themselves “cut to the heart” (*Acts* 2:37).

That is what compunction is: not a sense of guilt that makes us discouraged or obsessed with our unworthiness, but a beneficial “piercing” that purifies and heals the heart. Once we recognize our sin, our hearts can be opened to the working of the Holy Spirit, the source of living water that wells up within us and brings tears to our eyes. Those who are willing to be “unmasked” and let God’s gaze pierce their heart receive the gift of those tears, the holiest waters after those of baptism. [1] This is my desire for you, dear brother priests.

Yet we need to understand clearly what it means to *weep for ourselves*. It does not mean *weeping in self-pity*, as we are so often tempted to do. As, for example, when we are disappointed or upset that our hopes are frustrated, when we feel misunderstood, perhaps even by our fellow priests and our superiors. Or

when we take an odd and morbid pleasure in brooding over wrongs received, feeling sorry for ourselves, convinced that we were not treated as we deserved or fearing that the future will hold further unpleasant surprises. This, as Saint Paul teaches us, is “worldly grief”, as opposed to “Godly grief”. [2]

*Weeping for ourselves*, on the other hand, means seriously repenting for saddening God by our sins; recognizing that we always remain in God’s debt, admitting that we have strayed from the path of holiness and fidelity to the love of the One who gave his life for us. [3] It means looking within and repenting of our ingratitude and inconstancy, and acknowledging with sorrow our duplicity, dishonesty and hypocrisy. Clerical hypocrisy, dear brothers, is something we fall into all too often. We need to be attentive to this reality. And turning our gaze once

more to the crucified Lord and letting ourselves be touched by his love, which always forgives and raises up, never disappointing the trust of those who hope in him. Tears thus well up and, in flowing down our cheeks, descend to purify our heart.

Compunction demands effort, but bestows peace. It is not a source of anxiety but of healing for the soul, since it acts as a balm upon the wounds of sin, preparing us to receive the caress of the Lord, who transforms the “broken, contrite heart” (*Ps* 51:19), once it has been softened by tears. Compunction is thus the antidote to “*sclerocardia*”, that *hardness of heart* so often condemned by Jesus (cf. *Mk* 3:5; 10:5). For without repentance and sorrow, the heart hardens: first, it becomes stiff, impatient with problems and indifferent to persons, and then cold, impassive and

impenetrable, then finally turns to stone. Yet just as drops of water can wear down a stone, so tears can slowly soften stony hearts. In this way, a “good sorrow” miraculously leads to sweetness.

Here we can begin to see why the masters of the spiritual life insist on the importance of compunction. Saint Benedict says that, “in tears and groaning daily we should confess in prayer to God the sins of our past”, [4] and observes that in prayer, “it is not by many words that we are graciously heard, but by our purity of heart and tears of compunction”. [5] Saint John Chrysostom notes that a single tear can extinguish a blaze of sins, [6] while the *Imitation of Christ* tells us: “Give yourself to compunction of heart”, since “through levity of heart and neglect of our shortcomings, we do not feel the sorrows of our soul”. [7] Compunction is the remedy for

this, since it brings us back to the truth about ourselves, so that the depths of our being *sinner*s can reveal the infinitely greater reality of our being *pardoned* by grace – the joy of being pardoned. It is not surprising, then, that Isaac of Nineveh could say: “The one who forgets the greatness of his sins forgets the greatness of God’s mercy in his regard”. [8]

To be sure, dear brothers and sisters, all interior renewal is born of the encounter between our human misery and God’s mercy, and it develops through poverty of spirit, which allows the Holy Spirit to enrich us. Here too, we can think of the clear teaching of many spiritual masters, including, once again, Saint Isaac: “Those who acknowledge their sins... are greater than those who by their prayers raise the dead. Those who weep for an hour over their sins are greater than those who serve the

whole world by contemplation... Those who are blessed with self-knowledge are greater than those blessed with the vision of angels". [9]

