

Ecumenical Prayer for Peace in Jerusalem

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Palestinians from the Westbank are banned from entering Jerusalem during the Holy Week, including Good Friday. We are very sorry for all who could not come to our Prayer for Peace, the launching event for this years Easter Alert. We were thinking of you and want to share some pictures! Patriarch emerit. Michel Sabbah during his homily: Jesus told us, "In the world you will have hardship; but be courageous. I have conquered the world" (Jn16: 33). We pray and we believe that God will hear us, and He will triumph upon evil.

Here's the sermon of Patriarch emerit. Michel Sabah in our Prayer for Peace, held at March 22nd 2016 in St. Etienne Church, Jerusalem:

We read in the gospel of Luke and in Prophet Isaiah: "The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me, to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim good news to the captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord" (Lk 4: 18-19).



This prophecy is in harmony with the spirit of the Jubilee, referred to in the Law of Moses, to be celebrated every 50th year. In the jubilee year everything has to be returned to his legitimate owner. This year of Jubilee is the acceptable time in which man comes back to God and to his brothers and sisters. It is the time people remove themselves from all oppression.

Kairos Palestine has wanted to see the passing of 49 years of occupation, as a year of jubilee. Next year is the 50th year of occupation. It should be the year in which the return to God and conversion must happen. Return and conversion means for the Israelis to end their occupation of the Palestinian land. It must be a year of liberation for them, the occupier, from the sin of the occupation. It should be a year of freedom for us, freedom based not on wars or weapons, but on the law of God, the same law that governs all human beings, Israelis as well as Palestinians. The law of God for us all is the law of love.

We have come to pray together for peace, to send a message of peace and love to all Palestinians, to the Israelis, and to the Churches of the world, who celebrate Easter and the triumph of Jesus Resurrection over evil and sin.

We pray for peace so that each one of us learns how to make peace in himself first. In the soul of each one of us, there is a war, with ourselves, with our own deviations,



with people whom we love, or we do not love. We pray for peace, for learning to make peace in ourselves, and with all people with whom we live together; those who are near and those who are far. Peace is a power that imposes itself. War, instead, needs fighters and death makers to make it. Peace is a power that God gives and with it he changes hearts and people. We believe in what Jesus said, "Blessed are the peace makers, they will be called sons of God" (Mt 5: 9). We also believe in what he told us, that we are strong with his power. He said, "Whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, and will perform even greater works" (Jn 14: 12).

We have to make peace instead of wars. We can. We must remain steadfast. We pray. We act. and we resist occupation with love. We act with the logic of love so that the occupation will be transformed into a liberation of the soul of the occupier. It will then be freedom for us, the occupied.

We ask God almighty to give us peace and to put an end to occupation. We pray. God, look from your heaven, and have mercy upon us.

We also pray for peace in all Arab countries, and throughout the world. Many people indeed have died; many people are still killed. Their only guilt is to be weak.

For thm also we pray. God, in your justice, in your mercy, look from above and have mercy upon us.

We came this evening to pray with the Kairos Movement. The word Kairos means the moment in which we see the grace of God. God accompanies us with his grace, individuals and peoples, in every moment of our life, in difficulties and death, and in joy and peace. We are now in a moment of difficulty and death, in a moment of occupation, in a moment of despair.

In this moment of despair and death, we are called to discover the grace of God. The grace of God is love and life. It is not a confrontation with an enemy. It is not a war against an enemy. It is a moment of life and love that God gives us all, and those who occupy us. As God loves them, so we love them. This is a difficult task, almost impossible. But we say also that we resist the evil of the occupation, with the logic of love. Because of this we do not despair. To those, among the Palestinians, who despair, to the young people who go to death in these days, we say, "You must live not die. Believe in God, and in his Providence. Do not despair. Know that you have the power to give life. You are called to live and love. Peace and justice will be the fruit of your love and life.

This is the message of Kairos Palestine for the Holy Week.

In the Holy Week, we meditate on the sufferings of Our Lord Jesus Christ and on his death and resurrection. He passed through death to life and to the glory of resurrection. This is our faith. Just like Jesus, we also can pass from death to resurrection, from slavery to freedom, from occupation to liberation..

Our message is a prayer: God let us not live to kill, in your name, neither in vengeance. Give us to grow in making peace in ourselves and with every human being, even when we have to deal with those who deny our will and our capacity for making peace.



Jesus told us, "In the world you will have hardship; but be courageous. I have conquered the world" (Jn16: 33). In these words we believe, we resist every evil, e resist occupation, and we love all people.

We pray for all those who suffer under the occupation, those Palestinians who go to die in these days, for all prisoners who are being tortured, for all those who have had their houses demolished.

Israel may tell us: all these people are terrorists; you cannot be in solidarity with them. We say: all these prisoners, all those who go to die, all those exiled or have their houses demolished, are people whom you oppress, who ask for their freedom and human dignity. Moreover, they are human beings created in the image and resemblance of God.. Furthermore, in you also, our occupiers and our oppressors, we see the image of God. You too you are created by God in His image and resemblance. You too are called to see the image of God in yourself so that you become able to see him in others. With this vision only, the vision of God in every human being, a just peace can be achieved for everyone.

Brothers and sisters, you may say, how can we pray for those who kill us? Who occupy our land? And demolish our houses? We say: we pray for human beings created by God. Whatever evil they do they remain created at the image of God. Therefore, we pray for them. We pray and we have the duty to rectify all evil in them, and stop all their aggression. God will extend his hand to all those who love and who, with love, rectify evils around them.

We are in the Holy Week. The day after tomorrow is Good Friday where we meditate on the mystery of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. We pray in silence. We meditate on the words of Jesus, "Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23: 34).

We should begin by liberating ourselves from evil that is inside us, from all sin, for we are all sinners. Then we move on to liberate the land and all the hearts that are full of evil. Only after this, will the triumph of the Resurrection be ours and for all those who live in this Holy Land.

This is the prayer of Kairos Palestine. This is our call for all Christian Palestinians and all Palestinians who are believers in God. Our message is love, believe in God, and with your love resist all evil and aggression. With your love, with all your activity, open your hearts and the hearts of the aggressors. Open them, make them able to stay human and to love. Amen.

