

Issue 4  
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#### **When will the Resurrection take Place?**

*by Naim Ateek*

Palestinian Christians in Jerusalem celebrated Holy Week and Easter 1996, both western and eastern (one week apart), without their brothers and sisters from the rest of the West Bank who, due to the Israeli military closure of Jerusalem, were prevented from joining them at the various rich and colorful services of this season. Yet, like many past dark periods in the history of the church, and in spite of the grim and bleak contemporary political situation, Christ's resurrection was proclaimed - Christ is risen, the Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia.

The resurrection faith was proclaimed by its first witnesses in Jerusalem 2000 years ago. Those of us who live in Jerusalem today still resound the proclamation that has been passed down to us from our forefathers and foremothers who first witnessed it. We call attention to the presence of a living faith in the risen Lord. We believe that Christ's resurrection had, and continues to have, universal implications for all of humankind. So we gladly continue to reverberate it enthusiastically and live it experientially.

Some of us have been waiting for another resurrection to take place here in Jerusalem. Our Palestinian people have had a long passion week which ended with the crucifixion and death of justice. Justice died and was laid in the tomb. The grave has been sealed by the authorities, so justice will remain dead and buried. Since its death, our area had experienced neither peace nor security. The people in power have long lived in the illusion that state building is possible without the foundation of justice. They built a strong military state. It has grown in power and wealth. It has advanced economically and technologically. In spite of all of its impressive achievements, however, it has not known any rest or peace. Its joys are constantly marred by a deep sense of insecurity.

Those in power in Israel today have placed their soldiers at the tomb to make sure that justice will not see the dawn of day. They have managed to write history from their own perspective, defined justice in their own terms, blamed the Palestinian victims for being in their way. They have been quite successful in creating new perceptions in people, reversing images and spreading rumors that suit them: injustice is only that which is committed against them; and truth is that which is defined by them. They always act in self defense while others are the aggressors. They are the real seekers of peace, others are the terrorists and warmongers. The Palestinian inhabitants of the land are the strangers and at best can only be resident aliens, while Jews who immigrate into the land are the real nationals. Furthermore, they believed that, by their genius and military power, they are capable of manufacturing the peace they want to create and, irrespective of justice, impose it on the Palestinians (and on the whole area), and ultimately extract international legitimacy for themselves.

Some of us who have witnessed these things throughout the past years and saw the sealed grave with the big stone, lived in the fear and despair that no resurrection is possible. Then we remembered the resurrection of Christ when God acted against injustice and evil. We recalled that Christ has been raised from the dead by the power of a just and loving God. Therefore, we have been living in the constant hope of another resurrection. Because that First Resurrection was possible when God honored justice and God's love triumphed, we believe today that justice for the Palestinians will not stay in the grave. The seal will be broken and the stone will be rolled away. Justice will be resurrected and God again will triumph. Peace will then be established

on the firm ground of a living and resurrected justice and its fruits will be security and reconciliation for all who are willing to receive it. Christians, therefore, can still place their trust in the God who raised Christ from the dead and who is able to change the tears of the injustice of the Friday of crucifixion into the joy of the Sunday of resurrection morning. The passion week for Palestinians has been long and painful. They now await the inevitable resurrection morn.

*Watch out you people in power! Christ is Risen. Alleluia.*

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*Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek, Director of Sabeel, is Canon of St. George's Episcopal Cathedral in Jerusalem and pastor to its Palestinian congregation.*

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### **A City that Belongs to God**

*by Cedar Duaybis*

***If you only knew today  
what is needed for peace!***

As Jesus came closer to Jerusalem he wept over it, saying, "If you only knew today what is needed for peace!..." (Luke 19:41-42). Today, thousands of years later, Jerusalem is still searching for peace. The city holy to Christians, Muslims and Jews is at the heart of the Palestine and Israel conflict and what becomes of Jerusalem will determine whether or not the Middle East region will ever achieve a lasting peace based on justice.

Sabeel brought together Palestinian and international participants to address the issue of Jerusalem from its multi-faceted angles. Held in Jerusalem 22-27 January 1996, under the title "The Significance of Jerusalem for Christians and of Christians for Jerusalem", the conference discussed the theological, spiritual, legal, political, social, and cultural aspects of Jerusalem. It is absolutely mandatory to point out that our intention for this conference was very far from any exclusive claim. As a Christian community, we acknowledge the equal right of Muslims, Jews, and Christians to the

city of Jerusalem. We stand for a wholehearted inclusivity. At the same time, we struggle against any marginalization or peripherization of the Christian community or any other community.

### ***The Significance of Jerusalem***

The participants sought to raise the consciousness of the international community concerning the future status of Jerusalem, and to express a prophetic vision for a just and lasting peace in Palestine and Israel. It was furthermore an opportunity to educate Christians about their own Christian heritage. It reminded both easterners and westerners that the Christian faith which started in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, draws us together in solidarity, and empowers us to renew our energies in the work of justice.

The conference began and concluded with an ecumenical worship service, with the Most Reverend Samir Kafity, President Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, delivering the sermon during the opening worship. Father Elias Chacour, President and founder of Mar Elias College, Ibillin and Executive Committee member of Sabeel, Liberation Theology Center, delivered the sermon during the concluding worship service. The beginning of each conference day started with an ecumenical worship service which involved both clergy and laypersons.