Brother priests, let us look to ourselves and ask ourselves what part compunction and tears play in our examination of conscience and our prayers. Let us ask whether, with the years that pass, our tears increase. In nature, the older we become, the less we weep. In the life of the spirit, however, we are asked to become like children (cf. *Mt 18:3*): if we fail to weep, we regress and grow old within, whereas those whose prayer becomes simpler and deeper, grounded in adoration and wonder in the presence of God, grow and mature. They become less attached to themselves and more attached to Christ. Made poor in spirit, they draw closer to the poor, those who are most dear to God. As Saint Francis of Assisi wrote in his

testament, those whom we used to keep at a distance now become our dear companions. [10] So it is that those who feel compunction of heart increasingly feel themselves brothers and sisters to all the sinners of the world, setting aside airs of superiority and harsh judgments, and filled with a burning desire to show love and make reparation.

Dear brothers, another aspect of compunction is *solidarity*. A heart that is docile, liberated by the spirit of the Beatitudes, becomes naturally prone to practice compunction towards others. Rather than feeling anger and scandal at the failings of our brothers and sisters, it weeps for their sins. There occurs a sort of reversal, where the natural tendency to be indulgent with ourselves and inflexible with others is overturned and, by God's grace, we become strict with ourselves and merciful towards others. The Lord seeks, above all in

those consecrated to him, men and women who bewail the sins of the Church and the world, and become intercessors on behalf of all. How many heroic witnesses in the Church have shown us this way! We think of the monks of the desert, in East and West; the constant intercession, in groaning and tears, of Saint Gregory of Narek; the Franciscan offering for unrequited Love; and those many priests who, like the Curé of Ars, lived lives of penance for the salvation of others. Dear brothers, this is not poetry, but priesthood!

Dear brother priests, from us, his shepherds, the Lord desires not harshness but love, and tears for those who have strayed. If our hearts feel compunction, the difficult situations, the sufferings and the lack of faith that we encounter daily will make us respond not with condemnation, but with perseverance and mercy. How

greatly we need to be set free from harshness and recrimination, selfishness and ambition, rigidity and frustration, in order to entrust ourselves completely to God, and to find in him the calm that shields us from the storms raging all around us! Let us pray, intercede and shed tears for others; in this way, we will allow the Lord to work his miracles. And let us not fear, for he will surely surprise us!

Our ministry will help in this. Today, in our secular societies, we run the risk of being hyperactive and at the same time feeling inadequate, with the result that we lose enthusiasm and are tempted to “pull up the oars”, to take refuge in complaining and we forget that God is infinitely greater than all our problems. When that happens, we become bitter and prickly, always badmouthing and complaining about things. Whereas if bitterness and compunction are

directed not to the world but to our own hearts, the Lord will not fail to visit us and raise us up. That is exactly what the *Imitation of Christ* tells us to do: “Busy yourself not about the affairs of others, and do not become entangled in the business of your superiors. Keep an eye primarily on yourself, and admonish yourself instead of your friends. If you do not enjoy the favour of men, do not let it sadden you; yet consider it a serious matter if you do not conduct yourself as well or as carefully as is becoming”. [11]

Lastly, let me emphasize another essential point: compunction is not so much our work but a *grace*, and, as such, it must be *sought in prayer*. Repentance is God’s gift and the work of the *Holy Spirit*. As an aid to cultivating a spirit of repentance, I would share two bits of advice. First, let us stop looking at our life and our vocation in terms of efficiency and

immediate results, and being caught up in present needs and expectations; instead let us view things against the greater horizon of the past and the future. The past, by recalling God's fidelity – God is faithful –, being mindful of his forgiveness and firmly anchored in his love. The future, by looking to the eternal goal to which we are called, the ultimate purpose of our lives. Broadening our horizons, dear brothers, helps to expand our hearts, to spend time with the Lord and to experience compunction. My second bit of advice follows from the first. Let us rediscover our need to cultivate prayer that is not obligatory and functional, but freely chosen, tranquil and prolonged. Brothers, how is your prayer life? Let us return to adoration. Have you been forgetting to adore the Lord? Let us return to the prayer of the heart. Let us repeat: *Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.* Let us sense

