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**FROM JERUSALEM, THE CALL FOR AN
EXTRAORDINARY ACTION OF PRAYER
BY THE CHURCH
FOR RECONCILIATION, UNITY AND PEACE**

You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.

Is 62: 6b-7



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The Holy Land, the Land of Salvation and of eschatological Hope¹, is also the place, as can be observed, where *grave evils* largely spread in the world concentrate with particular fierceness, as much in its territorial circumscription as in the hearts of its inhabitants: the general lack of Peace, and the particular lack of Peace within the Church. The division of the Church appears in fact most evident and most scandalous in the Holy Land, around the Holy Places. Are Christians today aware that the division of the Church, this terrible sin against the One and Triune God², a tearing of the Body of Christ by human hands³, *profoundly conditions the general absence of Peace?*

The Old and the New Testaments constantly present Jerusalem as chosen by God in time and eternity, in both its earthly and spiritual dimensions, to be a place of *promise and of particular grace for the world*⁴. One can say that earth and heaven somehow meet there, because Christ, sent by the Father, God who became man, to whom the Spirit testifies, has accomplished and manifested Salvation there « once and for all »⁵ through his Death and Resurrection, and there has also promised to return in the full manifestation of his Glory⁶.

Jerusalem is also the *earthly birthplace of the Church*, the Mystical Body of Christ, through the action of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. She is the *Mother Church* of all Churches, *from whom* «repentance and forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in the name of Christ to all nations»⁷.

Jerusalem is, finally, the city wherein the Apostles are ordered to *stay* until they are « *clothed with power from on high*, »⁸ a house of prayer for all nations⁹.

« Ieroushalaïm, » the « City of Peace, »¹⁰ has therefore – precisely as the site of the original effusion of the Holy Spirit – the vocation of being the epicentre of grace for all nations and the historical and symbolical departure point for Reconciliation, Unity and Peace in Christ for the whole human family. In these times, more than ever, when the action of evil persists fiercely in the Land of Salvation, Jerusalem does not respond to its unique vocation of being the « crossroad of Peace, the bright sign of Peace that comes from God »¹¹, and the Mother Church, inspiring and

¹ Isa 8:23b-9,1

² John 13:34-35

³ Rom 12:3-5

⁴ Isa 2: 1-5

⁵ Rom 6:10; Heb 7: 27; 9:12; 10:10

⁶ Mic 4:1-5; Luke 13: 33

⁷ Luke 24: 47-49; Isa 2:1-5

⁸ Luke 24: 49

⁹ Marc 11:17; Isa 56: 2-8.

¹⁰ Jerusalem, «City of Peace», in Hebrew «ir» (city) and «shalom» (peace). In the Scriptures, places and proper names often have the significance that is given to them according to the function that God wants them to have. In Genesis (Gen 14: 18-20) appears the mysterious figure of Melchizedek («king of peace»), king of Salem («peace»), who offers bread and wine. In Hebrews 7: 1-3, he is considered as a figure of Christ, and described as follows: «He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace».

¹¹ Excerpt from the letter of John Paul II to the Cardinal Nasrallah-Pierre Sfeir, Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites, for the first congress of the bishops and patriarchs of the Orient (May 9-20, 1999).

promoting dialogue and Unity for the whole Church under the powerful, irresistible and joyful action of the Paraclet.

If the operating force of evil¹² supposes the collective and individual sins of man, Jerusalem and the Holy Land appear to be afflicted by it, in the complex superposition of political, social, cultural and religious issues, in a too *inextricable manner for man to solve by means of his own capacities*. This latent consciousness puts a heavy strain on the inhabitants and on the communities of the Holy Land, who are gravely tempted to fall into *despair*.

In the middle of such terrible anguish rises the call of the psalmist: *Qùma Adonai* (Rise, O Lord!). From the depths of their souls' memories, men and women, capable of God but incapable without their God, cry out to their Creator « *Miserere nobis* » (Have mercy of us)!

