

Patriarch Gregory III Laham's call for peace in Syria

BEIRUT (CNS) -- Catholic patriarchs in the Middle East, in their Easter messages, appealed for peace in Syria and expressed hope that the region would experience a resurrection. Melkite Catholic Patriarch Gregoire III Laham, who was born in Syria, said his country has "entered upon the fourth year of its way of the cross" but "will one day soon, we hope, reach resurrection joy. I want Damascus and the whole of Syria to live again the joy of (St.) Paul when he met Christ, risen from the dead, at the gate of Damascus," the patriarch said in his Easter message, issued ahead of the April 20 feast. On Easter, he visited the ancient city of Maaloula, Syria, with Orthodox Patriarch John X of Antioch and all the East. "We don't want any more martyrs," Patriarch Laham said in his message. "We don't want any more orphans! We don't want more widows and more mothers losing their children! We don't want any more millions of children traumatized! Enough wounded! Enough handicapped, mutilated or disfigured! Enough of people haunted by fear, hatred and bitterness! Enough kidnappings and extortions!" the patriarch said. He appealed to the world "in the name of the poor, weak, widows, victims, mortally wounded, mutilated, disfigured, displaced persons, refugees, homeless, hungry, children, the elderly, pregnant women, handicapped, all those in despair, pain and discouragement -- such as I often encounter at the Syrian-Lebanese border when travelling from Beirut to Damascus, or during my visits to families of victims and disaster-stricken people. They are burdened by fear about the future and the fate of their families, children and young people.