God's grandeur even as we contemplate our own sinfulness, and open our hearts to the healing power of his gaze. Then we will rediscover the wisdom of Holy Mother Church in having our prayer always begin in the words of the poor man who cries: *God, come to my assistance!*

Dear brothers, allow me to conclude by returning to Saint Peter and his tears. The altar we see above his tomb makes us think of how often we priests – who daily say: “*Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you*” – have disappointed and grieved the One who loved us so greatly as to make our hands the instruments of his presence. We do well, then, to repeat those prayers we say in silence: “*With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, Lord*”, and “*Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin*”. Yet in every way, brothers,

we are comforted by the certainty spoken of in today's liturgy: the Lord, consecrated by his anointing (cf. *Lk* 4:18), came "to bind up the brokenhearted" (*Is* 61:1). If hearts are broken, surely they can be bound up and healed by Jesus. Thank you, dear priests, for your open and docile hearts. Thank you for all your hard work and your tears. Thank you for bringing the miracle of God's mercy. Always forgive. Be merciful. Bring God's mercy to our brothers and sisters in today's world. Dear priests, may the Lord console you, strengthen you and reward you. Thank you!

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[1] "The Church possesses water and tears: the waters of Baptism and the tears of Penance (SAINT AMBROSE, *Epistula extra collectionem*, I, 12).

[2] "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation

and brings now regret, but worldly grief produces death” ( 2 Cor 7:10).

[3] Cf. SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *De compunctione*, I, 10.

[4] *Rule*, IV, 57.

[5] *Ibid.*, XX, 3.

[6] Cf. *De poenitentia*, VII, 5.

[7] Ch. XXI.

[8] *Ascetical Homilies* (III Coll.), XII.

[9] *Ascetical Homilies* (I coll.), XXXIV (Greek).

[10] Cf. *FF* 110.

[11] Ch. XXI.

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**Holy Thursday: Mass of the Lord's Supper**

At this moment of the meal, two episodes draw our attention. The washing of Jesus' feet: Jesus humbles Himself, and with this gesture, He helps us understand his words: "I came not to be served, but to serve" (cf. *Mk* 10:45). He teaches us the path of service.

The other episode, a sad one, is the betrayal of Judas, who is not capable of carrying forward love. Money and selfishness lead him to this ugly thing. But Jesus forgives everything. Jesus always forgives. He only asks us to ask for forgiveness.

Once, I heard an wise old lady, a grandmother of the people... She said this: "Jesus never tires of forgiving: it is we who tire of asking for forgiveness." Let us ask the Lord today for the grace not to tire of asking for forgiveness.

We all have small or big failures, always. Everyone has their own

story. But the Lord always waits for us, with open arms, and never tires of forgiving.

Now we will do the same thing that Jesus did: the washing of the feet. It is a gesture that draws attention to the vocation of service. Let us ask the Lord to make us all grow in the vocation of service.

Thank you.

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## **Good Friday: Celebration of the Passion**

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## **Good Friday: Way of the Cross**

Lord Jesus, as we contemplate your cross, we realize that you sacrificed yourself completely for our sake. We

now take this time to be with you.  
We want to spend it in closeness to  
you. On the way from Gethsemane to  
Calvary, you never stopped praying.  
In this Year of Prayer, we accompany  
you on your own journey of prayer.

*From the Gospel according to Mark:*

They went to a place called  
Gethsemane... Jesus took with him  
Peter and James and John, and began  
to be distressed and agitated. He said  
to them, "Remain here and keep  
awake." Going a little farther, he  
threw himself on the ground and  
prayed... "Abba, Father, for you all  
things are possible; remove this cup  
from me; yet not what I want but  
what you want." He came and found  
them sleeping; and he said to Peter,  
"Could you not keep awake one  
hour?" (14:32-37).

Lord, you prepared for every day of  
your life with prayer, and now, in  
Gethsemane, you prepare for your

Passover. *Abba, Father, for you all things are possible*, you say, for prayer is before all else dialogue and intimacy, yet at the same time struggle and supplication: *Remove this cup from me!* Prayer too is entrustment and offering: *Yet not what I want, but what you want*. In your prayer, you passed through the narrow door of our human suffering and experienced it fully. You were “distressed and agitated” (*Mk 14:33*), fearful in the face of death, crushed beneath the burden of our sin, and oppressed by untold grief. Yet in the midst of this struggle, you prayed “more earnestly” (*Lk 22:44*), and in this way turned your bitter anguish into a sacrifice of love.