The desperate cry of man « my God, my God, why have Thou abandoned me ? » can only develop into prayer, a fervent prayer, a prayer coming from the heart, a prayer of indefectible faith. We should in fact enter into the Will of God with a bare heart, disposed to a total gift of self, because our prayer then converges, by its nature, with the prayer that Jesus taught us in Gethsemane: « Thy Will be done, and not mine »¹³. We must pray so that we lower our voices and hear His Voice! We should pray intensively, because prayer is the essential presupposition of any decision¹⁴. The whole Church, the Church in heaven and on earth, should pray against the powers adverse to the Design of God, so that man repents and decides himself for God¹⁵. Praying is in fact the primary and essential duty of the Church : *the Church exists for prayer*¹⁶.

The bells of Jerusalem call the Church to pray. The Mother Church calls insistently upon the whole Church, bearer of the Good News, to pray, so that a unanimous and heart-felt call of all Christians, still divided, and yet united in the Spirit, might rise to the God of Israel, *in a prayer manifesting by its nature the adherence to Unity which He expects and asks of us*, for Reconciliation and Peace in Jerusalem and in the world.

The Church of Jerusalem, in this historical moment of particular difficulty in the Middle-East, asks all Christians for the help of an extraordinary action of prayer. Jerusalem calls for Peace upon itself, so that according to its vocation, it can diffuse Peace. The Mother Church invokes upon herself Unity in the Spirit, so that from Jerusalem, the Unity of the Church may be realised according to Christ's plan. She calls for Reconciliation and Peace among Christians as the presupposition for Peace in the world. In so doing, she responds to her eschatological vocation, reminding the Church to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world¹⁷:

You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.

Is 62: 6b-7

¹² 2 Thess 2:7

¹³ John-Paul II, *Fondare la Civiltà dell'Amore, Preghiere e meditazioni per gli uomini e le donne del nostro tempo*, quoting of November 24, 1984, Rizzoli, 2001, page 61-62.

¹⁴ John-Paul II, *Fondare la Civiltà dell'Amore, Preghiere e meditazioni per gli uomini e le donne del nostro tempo*, quoting of June 10, 1988, Rizzoli, 2001, page 43.

¹⁵ Tob 13:6; Ps 85:9; Gal 2:12-18

¹⁶ John-Paul II, *Fondare la Civiltà dell'Amore, Preghiere e meditazioni per gli uomini e le donne del nostro tempo*, quoting of June 10, 1988, Rizzoli, 2001, page 40 et ss.

¹⁷ Matt 5:13-16



**INTENTIONS OF THE
EXTRAORDINARY PRAYER BY THE CHURCH
FOR RECONCILIATION, UNITY AND PEACE**



1) For Peace in Jerusalem, for Peace in the Holy Land

This intention originates out of the consciousness that to Jerusalem and the Holy Land is entrusted the unique vocation of being the place wherein is to be realised God's promises for the entire human family. According to the spirit of the Scriptures, Jerusalem has the vocation of spreading, throughout the world, the Peace which is presently still lacking within its own boundaries and within the Holy Land. In this prayer, the Church is aware that there is no Peace without Justice, and that there is no Justice without Forgiveness¹⁸.

2) For the Mother Church of Jerusalem, that she might fully respond to her vocation of inspiring and promoting Unity among Christians and of inspiring and promoting inter-religious dialogue

This intention is born of the memory of Pentecost, which originated in the Holy City, and of the vocation of the Mother Church of Jerusalem, founded through the Effusion of the Holy Spirit, to inspire and promote Unity among Christians according to the Will of Christ, spring of all Promises and of all Good. The Mother Church of all Churches asks of them an assiduous and intense prayer so that Unity in the Spirit might be achieved again in her, and so that she might fully respond to her vocation of inspiring and promoting Unity and Peace in the entire Church and of inspiring and promoting dialogue with other religions. The dialogue with the two other monotheistic religions present in Jerusalem is particularly important.

3) For the unification of the date of Easter among Christians, in view of Unity in Spirit

The capital sin of the division of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, which is thrown to shreds by the hands of men, puts a strain on all mankind. All Christians must confess this sin and be reconciled with God, by achieving, with the predominant help of grace, the Unity of the Church, which would be a spring of Goodness and Peace for all nations. The non-unified celebration of Easter among Christians is certainly causing inexpressible sufferings to Christ, whose crucifixion is presently being commemorated at different times each year by the various Christian communities. Unity will first be achieved by the unified celebration of the great feast of Easter, with confidence that Christ will assume this first step and bring His Church to full Unity in Spirit.

