



The Holy See

***URBI ET ORBI MESSAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II
EASTER SUNDAY 1998***

1. *"You know what took place regarding Jesus of Nazareth. . .
we are witnesses to all that he did
both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem"* (cf. Acts 10:37-38).

These are the words which the Apostle Peter,
a witness to the Resurrection of Christ,
addressed to the centurion Cornelius and his household.

Today the witnesses speak:
the eye-witnesses present at the events of Good Friday,
those who were afraid before the Sanhedrin,
those who on the third day found the tomb empty.
Witnesses to the Resurrection were, first,
the women of Jerusalem and Mary of Magdala;
and later the Apostles, informed by the women:
first Peter and John, then all the rest.

Another witness was Saul of Tarsus,
converted at the gates of Damascus,
whom Christ permitted to experience
the power of his resurrection,
that he might become the chosen vessel
of the missionary thrust of the early Church.

2. Yes, today the witnesses speak out:
not only the first ones, the eye-witnesses,
but also those who, from them, have learned the Easter message

and have borne testimony to Christ crucified and risen from generation to generation.

Some have been witnesses even to the shedding of their blood and, thanks to them, the Church has continued on her way, also amid harsh persecutions and obstinate rejection.

On the strength of this unending testimony the Church has grown, and is now spread throughout the world.

Today is the feast of all witnesses; including those of our own century, who have proclaimed Christ in the midst of the "great tribulation" (*Rev 7:14*), confessing his death and resurrection in the concentration camps and the gulags, under the threat of bombs and guns, amid the terror unleashed by the blind hatred which has tragically engulfed individuals and whole nations. Today they come from the great tribulation and sing the glory of Christ: in him, rising from the shadows of death, life has been made manifest.

3. Today, we too are witnesses to the Risen Christ and we repeat his proclamation of peace to all humanity on its way to the Third Millennium.

We bear witness to his death and resurrection, especially to the men and women of our own time, caught up in fratricidal strife and slaughter which reopen the wounds of ethnic rivalries, and, in different parts of every continent, especially in Africa and in Europe, are now sowing in the earth the seed of death and new conflicts for a sad tomorrow.

This proclamation of peace is for all those who are undergoing a calvary seemingly without end, thwarted in their aspiration for respect for their dignity and human rights, for justice, for employment, for fairer living conditions.

May this proclamation be an inspiration to the leaders of the nations and to every person of good will,

especially in the Middle East and particularly in Jerusalem,
 where peace is put at risk by dangerous political decisions.
 May it give fresh courage to those who have believed and still believe
 in dialogue as the way to settle national and international tensions.
 May it fill everyone's heart with the boldness of the hope
 which springs from the truth being recognized and respected,
 so that new and promising prospects of solidarity
 may open up in the world.

4. Christ, who died and rose for us,
 you are the foundation of our hope!
 We wish to make our own the testimony of Peter
 and that of countless other brothers and sisters down the centuries,
 in order to proclaim it again at the threshold of the new Millennium.
 It is true: "The stone which the builders rejected
 has become the head of the corner" (*Ps 118:22*).
 On this foundation is built the Church of the Living God,
 the Church of the Risen Christ.
 In today's liturgy this Church sings
 a song both old and ever new.
 With words filled with ardor
 she proclaims the victory of life over death:
"Mors et Vita duello conflixere mirando . . ."
 "Death and life joined in a wondrous duel.
 The Lord of life was dead; but now, alive, he triumphs".
 And as though it had happened only yesterday,
 the Church turns to Mary of Magdala,
 who was the first to meet the Risen Lord:
"Dic nobis, Maria, quid vidisti in via?"
 "Tell us, Mary, what did you see on the way?
 The tomb of the living Christ, the glory of the Risen Christ,
 and his witnesses the angels, the shroud and his garments.
 Christ, my hope, is risen;
 he goes before you into Galilee".

5. Today, you, the Risen One, wish to meet us
 in every corner of the earth,
 just as yesterday you met the Apostles in Galilee.
 By virtue of this encounter we too can repeat:
*"Scimus Christum surrexisse a mortuis vere:
 tu nobis, victor Rex, miserere"*.

"Yes, we are certain: Christ is truly risen.
Oh victorious King, bring us your salvation".