Of us, you asked only one thing: *to remain with you and to keep awake*. You did not ask something impossible, but simply closeness. How many times, though, have I strayed far from you! How many

times, like the disciples, rather than keeping awake, have I instead fallen asleep! How many times have I failed to find the time or the desire to pray, whether from weariness, distraction or dullness of mind and heart! Lord Jesus, say once more to me and to us, your Church: “Get up and pray” (*Lk 22:46*). Rouse us, Lord! Awaken our hearts from their lethargy, for today too – today above all – you count on our prayer.

*Read the full text of the meditations on each station at [vatican.va](http://vatican.va).*

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## **Easter Vigil**

The women go to the tomb at daybreak, yet they still feel the darkness of night. They continue to walk, yet their hearts remain at the foot of the cross. The tears of Good Friday are not yet dried; they are

grief-stricken, overwhelmed by the sense that all has been said and done. A stone has sealed the fate of Jesus. They are concerned about that stone, for they wonder: “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” (*Mk 16:3*). Yet once they arrive, they are taken aback when they see the amazing power of the Easter event: “When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back” (*Mk 16:4*).

Dear brothers and sisters, let us stop and reflect on these two moments, which bring us to the unexpected joy of Easter. At first, the women anxiously wonder: *Who will roll away the stone from the tomb?* Then, at a second moment, *looking up*, they see that it *had already been rolled back*.

First, there is the question that troubles their grieving hearts: *Who*

*will roll away the stone from the tomb?* That stone marked the end of Jesus' story, now buried in the night of death. He, the life that came into the world, had been killed. He, who proclaimed the merciful love of the Father, had met with no mercy. He, who relieved sinners of the burden of their condemnation, had been condemned to the cross. The Prince of Peace, who freed a woman caught in adultery from a vicious stoning, now lay buried behind a great stone. That stone, an overwhelming obstacle, symbolized what the women felt in their hearts. It represented the end of their hopes, now dashed by the obscure and sorrowful mystery that put an end to their dreams.

Brothers and sisters, it can also be that way with us. There are times when we may feel that a great stone blocks the door of our hearts, stifling life, extinguishing hope, imprisoning

us in the tomb of our fears and regrets, and standing in the way of joy and hope. We encounter such “tombstones” on our journey through life in all the experiences and situations that rob us of enthusiasm and of the strength to persevere. We encounter them at times of sorrow: in the emptiness left by the death of our loved ones; we encounter them in the failures and fears that hold us back from accomplishing the good we mean to do. We encounter them in all the forms of self-absorption that stifle our impulses to generosity and sincere love, in the rubber walls, the real rubber walls, of selfishness and indifference that hold us back in the effort to build more just and humane cities and societies; we encounter them in all our aspirations for peace that are shattered by cruel hatred and the brutality of war. When we experience these disappointments, do we also have the sensation that all

these dreams are doomed to failure, and that we too should ask ourselves in anguish: “Who will roll away the stone from the tomb?”

Yet the same women who bore this darkness in their hearts tell us something quite extraordinary. *When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.* This is the Pasch of Christ, the revelation of God’s power: the victory of life over death, the triumph of light over darkness, the rebirth of hope amid the ruins of failure. It is the Lord, the God of the impossible, who rolled away the stone forever. Even now, he opens our hearts, so that hope may be born ever anew. We too, then, should “look up” to him.