¹⁸ Message of John-Paul II for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2002.



**HOW IS THE
EXTRAORDINARY PRAYER BY THE CHURCH
FOR RECONCILIATION, UNITY AND PEACE
PRACTISED AND PROPOSED**



All Christian communities and all Christians are invited to participate in the extraordinary prayer of the Universal Church for Reconciliation, Unity and Peace, *beginning in and preceding from Jerusalem*¹⁹. It is hoped that the accomplishment of the promises and prophecies related to the Holy City in Jerusalem, as prophesied, will precede their accomplishment in the entire world.

The foundational principle is that *all Christians pray together, at the same time, for the same intentions*. The communion of prayer of Christians truly prefigures Reconciliation and Unity within the Church. The union of prayer in the name of Christ also ensures His Presence amongst us:

¹⁹ *“Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”*

Matt 18: 19-20

The extraordinary prayer of the Universal Church for Reconciliation, Unity and Peace thus arises as a *great intercessory prayer for our time*, spontaneous and joyful, born in the heart of Christians inspired by the Holy Spirit. *All Christians are strongly encouraged, in this Spirit, to further diffuse this prayer of deep and intense faith*, so that the prayer of the *whole* Church might be fully realized.

The prayer may, of course, be practiced differently in accord with the free choice of its participants. A structure is proposed, however, for those who wish to follow a common pattern, in communion with those who pray in Jerusalem.

The basic proposal is to **practice one hour of prayer every Saturday between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. in the Holy Land, or between 6. p.m. and 7 p.m. local time, throughout the rest of the world**. For those who are unable to participate fully, **a reduced participation (of even a few minutes !)** is **suggested**, but preferably, at the indicated time.

Saturday is in fact the day during which we wait for the Resurrection, the accomplishment of Christ's promises.

For Christian communities and individual Christians who are willing to pray more and who are able to take more time, a **cycle of solemn prayer**, inspired by the Easter triduum, is proposed in addition to the weekly Saturday prayer, during the **third week of the month** (see below).

Conscious that it is through the action of the Spirit, who cries out in our hearts to the Father, that we call Him « Abba »²⁰, it is suggested to start each moment of prayer by invoking Him (*Veni Creator, Veni Sancte Spiritus, or some other solemn invocation of the Holy Spirit*), followed (if practiced) by a litany of the Saints, to invite the heavenly Church to participate in the extraordinary prayer of the earthly Church.

¹⁹ Luke 24: 47

²⁰ The aramaic word « Abbà » (Gal 4: 4-7) has a confidential connotation which expresses in a stronger way the filial trust towards God. In English, the word could be translated « dad ».

The extraordinary prayer of the Church is entrusted to the protection of the Archangel Saint Michael, the Archstrategus, protector of the people of God²¹. Suggested is a litany of the Saints followed by a special prayer to Saint Michael, asking him to guide the Church in its specific mission and to protect the prayer against all interference.

WEEKLY PRAYER EVERY SATURDAY (AT 7 P.M. IN THE HOLY LAND OR AT 6 P.M. LOCAL TIME, THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE WORLD)

All Christians are invited to participate privately or in community in this hour of prayer every Saturday.

The proposal is to participate in a Eucharistic Celebration or in a Holy Communion – the Church’s great prayer of intercession – while keeping in heart the intentions of the extraordinary prayer for Reconciliation, Unity and Peace.

Alternatively, a sequence of five biblical readings (or chosen excerpts thereof) with an exposition of the intentions of the extraordinary prayer is proposed.²² It is suggested to accompany them with prayers typical of the Christian community to which one belongs (acathistos hymn, rosary, etc.), accompanied by hymns, adoration or silent prayer.

In Jerusalem, a presence of prayer at the Holy Sepulchre is ensured.

SOLEMN CYCLE OF PRAYER INSPIRED FROM THE EASTER TRIDUUM DURING THE THIRD WEEK OF THE MONTH

The Christian communities and the individual Christians who are able to participate in this solemn monthly prayer cycle practiced during the third week of the month²³, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, are invited to make it the occasion of not only a spiritual but also a physical encounter among participating Christian communities. The constitution of groups of prayer, physically gathering the various Christian communities, is therefore encouraged.