The opening session featured the keynote address by Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem Michel Sabbah, as well as welcoming remarks by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and members of Sabeel, Liberation Theology Center. With messages of support, as well as participation, by members from the Latin, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Syrian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, Coptic, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Brethren, Roman Catholic, Reformed, Episcopal, Baptist, Latter Day Saints, Evangelical, and Free churches, plus Mennonites, Quakers, Unitarians and Disciples, as well as the World Council of Churches and Middle East Council of Churches, this was a truly ecumenical event.

### ***Conference Highlights***

The conference addressed the many complex angles of Jerusalem by having a variety of speakers, both local and international, focus on the different problems lying before the Christian community, as well as the Palestinian population at large. Albert Aghazarian of Birzeit University discussed Jerusalem's historic plurality, while Father Dr. Maroun Lahham of Beit Jala Latin Seminary presented the historic continuity of the Christian presence. Canon Dr. Naim Ateek, director of Sabeel, gave a Palestinian theology of Jerusalem, and Rev. Dr. Don Wagner explained the history and dangers of Christian fundamentalism, while Drs. Geris Khoury and John Esposito gave their

visions for Muslim-Christian relations. During a session on current realities, advocate Lynda Brayer discussed the effects of the Israeli closure of the West Bank and Gaza.

A panel discussion on the political future of Jerusalem was led by Mr. Afif Safieh, Palestinian Special Envoy to the Holy See, Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, President of Al-Quds University, and Mr. Dedi Zucker, Israeli Member of Knesset, while Dr. Usama Halabi of the Quaker Legal Aid Society talked about the legal requirements for a just resolution and Mrs. Jean Zaru addressed the challenges to Christian unity. An environmental profile of Jerusalem was presented by Dr. Jad Isaac, General Director of the Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem and a vision for preserving our 2,000 year Christian heritage was outlined by Mrs. Ruth Hummel of Washington, DC. The Jordanian ambassador to Israel, Dr. Marwan Mu'asher, and Palestinian representative in Jerusalem, Mr. Faisal Husseini, offered words of greetings and encouragement, as well.

The conference provided an opportunity to foster relationships and for Christians to stand in solidarity at this critical moment in history, especially as the final status negotiations on Jerusalem are scheduled to begin in May 1996.

Approximately 400 participants, from over 23 nations, including Sweden, the United Kingdom, the US, Kenya, South Africa, Jordan, India, Korea, and Taiwan, attended the Jerusalem based conference sessions. Over 1,000 people in total were involved through programs in Jerusalem's Old City, Ramallah, Taybeh, Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, Beit Jala, Ramleh, Haifa and Nazareth, as well as through an alternative tour of Israeli settlements and an optional trip to Gaza.

The visits to the cities and villages in the West Bank gave those who are forbidden entry into Jerusalem, because of the Israeli closure of the city, an opportunity to participate in the conference. It also gave the international participants an opportunity to meet Palestinians in their locations and hear their hopes, fears and concerns. The program, which was organized by local ecumenical committees, varied in each location and included a Dubkeh (folklore dancing) performance in Beit Jala, a panel discussion in Beit Sahour, a visit to a Palestinian folklore museum in Bethlehem, and a discussion on the history of the Christian presence in Taybeh. In addition a number of participants visited the town of Ramleh, inside Israel, and dialogued with the local Christian community, after a lecture delivered by an Orthodox priest.

In Ramallah, for example, the group met with a number of prominent Palestinian Christians in the fields of public life, education, law, women's committees, as well as leaders of most of the churches. The meeting came in the wake of the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council, so the discussion centered around the participation of the Christian community in public life. The problems and responsibilities of the

educational institutions in general and the Christian institutions in particular during the new stage of nation building in a pluralistic society were discussed. The participants also had an opportunity to visit Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, newly elected member of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Dinner was an opportunity for a more personal exchange. The international participants were able to share in their hosts' experience of everyday life in this critical and difficult transitional period, and hear their vision for the future. The evening ended in an atmosphere of warmth, friendship, and solidarity.

### ***The Future of Jerusalem***

Prior to the concluding ecumenical worship, the participants enthusiastically accepted the conference message, and pledged to work for justice and peace in Jerusalem and throughout Palestine and Israel.

The conference participants reaffirmed that Jerusalem should serve as the capital for two sovereign and independent states, Israel and Palestine. They insisted that the government of Israel should forthwith remove all checkpoints, roadblocks, and obstacles preventing free access to Jerusalem for Palestinians. There should be an immediate cessation of all land expropriations in the West Bank including East Jerusalem and of the building and expansion of Jewish settlements there, especially the Jebel Abu Ghneim (Har Homa) settlement. The government of Israel should change its planning policies so that Palestinians have equal rights to build housing in Jerusalem and develop their institutions which have been restricted since 1967. East Jerusalem, as an integral part of the occupied territories, should be included in all political arrangements relating to these territories, including self-determination, release of prisoners, right of return and eventual sovereignty.

The conference participants committed themselves to respect the noble ideals of all religions and disassociated themselves from all fundamentalist tendencies which subvert the dignity of people under the pretext of an alleged divine mandate. The participants repudiated the ideology and activities of Christian Zionist groups and others who seek to sanctify exclusive Israeli control over the Holy City through such campaigns as "Jerusalem 3000".