The second moment: *let us look up, then, to Jesus.* After assuming our humanity, he descended into the depths of death and filled them with

the power of his divine life, allowing an infinite ray of light to break through for each of us. Raised up by the Father in his, and our, flesh, in the power of the Holy Spirit, he turned a new page in the history of the human race. Henceforth, if we allow Jesus to take us by the hand, no experience of failure or sorrow, however painful, will have the last word on the meaning and destiny of our lives. Henceforth, if we allow ourselves to be raised up by the Risen Lord, no setback, no suffering, no death will be able to halt our progress towards the fullness of life. Henceforth, “we Christians proclaim that this history... has meaning, an all-embracing meaning... a meaning no longer tainted by absurdity and shadows... a meaning that we call God... All the waters of our transformation converge on him; they do not pour down into the depths of nothingness and absurdity... For his tomb is empty

and the One who died has now been revealed as the Living One” (K. RAHNER, *Wie heisst Auferstehung?*).

Brothers and sisters, Jesus is our Pasch. He is the One who brings us from darkness into light, who is bound to us forever, who rescues us from the abyss of sin and death, and draws us into the radiant realm of forgiveness and eternal life. Brothers and sisters, let us look up to him! Let us welcome Jesus, the God of life, into our lives, and today once again say “yes” to him. Then no stone will block the way to our hearts, no tomb will suppress the joy of life, no failure will doom us to despair. Brothers and sisters, let us lift our eyes to him and ask that the power of his resurrection may roll away the heavy stones that weigh down our souls. Let us lift our eyes to him, the Risen Lord, and press forward in the certainty that, against the obscure backdrop of our failed hopes and our

deaths, the eternal life that he came to bring is even now present in our midst.

Sister, brother, let your heart burst with jubilation on this night, this holy night! Together let us sing of Jesus' resurrection: "Sing to him, everything sing to him: rivers and plains, deserts and mountains ... Sing to the Lord of life, risen from the tomb, more brilliant than a thousand suns. All peoples beset by evil and plagued by injustice, all peoples displaced and devastated: on this holy night cast aside your songs of sadness and despair. The Man of Sorrows is no longer in prison: he has opened a breach in the wall; he is hastening to meet you. In the darkness, let an unexpected shout of joy resound: He is alive; he is risen! And you, my brothers and sisters, small and great ... you who are weary of life, who feel unworthy to sing... let a new flame be kindled in

your heart, let new vitality be heard in your voice. It is the Pasch of the Lord, brothers and sisters; it is the feast of the living” (J-Y. QUELLEC, *Dieu face nord*, Ottignies, 1998, 85-86).

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## **Easter Sunday: Holy Mass**

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### **Easter Sunday: *Urbi et Orbi* Blessing**

*Dear brothers and sisters, Happy Easter!*

Today throughout the world there resounds the message proclaimed two thousand years ago from Jerusalem: “Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, has been raised!” (*Mk* 16:6).

The Church relives the amazement of the women who went to the tomb at dawn on the first day of the week. The tomb of Jesus had been sealed with a great stone. Today too, great stones, heavy stones, block the hopes of humanity: the stone of war, the stone of humanitarian crises, the stone of human rights violations, the stone of human trafficking, and other stones as well. Like the women disciples of Jesus, we ask one another: “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” (cf. *Mk* 16:3).

This is the amazing discovery of that Easter morning: the stone, the immense stone, was rolled away. The astonishment of the women is our astonishment as well: the tomb of Jesus is open and it is empty! From this, everything begins anew! A new path leads through that empty tomb: the path that none of us, but God alone, could open: the path of life in

the midst of death, the path of peace  
in the midst of war, the path of  
reconciliation in the midst of hatred,  
the path of fraternity in the midst of  
hostility.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is  
risen! He alone has the power to roll  
away the stones that block the path  
to life. He, the living One, is himself  
that path. He is the Way: the way that  
leads to life, the way of peace,  
reconciliation and fraternity. He  
opens that path, humanly impossible,  
because he alone takes away the sin  
of the world and forgives us our sins.  
For without God's forgiveness, that  
stone cannot be removed. Without  
the forgiveness of sins, there is no  
overcoming the barriers of prejudice,  
mutual recrimination, the  
presumption that we are always  
right and others wrong. Only the  
risen Christ, by granting us the  
forgiveness of our sins, opens the  
way for a renewed world.

Jesus alone opens up before us the doors of life, those doors that continually we shut with the wars spreading throughout the world. Today we want, first and foremost, to turn our eyes to the Holy City of Jerusalem, that witnessed the mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, and to all the Christian communities of the Holy Land.