The solemn prayer cycle every month is inspired by the Easter Triduum cycle, wherein the expectation of Saturday continues with the expectation of Unity and Peace, as promised by Christ. The Easter celebration of the Eucharist or Holy Communion on Sunday takes place within in the various communities, in the expectation and hope of a Eucharistic celebration around the One and only Tabernacle (the Body of Christ), in the fully unified Church of Christ.

SOLEMN PRAYER OF THURSDAY (AT 5 P.M. IN THE HOLY LAND OR AT 4 P.M. LOCAL TIME, THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE WORLD)

On the first day of solemn prayer, the Church is called to participate in the great prayer of Christ, our great Intercessor with the Father, at Gethsemane: « Thy Will be done, and not mine ». With this

²¹ Dan 12:1

²² The structure of the prayer and the proposed readings can be downloaded from the website www.prayerreconciliationunitypeace.info or www.prayrup.info.

²³ The first prayer Triduum of the year is held during the week of prayer for the Unity of Christians, i.e. the third week of January.

prayer, the Son, and with Him His Body, the Church, submit themselves completely to the Will of the Father. This prayer is therefore an act of complete confidence in the Father, to whom are entrusted the intentions of prayer, and in the promises of God that the Church intends to celebrate in union with its Shepherd, Christ and Lord.

A sequence of five biblical readings (or chosen excerpts thereof) and prayer intentions are proposed concerning Christ's Sacrifice and submission to the Father.²⁴ They may be accompanied by hymns, adoration or silent prayer.

This first part of the solemn prayer of Thursday is followed by a Eucharistic Celebration or a Holy Communion, the Perpetual Sacrifice of Christ, by which all sins are redeemed. In this way, the Church asks the Father, by the intercession of its Pastor Christ the Redeemer and Great Intercessor, the forgiveness of the sins that have prevented and still prevent the accomplishment of the intentions of prayer; the Church asks for Unity and Peace by Reconciliation.

In Jerusalem, a presence of prayer at Gethsemane is ensured.

SOLEMN PRAYER OF FRIDAY (AT 7 P.M. IN THE HOLY LAND OR AT 6 P.M. LOCAL TIME, THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE WORLD)

On the second day of solemn prayer, the Church is called to participate in the submissive abandonment of Christ to the Father on Golgotha, in a spirit of sacrificial offering to the Father of its sufferings and those of mankind: the sufferings of the present and those of the past, especially the sufferings related to the lack of Peace and to the division of the Church.

After a few introductory readings on the theme of the Lord's passion (or chosen excerpts thereof), adoration of the Cross is proposed, followed by the alternate reading of the four evangelical accounts of the Passion, and an exposition of the intentions of the extraordinary prayer²⁵. This prayer may be accompanied with other prayers typical of the Christian community to which one belongs (acathistos hymn, rosary, etc.), by hymns, adoration or silent prayer.

For the Christian communities who celebrate the Eucharistic adoration, this is proposed at the end of the prayer.

In Jerusalem, a presence of prayer at Gethsemane is ensured.

SOLEMN PRAYER OF SATURDAY (AT 7 P.M. IN THE HOLY LAND OR AT 6 P.M. LOCAL TIME, THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE WORLD)

On the third day of solemn prayer – in the presence of the closed Sepulchre – the Church is called to confident expectation of the accomplishment of God's promises. The Church celebrates the promises of Christ and prays for Reconciliation, Unity and Peace. The Church invokes, for herself and for mankind, Divine Mercy: the limit, set by the Creator, to the action of evil²⁶.

²⁴ The structure of the prayer and the proposed readings can be downloaded from the website www.prayerreconciliationunitypeace.info or www.prayrup.info.

²⁵ The structure of the prayer and the proposed readings can be downloaded from the website www.prayerreconciliationunitypeace.info or www.prayrup.info.

²⁶ John-Paul II, Encyclical "Dives in Misericordia", November 30, 1980.

An office of readings (or excerpts thereof to be chosen) accompanied by psalms on the theme of iniquity and the subversion of justice in the world, as well as those concerning God's promises for intermediate and eschatological time, are proposed – along with a development of the intentions of the extraordinary prayer.

In Jerusalem, a presence of prayer at the Holy Sepulchre is ensured.

You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.

Is 62: 6b-7

Jerusalem, January 6, 2007