The participants visited with Palestinian Arab Christians in Israel, especially in the Galilee, and affirmed their demand that equal rights and opportunities for Palestinian Arabs living in the state of Israel be granted. Palestinian Christians affirmed their essential attachment to the Holy City and acknowledged its significance for Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Both the local and international Christians recognized their responsibility to bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in this, the land of his birth, death and resurrection.

The conference participants were unanimous in expressing this responsibility. All committed themselves to taking the conference message to their home churches and communities, as well as to translating their experiences into concrete action and continuing to strive for a just peace in the region. For peace to endure, justice must roll down like water and righteousness like an everflowing stream (Amos 5:24).

See also [Jerusalem: What Makes for Peace!](#) (Newsletter No. 8)

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*Cedar Duaybis, a Sabeel Executive Committee member, is concerned with women's issues in church and society.*

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### **Conference Feedback**

"As a first and one of its kind, this was an excellent conference ... [it] brought home the crisis in a real way, particularly, as we spent time with the 'living stones' of this great and wonderful land."

"I have met people from very different backgrounds among speakers and participants. It has enriched me a great deal and I have learnt a lot more about the situation in Palestine."

"The worship service ... enhanced and reinforced the quest for PEACE in Jerusalem and peace for the world."

"A great privilege to be here - the challenge is now with us to act."

"Thank you for bringing all of us into the SABEEL, the concrete/creative way of searching as believers for peace based on truth and justice. The conference has been a challenging and deeply moving moment for me in Jerusalem."

"The night we spent at public lectures in different communities was great. It is vital to meet the people at the heart of the issue."

"The conference has achieved its goal in ... building a solidarity network of committed and knowledgeable people."

"This conference was one of the most informative and significant...I have attended. The spirit of ecumenicity and openness ... was evident."

"My prayers (and action) will be with you."

"What was outstanding was ... the inclusion of persons of different Christian denominations, the catholicity of approach, and the excellent caliber of speakers."

"It was wonderful to ... see so many parts of the Palestinian territory. This has been an incomparable learning experience for me."

"I feel honored to have attended this conference and hope that I can somehow help this part of God's church. I feel ashamed at my past ignorance and inaction."

"Most encouraging ... is the determination ... to not allow this conference to come to a close..., but to take ... concrete steps ... that will bring about change, promote awareness, and prevent further deterioration of the present tentative situation."

"Consistent high standard of speakers - some outstanding - contributed to a rounded focus upon the significance of Jerusalem, i.e. historic, religious, political, etc."

"The visit to Galilee and the Mount of Beatitudes will live forever in one's memory. The recital of the Beatitudes looking over the Sea of Galilee was marvelous and moving."

"I left feeling Sabeel can be a great instrument used by God for renewal in the church and for significant trusted witness in the Holy City and to the world."

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## **Good Friday**

*by Jonathan Kuttab*

The Arabic word for Good Friday is jum'a al hazini which means "Sad Friday". Sad Friday denotes the situation of Christ and Christianity on that Friday two thousand years ago: Christ had been humiliated, condemned, and crucified as a criminal. His disciples were all disheartened, scattered to the four winds, and broken in spirit. They had abandoned their Lord and Master, who had apparently betrayed their hopes of a glorious kingdom which was heralded by his triumphant entry in Jerusalem. It represented the depth of despair for the apparent victory of the forces of evil, oppression and hypocrisy. The Romans, the foreign occupiers, had collaborated with the local political and religious leadership to crush the fresh voice of the prophet from Nazareth. All hope seemed to have been abandoned.

Palestinians are living today in the "Sad Friday" period of their history. Never before did their situation seem as desperate as it is now. Indeed, the very promise of a new reality that was heralded in Madrid, and the beginnings of the Palestinian National Authority, only contributed to the deepening sense of despair when that promise seemed betrayed with new and more repressive measures of collective punishment. People correctly point out that their current situation is worse than it had ever been under the occupation. The existence of a "Peace Process" has eliminated the chances of outside intervention on behalf of the Palestinians and their human rights. The "on-going negotiations" have successfully insulated Israel from righteous indignation by the international community, and from the requirements of abiding by international law and international norms. Israel even boasts that the "occupation" has now ended since the Palestinians are participating in the process of determining their future. The United Nations and the international community have been sidelined, and reference is no longer made to the Geneva Conventions or the requirements of international law. The Oslo Agreement now appears to be the only legal reference point for the dispute.

In addition, the Palestinian Authority is totally under siege, requiring the good will of Israelis to simply carry out the day to day functions of life. Where in the past the Palestinians could rage against and confront the officials of the military government and the civil administration, now they can only vent their frustration at Palestinian officials, who are powerless to do anything, but to carry the requests to their Israeli masters, if and when, the Israelis agree to meet with them.

On the economic front, the situation is now far worse, with the little international assistance which is given being diverted to pay the salaries of the Palestinian policemen and officials, whose primary function is to protect Israeli security. Pressure is placed on donors to fund the Palestinian Authority directly and not the numerous NGO's as in the past. Travel into Israel and East Jerusalem is now virtually prohibited. Furthermore, travel within the West Bank from one village or town to the next is severely restricted as the Israelis have cantonized the West Bank into hundreds of small enclaves and restricted movement between them. Even the most optimistic

Palestinian is now feeling a deep sense of depression and despair, as what looked like the beginnings of statehood, freedom, and self-determination, is being turned into an abysmal combination of bantustans and a puppet regime that is powerless to do anything other than pursue Israeli interests.