My thoughts go especially to the victims of the many conflicts worldwide, beginning with those in Israel and Palestine, and in Ukraine. May the risen Christ open a path of peace for the war-torn peoples of those regions. In calling for respect for the principles of international law, I express my hope for a general exchange of all prisoners between Russia and Ukraine: all for the sake of all!

I appeal once again that access to humanitarian aid be ensured to Gaza, and call once more for the prompt release of the hostages seized on 7 October last and for an immediate cease-fire in the Strip.

Let us not allow the current hostilities to continue to have grave repercussions on the civil population, by now at the limit of its endurance, and above all on the children. How much suffering we see in the eyes of the children: the children in those lands at war have forgotten how to smile! With those eyes, they ask us: Why? Why all this death? Why all this destruction? War is always an absurdity, war is always a defeat! Let us not allow the strengthening winds of war to blow on Europe and the Mediterranean. Let us not yield to the logic of weapons and rearming. Peace is never made with arms, but with outstretched hands and open hearts.

Brothers and sisters, let us not forget Syria, which for thirteen years has suffered from the effects of a long and devastating war. So many deaths and disappearances, so much poverty and destruction, call for a response on the part of everyone, and of the international community.

My thoughts turn today in a special way to Lebanon, which has for some time experienced institutional impasse and a deepening economic and social crisis, now aggravated by the hostilities on its border with Israel. May the Risen Lord console the beloved Lebanese people and sustain the entire country in its vocation to be a land of encounter, coexistence and pluralism.

I also think in particular of the region of the Western Balkans, where significant steps are being taken towards integration in the European project. May ethnic, cultural and

confessional differences not be a cause of division, but rather a source of enrichment for all of Europe and for the world as a whole.

I likewise encourage the discussions taking place between Armenia and Azerbaijan, so that, with the support of the international community, they can pursue dialogue, assist the displaced, respect the places of worship of the various religious confessions, and arrive as soon as possible at a definitive peace agreement.

May the risen Christ open a path of hope to all those who in other parts of the world are suffering from violence, conflict, food insecurity and the effects of climate change. May the Lord grant consolation to the victims of terrorism in all its forms. Let us pray for all those who have lost their lives and implore the

repentance and conversion of the perpetrators of those crimes.

May the risen Lord assist the Haitian people, so that there can soon be an end to the acts of violence, devastation and bloodshed in that country, and that it can advance on the path to democracy and fraternity.

May Christ grant consolation and strength to the Rohingya, beset by a grave humanitarian crisis, and open a path to reconciliation in Myanmar, torn for years now by internal conflicts, so that every logic of violence may be definitively abandoned.

May the Lord open paths of peace on the African continent, especially for the suffering peoples in Sudan and in the entire region of the Sahel, in the Horn of Africa, in the region of Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the province of Capo Delgado in Mozambique, and bring

an end to the prolonged situation of drought which affects vast areas and provokes famine and hunger.

May the Risen One make the light of his face shine upon migrants and on all those who are passing through a period of economic difficulty, and offer them consolation and hope in their moment of need. May Christ guide all persons of good will to unite themselves in solidarity, in order to address together the many challenges which loom over the poorest families in their search for a better life and happiness.

On this day when we celebrate the life given us in the resurrection of the Son, let us remember the infinite love of God for each of us: a love that overcomes every limit and every weakness. And yet how much the precious gift of life is despised! How many children cannot even be born? How many die of hunger and are

deprived of essential care or are victims of abuse and violence? How many lives are made objects of trafficking for the increasing commerce in human beings?

Brothers and sisters, on the day when Christ has set us free from the slavery of death, I appeal to all who have political responsibilities to spare no efforts in combatting the scourge of human trafficking, by working tirelessly to dismantle the networks of exploitation and to bring freedom to those who are their victims. May the Lord comfort their families, above all those who anxiously await news of their loved ones, and ensure them comfort and hope.

May the light of the resurrection illumine our minds and convert our hearts, and make us aware of the value of every human life, which

must be welcomed, protected and loved.

A happy Easter to all!

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