



## Easter Message 2015

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**Ecclesiastical Grand Prior of the Sacred Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus**

"The Lord rose from the dead"

The Easter message has echoed in the Church and throughout the world for over twenty centuries and still reaches us, even though we are doubtful believers who are disappointed and distressed by the fear of death in an age that seeks to create life in the laboratory, to extend old age, but to anticipate natural death.

St. Paul says: "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile" (1 Cor 15, 17). Referring to this text, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein stated: "If he did not rise from the dead, then he decomposed in the grave like any other man. He is dead and decomposed. In that case he is a teacher like any other and can no longer help; and once more we are orphaned and alone. So we have to content ourselves with wisdom and speculation. We are in a sort of hell where we can do nothing but dream, roofed in, as it were, and cut off from heaven. But if I am to be really saved, what I need is certainty - not wisdom, dreams, or speculation - and this certainty is faith. And faith is faith in what is needed by my heart, my soul, not my speculative intelligence. For it is my soul with its passions, as it were with its flesh and blood, that has to be saved, not my abstract mind. Perhaps we can say: Only love can believe the Resurrection, work at believing it."

The Patriarch of Moscow, Kirill, has said that Easter is not a beautiful legend, nor a theology theory, nor a tribute to popular traditions established in the distant past. Easter is the essence and the core of Christianity. It is the victory granted to us by God.

Since Jesus Christ rose from the dead we have the assurance that He is not contemporary to us in a metaphorical sense, meaning that his presence remains in our memory or is motivating us to follow his path as might that of any other famous historical figure, but He is contemporary in a proper sense and in reality.

The Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, wrote: "The only ethical relationship that you can have with Christ is one of contemporaneity. The relationship with the deceased is an esthetic one: His life has lost its sting, he does not judge my life nor makes me judge my own life, he allows me to admire him and lets me live in quite different categories: He does not force me to judge the definite meaning."





We are not admirers of a famous deceased person but the disciples of a “Living Being”; He is building the Kingdom of God as a kingdom of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace on earth as in heaven. During Easter, we celebrate Him as our contemporary; we have to work with Him on His project and fight for the coming of the Kingdom of God in the present time.

And it is the presence of the risen Christ in the Church through his Spirit today that may require my faith. For those who believe in him, relegating Jesus to the past is impossible, because it would mean cutting the link between our existence and His.

The resurrection of Jesus is the source from which we can draw the merciful love of God, which is stronger than evil and death itself and can transform our lives, to flourish in those areas of desert that we own in our hearts and in our society.

The Anglican Bishop, Nicholas Thomas Wright, wrote: "Resurrection and forgiveness are, after all, two sides of the same coin; if you believe in one, you have to believe in the other [...] in the gospel we discover what it means to know the risen Jesus as our contemporary, the one who wipes our tears, who answers our hard questions, but especially invites us to come up with humility and love, a love through which the power of his risen life, of Him as a shepherd, can work again in our time."

I echo what Pope Francis stated in his Easter message: "We welcome the grace of the Resurrection of Christ! Let us renew the mercy of God, let us love Jesus, let the power of his love transform our life too; and may we become instruments of this mercy, channels through which God can irrigate the land, preserve all creation and allow justice and peace to flourish. "

The testimony of a life transformed by meeting Jesus is the assumption that we may fulfil the mission to proclaim the joy of the gospel that the risen Christ entrusts to contemporary Christians in this third millennium.

If the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a children's story we Christians are impostors, but if it is a real – although mysterious – event, then it makes sense to exchange best wishes for a Happy Easter.

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