Yet precisely in this dark hour of despair, the message of Easter needs to be proclaimed again: Christ will not remain in the tomb nor will evil and oppression have the last word. Christ rose again on the third day with a glorious triumph over the forces of evil and darkness, and over death itself proclaiming to the whole world a new era and the victory of good over evil.

The message of Easter, for Palestinians, as well as for the poor and oppressed everywhere, is that God is sovereign in the affairs of this world. No matter how dark things appear to be on "Sad Friday", Easter is coming and with it the promise, hope and certainty of resurrection, a new beginning, and the victory of life over death.

It is the task of Christian Palestinians, out of the depth of their agony, suffering, and despair, to proclaim that after Sad Friday comes the glorious Easter Sunday, and to repeat the centuries old greeting:

*"Christ is Risen - He is Risen Indeed."*

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*Jonathan Kuttab is a human rights lawyer and a member of Sabeel's Steering Committee.*

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## **How Can We Save the Peace Process?**

*by Naim Ateek*

The road to peace is filled with obstacles. Undoubtedly, the suicide bombings at the end of February and the beginning of March dealt a heavy blow to the peace process. Israel imposed a tight blockade on the whole of the West Bank and Gaza that collectively punished over two million Palestinians. Consequently, the Palestinian community has suffered more than at any other time before. In April, the tension at the Lebanese border escalated with clashes between the Israeli army and Hizbullah guerrillas that led to

katyusha rockets from one side and shells and fighter jet planes from the other. Approximately 200 Lebanese civilians were killed, and more than 400,000 people had to flee their homes from over 50 villages and towns in south Lebanon, to escape the bombardment of their homes, thus yielding another blow to the peace process.

Israel's retaliatory policy has never been an eye for an eye but a hundred eyes for an eye and a hundred teeth for a tooth. Israel still believes in the logic of war even though it has constantly failed. Tragically, it is still the dominant logic in our world. Instead of bringing peace closer, it usually fuels animosity, deepens the love for revenge, and prolongs the conflict.

What needs to be done in order to salvage the peace process and achieve a viable peace in our region?

**1) New sponsors are needed.** With great candor one can say that the United States has not been an honest broker in this peace process. Russia appears to be nominally involved. Its own domestic problems seem to consume its energy, so it is unable to play any viable role. The United States has been the sole active player. In a presidential election year, it is difficult to trust the purity of US motives and the objectivity of its actions. Apparently, Israel seems to be comfortable with American sponsorship and especially with President Clinton's support. Many Palestinians, however, are not. Yet they have no other recourse.

New or expanded sponsorship is needed. Should the parties go back to the United Nations? Can the United Nations carry out the peace process fairly and impartially without United States imposition? In the absence of a strong UN, many people would prefer to see the expansion of the sponsorship to include the European Union? The involvement of a country like France would seem important because of its more balanced positions. What has become abundantly clear is that, given the present composition of the sponsors, the peace process is not going anywhere. In order to guarantee better results, there is a need for broadening its sponsorship.

**2) A new commitment to the protection of human rights is needed.** Even when one understands Israel's security needs, it is difficult to accept or condone its large scale reprisals. One gets the feeling that Israel acts out of a motivation of punishment and revenge rather than out of a desire to achieve security. Many people are asking the question: can security needs be achieved without large scale destruction and collective punishments, without rubbing people's noses in the dust, humiliating and dehumanizing them? In its attempt to achieve security, Israel does not seem to show any qualms in suppressing the human rights of whole communities of people. Israel actions against Lebanon are more violent and terrorist than those against itself, which it rightly condemns.

The suicide bombings and the katyushas were carried out against Israel by a small group of extremists who do not represent the majority of the population in Palestine or in south Lebanon. However, the blockade, the collective punishment, the large scale destruction, and the killings have been carried out by the state of Israel and by its legitimate government, against mostly innocent men, women, and children.

The Palestinian community repeatedly expressed its condemnation of the suicide bombings through statements in the media as well as demonstrations, yet the punishment persisted. Inhuman Israeli practices have called into question the Israeli government's intention for peace. Many people feel that Israel is not only fighting extremists, it is fighting the whole of the Palestinian people, its Authority, and even the peace process itself. The same applies to Israel's massive destruction in south Lebanon. It was fighting not only Hizbullah, it was fighting Lebanon and intentionally destroying its fragile infrastructure, thus delaying its capability for national recovery. Under the guise of security, therefore, Israel is committing a worse terror. Its actions do not build trust nor contribute to peace. On the contrary, they breed more violence and nourish terrorism. What is needed is a new whole hearted commitment to the protection of human rights that cannot be simply swept by and curtailed as a result of extremist actions. It has to be unconditional and reflect the sacredness of human rights. Incidentally, one must note that the Palestinian Authority also has to be responsible for the protection of human rights. Many Palestinians are thankful for the role a number of local and international NGOs and churches have played, in quickly drawing attention to all human rights abuses, no matter the perpetrator. The Palestinian Authority must continue to be held accountable, as must Israel, for the protection of human rights.

**3) A new honesty is needed.** A growing number of Israelis and Palestinians are confused and bewildered about the peace process. Conflicting signals are sent all the time. Israel cannot sit at the negotiating table and talk peace while, under the table, it continues to confiscate land and enlarge its settlements. Distrust seems to be growing on both sides. This can be minimized by a greater measure of honesty on the part of the leaders. There is a great amount of unnecessary suffering that is caused by dishonesty. If the leaders on both sides can level more with their own people and communicate to them what is really happening, a good measure of progress will be achieved. As it is, many things remain in the dark and, therefore, contribute to distrust, frustration, and despair. Honesty is still the best policy. Unfortunately it is seldom used.

**4) New attitudes are needed.** Israel still treats Palestinians as less than human. It must change its attitude towards them. It must understand that most Palestinians today are genuinely seeking peace. They cannot be treated, a priori, as guilty and as terrorist. A change of attitude will help tremendously. At the same time, the best way to fight

terrorism is to restore justice to the Palestinians. Israel itself suffers from a victimization complex. This can be understandable in light of the Holocaust. As a friend told me, one cannot go forward by always looking backward. In the Holocaust Jews were the victims and the Nazis were the victimizers. In the Palestine conflict Israel is the victimizer and the Palestinians are the victimized. Yet Israel continues to perceive itself as the victim. This complex forces it to act brutally against the Palestinians. The sooner Israel realizes its own need for health, the better it is able to move forward constructively and positively with the peace process. The Palestinians and Israelis today, with the exception of extremists on both sides, are partners in peacemaking. They should perceive each others as equal partners. They need to treat each other as fellow human beings involved in a new struggle for peace. The impression of most Palestinians is that Israel still treats them, generally, as enemies. It still behaves towards them with an occupier mentality. The occupation, therefore, is not over. There is an urgent need to relate to Palestinians as human beings with respect and dignity, rather than with arrogance and condescension. The humiliation must stop.

Palestinians and Israelis today have a very good chance to carve an honorable peace based on an acceptable justice that will ensure a good measure of security and will give a new life to the region. In spite of all the miseries and tragedies of the last few months, the climate is ripe for a new thrust in the negotiations. In its meeting in Gaza on 24 April 1996, the Palestinian National Council agreed to cancel from its covenant all those clauses that called for the destruction of the state of Israel. On the following day, the Labor Party of Shimon Peres omitted from its election campaign any objections to the establishment of a Palestinian state. These are hopeful signs that can give a new impetus for negotiations. It is therefore hoped, that with a renewed commitment based on some of the ideas expressed above, it will be possible to save the peace process and put new life into it, which would eventually lead to the achievement of a viable peace in our region.

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## **A Prayer for Peace**

*by Joseph Cornelius Donnelly*

Lord God,  
Jerusalem is our mother.  
Jesus is our brother.

You are peace.  
She is peace.  
He is peace.  
Brothers and sisters,  
Gathered together in these tense times,  
We are your own family of peace...  
here and now,  
here and everywhere,  
today and tomorrow inshahallah.  
We were created for peace.  
We live for peace.  
We die for peace.  
Sabeel...sabeel...inshahallah.  
You are the path and the peace.

Here on the Mount of Olives where you wept for Jerusalem,  
Heal our deep hurts and deep hopes  
In this, your city of resurrection.  
Heal all the peoples of this land and all who love her.

Restore our courage.  
Renew our commitment.  
Raise us up again  
That we may be born once more as peace.

Inshahallah,  
May your grace lead us home.  
Amen.

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*Joseph Cornelius Donnelly works for Catholic Relief Services in Jerusalem. This prayer was written for the concluding ecumenical worship of the conference.*

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**Fasting in the Coptic Orthodox Church**

*by Father Raphael*

### ***Biblical and Traditional Fasting***

Fasting is the oldest commandment humanity has known. It was the commandment God gave to Adam, to abstain from eating from a certain tree while eating from all the others (Genesis 2:16-17). Thus God put a limit so that the body would not exceed it. One should abstain not for deprivation and repression, but so one can rise above the level of the body and matter. This is the wisdom or philosophy of fasting.

Christ started his ministry with a fast. He rejected the temptations of Satan to eat in order to live, and revealed to him that humans are not only of flesh, but in them there is another element, the spirit. The food of the spirit is every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). Many of the prophets fasted including David (Psalm 35:13, 69:10), Daniel (Daniel 9:3), and Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:4). The Apostles also fasted after the Ascension of our Lord and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, as proclaimed by Christ (Matthew 9:15). This was the first fast by the Christian Church.

### ***The Significance of Fasting in the Coptic Orthodox Church***

There are nearly 200 days of fasting in the Coptic Orthodox Church each year, and a fast should precede every grace and liturgy. For every blessing God bestows on us, we receive with fasting to be in a spiritual state worthy of his blessings. Feasts bring blessings, so fasting precedes every feast. This includes: Holy Communion; the Baptismal Sacrament, when the one to be baptized, the Godfather, the Godmother, and the priest should fast to receive this new spiritual birth; and the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, when the priest and all those who are to be anointed should fast, except for the very sick and old who cannot. One has to fast to prepare the soul for the blessings of the Holy Spirit which believers receive through the sacraments of the church.

### ***How to Fast in the Coptic Church***

The Coptic Church defines fasting as the abstinence from food for a certain period of time followed by the consumption of vegetable food, without animal fat or dairy products. There must be an abstinence from food for a certain period of time, for if we eat from the beginning of the day without abstinence, we become vegetarians and are not fasting. The period of abstinence differs from one person to another, according to their spirituality, health and age, but there is a minimum to this.

The spiritual state of the person during the fast is the most important attribute. The period of abstinence should be ascetic. One should not care for the body, but be above the level of eating and food, and should not keep thinking about when and what to eat, or prepare delicious food. The person who fasts should not eat covetously after abstinence. Those who do so, or choose their favorite dishes, have not spiritually benefited or learnt to be ascetic. We must begin with prayer and thanks before eating. We should refrain from eating meat or any animal products after abstinence, for the calories and other materials contained, stir lust and fierce savage nature. Birds and animals who eat flesh are more aggressive than those who eat grass and plants. Thus, we conclude that vegetable food is tranquil and sedative.

### ***The Coptic Church and Vegetable Food***

In the Holy Bible, fasting was performed by vegetable food. Vegetable food during fast is a Godly order with its origin in nature. From Adam and Eve until after the flood and Noah's Ark, humans did not eat meat, but survived, and lived long lives, on vegetables and fruit alone. Daniel ate vegetables so as not to defile himself with the portion of the king's meat (Daniel 1:8,12), while Ezekiel ate vegetables during his fast as the Lord ordered him (Ezekiel 4:9). Vegetarians, including monks and hermits, lived very long lives. Thus, we do not fear fasting lest it weakens our bodies, for it benefits the soul as well as the body.

### ***Fasts in the Coptic Church***

The Coptic calendar starts in September. The first fast of the new year is the Christmas fast (Fast of the Divine Incarnation), and the final one is the fast of St. Mary, while in between there is the fast of Nineveh, Lent, and the Apostles Fast.

The Christmas fast begins on 25 November and ends on 7 January, a total of 43 days. We fast the forty days to receive the Incarnated Word of God in the person of Christ, just as Moses fasted on the mountain to receive the written Word of God. The additional three days remind us of the miracle of the moving of Al-Mukattam mountain in Cairo by the Patriarch Abraam Ibn Ziraa, the 62nd Pope of the See of Alexandria, in the presence of Saint Simon the Tanner, in the tenth century. During the three day Nineveh's Fast, which precedes lent by fourteen days, we fast for repentance, as the people of Nineveh fasted when the prophet Jonah called them to repent. God forgave them their sins, as they each repented of their evil ways. In this way we fast and submit in true repentance with tears for God to have mercy upon us.

Lent lasts for a period of 55 days, its beginning connected with the date of the Resurrection. It consists of 40 Holy days representing the time when our Lord Jesus Christ fasted on the mountain, plus Passion week, and an additional week for the

Saturdays and Sundays during Lent when we should not abstain from food. However, we should not eat any meat or dairy products during the entire Lenten period. The aim of all these fasts is to lead the soul to repentance, and deep prayer with a broken heart and a humiliated body, sharing the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. "That I may know him, and the power of the Resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made comformable unto his death" (Philip 3:10).

The Apostles Fast begins the day after Pentecost and ends on St. Paul's and Peter's Day (12 July). This fast, for the the sake of spreading the kingdom of God through ministry and preaching, varies between 15 days, if the Resurrection Day is late, and 49 days if it is early. The Holy Virgin Mary Fast begins on 7 August, and ends 15 days later on 22 August. This fast is in memory of the Ascension of the Body of the Holy Virgin to heaven.

In addition to the above fast days, which occur at specific times of the year, Copts should also fast on Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year, except during the fifty days after the Resurrection, and on Christmas and Epiphany, if they are on a Wednesday or Friday. Wednesday reminds us of the betrayal of Judas, while Friday reminds us of the great Good Friday, the day of redemption when the Lord of Glory was crucified.

The Coptic Church rejoices more during the periods of fasting than on other days, for fasting is a reconciliation with God, a period when a broken heart calls and God listens. During a fast, we abstain from bodily food and care for the everlasting food of everlasting life. "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (John 6:27).

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*Translated from Arabic by the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate. Father Raphael is a Coptic Orthodox priest*

*in Jerusalem.*

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### **Eastern and Oriental Celebration of Easter in Jerusalem**

*by John Tleel*

Christmas is not only the day God came to earth and became a simple man for the sake of humanity, but it is also the day of theosis (deification). Yet Christmas is not the most ancient feast of the Church. The oldest Christian celebration is the Pascha (Easter), the day of Christ's Resurrection. This has been celebrated by the Church every Sunday since its inception, as every Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, every Sunday is Easter, the victory of Life over death. For this reason, the Eastern Orthodox Church is called the Church of the Resurrection.

The Eastern as well as the Oriental Churches are very much attached to their Christian traditions. Their celebrations of Easter and the reenactment of our Lord Jesus Christ's Passion, His last days on earth and His Resurrection from the dead, are the most impressive. They are marked by a richness of expressive and splendid ceremonies. All these religious and lay manifestations are unique and unparalleled in Jerusalem and

the Holy Land, where Christianity was born, flourished and from where it spread through the nations of the world.

Preparations for Easter start 50 days before with the Great Lent and its different ceremonies, particularly in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The various communities - the eastern Greek Orthodox, the oriental Armenian (respectively the first and third among the three main Christian communities, the Latin Catholic being the second), the oriental Syrian and oriental Coptic, hold services in their private and common sections according to their respective rights and boundaries, as defined by the existing status quo (1852) of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The main Easter ceremonies in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in particular, and at the various denominational churches in general, start on Palm Sunday and continue throughout Holy Week to Easter Sunday,

On Palm Sunday the Greek Orthodox celebrate their Pontifical Liturgy at the Katholikon, the main Greek Orthodox Church within the Church of the Anastasis (Resurrection) / Church of the Holy Sepulcher. When the Liturgy is over, the participating clergy walk in procession to the Rotunda, the round church surrounding the edicule of Christ's Holy Tomb. This impressive procession, which is led by the Patriarch, circles the Rotunda three times and continues around the various parts of the church until it returns to the Katholikon. As the Greek Orthodox Procession concludes, the oriental communities, the Armenian, the Syrian and the Coptic, start their own colorful processions.

On Maundy Thursday the Ceremony of the Washing of the Feet takes place at the Parvis, the paved courtyard, of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The Greek Orthodox Patriarch kneels and washes the feet of twelve clerics. On this day the oriental communities celebrate their own ceremonies at their churches and convents all over the Old City of Jerusalem.

Good Friday is a full day of continuous services and processions. It starts in the morning from the Lithostrotos Pilate's Praetorium, where Jesus Christ was tried and condemned to death. Each group of pilgrims bearing its own cross passes through the traditional Stations and finally the, more than symbolic, Way (of the Cross) culminates in the arrival at Golgotha (Calvary).

The mournful Holy Week concludes joyfully as grief turns into festivity. Saturday is the Day of the Holy Fire, and Sunday is Easter, the Day of the Resurrection. The Holy

Fire or Sabt el-Nur (Arabic for 'Saturday of the Holy Light') - solely an Orthodox ceremony and celebration for centuries - has grown up in a very traditionalistic and even religio-nationalistic manner. A group of young men, accompanied by some leading lay figures of the Greek Orthodox Community, demonstrate joyfully in the streets of the Old City and inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. This Zaffeh (Arabic for 'joyful demonstration' such as during a wedding) shows clearly the pride this indigenous Palestinian population is feeling. All these and other experiences, especially the Light that gushes from the Tomb, will go on making a deep impression on the minds and feelings of all the faithful. This is especially true for the thousands of Greek and Cypriot pious hadjinas (pilgrims), and other pilgrims and tourists who come from every corner of the globe to experience and witness Easter in the Holy City of Jerusalem, and to light their candle with the Holy Light. In fact, the Holy Light is taken from Jerusalem by procession to the Christian towns and villages throughout Palestine and Israel, and even by plane to Greece.

In the evening, the Ethiopians have their own way to mark and celebrate the end of the Great Saturday and the Eve of Easter. On the rooftop of St. Helena's Church (the Grotto of the Finding of the Holy Cross) where they have their modest dwellings, they circle in procession the dome of the church. The atmosphere is religiously exotic and genuinely Ethiopian with umbrellas adorned with glittering jewels. The church itself, a Constantinian Edifice which the Armenians prefer to call the Church of St. Gregory, the Illuminator, is part of the Armenian section inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and the above mentioned rooftop is also connected with the Coptic Church.

This year, Eastern and Oriental Easter is celebrated very early, on 1 April, according to the Julian (eastern) calendar and 14 April on the Gregorian or western calendar. Sometimes it can take place as late as the 8 May (1983). The moon and other components are considered to determine the date. To celebrate a common and fixed Easter is a wish that is shared by all the churches and one day, hopefully toward the year 2000, with God's help and with much Christian endeavor it will be realized.

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*Dr. John N. Tleel, a member of the Greek Orthodox Church, lives in Jerusalem's Old City.*

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## **From Ur to Hebron**

*by Anne Montgomery*

Scripture offers Abraham's journey from Ur to Hebron as a model of faith and a trust in God that empowers us to risk the unknown. This past year, with several detours, I followed in the footsteps of Abraham. In July, I stood on the ziggurat at Ur where he began his journey into faith. On Good Friday I walked on a roof in Karakosh, near ancient Nineveh, listening to the chanting of the faithful in a village that out of its own poverty had housed and fed refugees from cities bombed during the Gulf War. On February 28, not far from Abraham's final resting place, I sat on the roof of a house about to be bulldozed.

To Iraq we had carried a few boxes of medicine for children dying in pain, some from easily curable diseases. In Hebron we had only our bodies, to be dragged away by Israeli soldiers.

When a young man immolates himself and others, when government leaders carry such terrorism to homes and cities, do they truly think their mandate is from heaven? I am sure that Abraham, embracing his son on the mountain he named, "God will provide," found another perspective on the will of God.

The people of Karakosh chanted the meaning for which we search: Cross and resurrection are one, the victory of life and hope over death and despair. Perhaps this is the only way to cling to hope in a journey which, for both Iraqis and Palestinians, is a continuation of "Sad Friday" and can so easily lead to despair prompting either passivity or violence.

The deeper theological point is that something systematically evil is taking place: a psychological warfare which we can recognize as the battle with the Principalities and Powers. We should be ready with the weapons of the powerless, the armor described by Paul, if we are to resist that hopelessness which makes small nations surrender their resources and the oppressed resort to bombs.

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*Anne Montgomery, RSCJ, from New York, works with the Christian Peacemaker Team in Hebron.*

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## **Easter in a Palestinian Home**

*by Maha Ateek*

Easter week is a busy week in the home, as well as at church. To celebrate Easter everything should be clean. Spring cleaning starts at the beginning of the week, while special care is taken to clean the windows and to take the carpets out in the sun. New summer clothes are bought for the children to replace their winter clothes. The rain usually stops by then, and the weather can be beautiful and sunny. The most important task is making Easter cookies, which should be baked before Saturday, as this day is dedicated to cooking for Easter day and to dyeing eggs - what a week!

The extended family gathers together for Easter lunch. The traditional meal includes stuffed chicken with rice and meat along with stuffed zucchini and stuffed vine leaves. In the afternoon and for a few days after Easter, relatives and friends exchange visits to greet each other. Muslims visit their Christian friends and neighbors to wish them a happy feast, just as Christians do following Ramadan. It is such a beautiful tradition. Visits are usually short because of the numerous visits everyone makes. A typical visit starts with a very small glass of liquor offered with chocolate (usually an egg shaped chocolate), then the hostess comes with a plate full of Easter cookies. Forcing people to eat is part of our hospitality, if you are full and can't eat you have to take it with you in a napkin. Colored eggs are offered to the children. When I was a child I remember that my grandmother and others used to dye their eggs with onion skins or with wild yellow and red flowers.

Every home makes Easter cookies, of which there are two kinds. One is stuffed with dates and has the shape of a crown, which symbolizes the crown of thorns, while the other kind is stuffed with nuts and is egg-shaped, it symbolizes the rock in front of Christ's tomb, or the sponge used to give Christ the wine vinegar. Both cookies are made of the same dough which consists of semolina, margarine, yeast and water. This process is very long. Some women make them by themselves, while others order them, which is very expensive. A third way of making the cookies is through social gatherings. A group of three or four women get together to help each other. Every evening they meet in a different home to help the hostess make her cookies. Husbands sometimes join their wives to help or just to visit each other. These are part of such a beautiful tradition.

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*Maha Ateek received her degree in Home Economics in Beirut. She is coordinator of women's activities, organist, and volunteer administrative assistant at St. George's Episcopal Parish, Jerusalem.*

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## **Easter Cookies (Ka'ek wa Ma'mool)**

### **Ingredients**

#### *Pastry*

- 1 kg. (2 lbs.) semolina
- 500g (1 lb.) melted butter
- 1 tsp. yeast
- 1/2 cup rose water
- 1 cup warm water

#### *Date filling*

- 500g (1 lb.) pack of pitted and kneaded dates
- (or pitted dates and 20g, or 1 tbs., butter to knead)
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg

#### *Walnut filling*

- 500g (1 lb.) coarsely ground or chopped walnuts
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/4 cup sugar

### **Method**

- 1.** Add butter to the semolina in a large bowl. Work with your fingers until the ingredients are almost blended.
- 2.** Sprinkle with the rose water and work with your fingers, but do not knead. Cover the bowl and leave for 24 hours.
- 3.** Sprinkle the yeast in the semolina. Slowly add the water and work the semolina with your fingers and palms until the semolina becomes a soft pliable dough.
- 4.** To make filling combine ingredients. (If you are using fresh dates, first heat them in a moderate oven for a few minutes, then mash to a stiff paste with a fork. Ensure all stones are removed).

*To shape cookies as a 'rock'.*

Take a tablespoon of dough, form into a ball and flatten. Place a dessert spoon of filling into the center. Enclose the filling, joining the edges, and flatten a little. Mark the top of the 'rock' with a fork to make a textured pattern.

*To shape cookies as a 'crown' - date filling.*

Take a tablespoon of dough. Flatten into a thin (3mm, 1/8") rectangle 5cm by 10cm (2" by 4"). Take a piece of date mixture and roll it into a 1cm (2/5") roll 10cm (4") long. Place date roll on pastry rectangle. Roll pastry around date filling and smooth the seam, then join ends together in the shape of a 'crown' (like a small donut).

Smooth the joins, and score the top of the 'crown' to make a textured pattern.

Place on a baking tray, and bake in a moderate oven for 20-30 minutes, or until they begin to brown on top. When cool, sprinkle with powdered sugar.

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### **Snapshots of Our Activities**

The conference on *The Significance of Jerusalem for Christians and of Christians for Jerusalem* placed the ministry of Sabeel on a renewed, challenging and exciting path both locally and internationally. This new agenda does not minimize, but enhances, the existing on-going programs, which are necessary for the renewal of hope for Palestinian Christians. Among these programs are Clergy Meetings, Bible Studies, Speakers' Bureau, and Youth Work.

#### ***Continuing Programs***

##### ***Clergy Meetings***

A small group of parish priests have been faithfully attending this monthly event since it began in May 1995. Ecumenism is evident, not only in the variety of headgear and clergy robes of different traditions, but also in the visible growing atmosphere of mutual trust, understanding, and Christian love. It is this spirit that brings together people of the same faith as they share prayers, fellowship, and food, while discussing important issues such as the needs and fears of their parishioners, and the rising negative effect of extremism, including Christian Zionism. They have also written a book review of *Christianity in the Arab World* by Jordan's Prince Hassan.

In order to challenge the obstacles imposed by the closure, the March meeting was held in Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem, West Bank. This ensured the participation of two newcomers. Consequently, the May meeting will be held in Ramallah to facilitate the attendance of clergy from the northern parts of the West Bank. In June there will be a field trip to the Galilee, in order to build ties with the parish priests there.

### ***Bible Study***

A 16 week course began on 18 April to study the Apocalypse of St. John or the Book of Revelation with the help of Carlos Mesters' book *The Hope of the People Who Struggle*. Carlos Mesters, a Dutch Carmelite priest, works among the poor in Brazil doing theology on the ground.

### ***Speakers' