The Holy See

URBI ET ORBI MESSAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

EASTER 2016

Central loggia of the Vatican Basilica
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[Multimedia]

"O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his mercy endures for ever" (*Ps* 135:1)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Happy Easter!

Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God's mercy, out of love for us, died on the cross, and out of love he rose again from the dead. That is why we proclaim today: Jesus is Lord!

His resurrection fulfils the prophecy of the Psalm: God's mercy endures for ever; it never dies. We can trust him completely, and we thank him because for our sake he descended into the depths of the abyss.

Before the spiritual and moral abysses of mankind, before the chasms that open up in hearts and provoke hatred and death, only an infinite mercy can bring us salvation. Only God can fill those chasms with his love, prevent us from falling into them and help us to continue our journey together towards the land of freedom and life.

The glorious Easter message, that Jesus, who was crucified is not here but risen (cf. *Mt* 28:5-6), offers us the comforting assurance that the abyss of death has been bridged and, with it, all mourning, lamentation and pain (cf. *Rev* 21:4). The Lord, who suffered abandonment by his disciples, the burden of an unjust condemnation and shame of an ignominious death, now makes us sharers of his immortal life and enables us to see with his eyes of love and compassion those who hunger and thirst, strangers and prisoners, the marginalized and the outcast, the victims of

oppression and violence. Our world is full of persons suffering in body and spirit, even as the daily news is full of stories of brutal crimes which often take place within homes, and large-scale armed conflicts which cause indescribable suffering to entire peoples.

The risen Christ points out paths of hope to beloved Syria, a country torn by a lengthy conflict, with its sad wake of destruction, death, contempt for humanitarian law and the breakdown of civil concord. To the power of the risen Lord we entrust the talks now in course, that good will and the cooperation of all will bear fruit in peace and initiate the building of a fraternal society respectful of the dignity and rights of each citizen. May the message of life, proclaimed by the Angel beside the overturned stone of the tomb, overcome hardened hearts and promote a fruitful encounter of peoples and cultures in other areas of the Mediterranean and the Middle East, particularly in Iraq, Yemen and Libya. May the image of the new man, shining on the face of Christ, favour concord between Israelis and Palestinians in the Holy Land, as well as patience, openness and daily commitment to laying the foundations of a just and lasting peace through direct and sincere negotiations. May the Lord of life also accompany efforts to attain a definitive solution to the war in Ukraine, inspiring and sustaining initiatives of humanitarian aid, including the liberation of those who are detained.

The Lord Jesus, our peace (*Eph* 2:14), by his resurrection triumphed over evil and sin. May he draw us closer on this Easter feast to the victims of terrorism, that blind and brutal form of violence which continues to shed blood in different parts of the world, as in the recent attacks in Belgium, Turkey, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Iraq. May he water the seeds of hope and prospects for peace in Africa; I think in particular of Burundi, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, marked by political and social tensions.

With the weapons of love, God has defeated selfishness and death. His son Jesus is the door of mercy wide open to all. May his Easter message be felt ever more powerfully by the beloved people of Venezuela in the difficult conditions which they are experiencing, and by those responsible for the country's future, that everyone may work for the common good, seeking spaces of dialogue and cooperation with all. May efforts be made everywhere to promote the culture of counter, justice and reciprocal respect, which alone can guarantee the spiritual and material welfare of all people.

The Easter message of the risen Christ, a message of life for all humanity, echoes down the ages and invites us not to forget those men and women seeking a better future, an ever more numerous throng of migrants and refugees – including many children – fleeing from war, hunger, poverty and social injustice. All too often, these brothers and sisters of ours meet along the way with death or, in any event, rejection by those who could offer them welcome and assistance. May the forthcoming World Humanitarian Summit not fail to be centred on the human person and his or her dignity, and to come up with policies capable of assisting and protecting the victims of conflicts and other emergencies, especially those who are most vulnerable and all those persecuted for

ethnic and religious reasons.

On this glorious day, *"let the earth rejoice, in shining splendour"* (cf. Easter Proclamation), even though it is so often mistreated and greedily exploited, resulting in an alteration of natural equilibria. I think especially of those areas affected by climate change, which not infrequently causes drought or violent flooding, which then lead to food crises in different parts of the world.

Along with our brothers and sisters persecuted for their faith and their fidelity to the name of Christ, and before the evil that seems to have the upper hand in the life of so many people, let us hear once again the comforting words of the Lord: *"Take courage; I have conquered the world! (Jn* 16:33). Today is the radiant day of this victory, for Christ has trampled death and destruction underfoot. By his resurrection he has brought life and immortality to light (cf. *2 Tim* 1:10). *"He has made us pass from enslavement to freedom, from sadness to joy, from mourning to jubilation, from darkness to light, from slavery to redemption. Therefore let us acclaim in his presence: Alleluia!"* (Melito of Sardis, Easter Homily).

To those in our society who have lost all hope and joy in life, to the elderly who struggle alone and feel their strength waning, to young people who seem to have no future, to all I once more address the words of the Risen One: "See, I am making all things new… To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life" (*Rev* 21:5-6). May this comforting message of Jesus help each of us to set out anew with greater courage and hope, to blaze trails of reconciliation with God and with all our brothers and sisters. How much we need this!

Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to renew my best wishes for a Happy Easter to all of you from Rome and various countries, as well as those who are joining us by way of television, radio and other means of communication. May there echo in your hearts, in your families and communities the announcement of the Resurrection, along with the warm light of the presence of the Living Jesus: a presence which brightens, comforts, forgives, gladdens. Jesus conquered evil at the root: he is the Door of Salvation, open wide so that each person may find mercy.

I thank you for your presence and your joy on this day of celebration. Thanks in particular for the gift of flowers, which again this year have come from the Netherlands.

May you bring to all the joy and hope of the Risen Christ. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your Easter lunch. *Arrivederci*!

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