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Message for the Palm Sunday Procession 2023

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Message for the Palm Sunday Procession

2023 Available in the following languages:

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Beloved brothers and sisters,

I would like to welcome all our parishes,
coming from all over Palestine and Israel.
Together with you, I greet the many pilgrims
who have joined us today on this beautiful
day of celebration, prayer and communion.
Faithful, religious, priests, bishops,
Christians from different churches, we are all

united with joy in the name of Jesus, the most beautiful name of all, one that we will never cease to pronounce and celebrate.

I am therefore happy to stand here together with you for this beautiful church experience. At the conclusion of this procession, we may be a little physically tired, but we will certainly leave here strengthened in faith and communion. Because communion in Christ, the unity of community, the feeling that we are all brothers and sisters in Jesus' name, gives us renewed strength and warms our hearts. We need it. We need these experiences in which the power of the Spirit (cf. Rom. 15:19) unites us and works in us with power.

As you return to your homes, to your countries of origin, from Jerusalem to the many places from which you all come, communicate to everyone this joy and the power of the Holy Spirit that we all have received here today. And also say, like the women in the Gospel, "We have seen the Lord!" (Jn. 20:25). We have seen Him in the eyes of brothers and sisters whom we do not know, but who are united with us in the joy of communion in Jesus Christ. We want you, once again, from Jerusalem, to carry this proclamation of love, freedom and life throughout the world, as people did two thousand years ago.

Yes, Jerusalem, despite everything, is still capable of generating this experience. It is not only a city of conflict and division, of political and religious tension, of possession

and exclusion. As we have experienced today, it is also a place of encounter, faith, prayer, joy, communion and unity.

We have witnessed in recent weeks many incidents of violence in this city, including against churches and Christian symbols. But we must not be afraid of those who want to divide, those who want to exclude or who want to take over the soul of this Holy City. They will not succeed, because the Holy City has always been and will always remain a house of prayer for all peoples (Is 56:7). No one will be able to possess it exclusively. As I keep repeating, we belong to this city and no one can separate us from our love for it, just as no one can separate us from the love of Christ (Rom 8:35).

To those who want to divide, we will respond with the desire to build unity. To those who express hatred and contempt, we will respond with the healing power of love. To those who wish to exclude, we will respond by seeking to meet and welcome.

We will never give up our love for what this City represents: it is the place of Christ's death and resurrection, the place of reconciliation, of a love that saves and overcomes the boundaries of pain and death. And this is also our mission, as Church of Jerusalem: to build up, to unite, to break down barriers, to hope against all hope (cf. Rom. 4:18), to bear witness with serene confidence to a way of life freed from the shackles of any form of fear.

Therefore, in our hearts, in the hearts of the Christians of Jerusalem, there is no room for hatred and resentment. We do not want to hate or despise. The love of Christ that has conquered us is stronger than any opposite experience. And this is, and remains, our strength; this is and always will be, despite our many limitations, our witness.

Let us not be discouraged. Let us not lose heart. Let us not lose hope. And let us not be afraid, but look up confidently and once again renew our sincere and concrete commitment to peace and unity, with firm confidence (cf. Heb. 3:14) in the power of Christ's love!

Soon we will receive the blessing with the relic of the cross.

The cross of Christ is our boast (Gal 6:14), it is the measure of God's love for us. During these days, we will carry it through the streets of the Holy City, and behind it we will carry our labors and sorrows, our loneliness, but also our desire to experience once again the love of Christ. May that cross then always accompany us, comfort us in all our troubles (cf. 2 Cor. 1:4), illuminate our paths and open us to the encounter with the Risen One. Amen.

Happy Holy Week to all!

†Pierbattista Pizzaballa
Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem

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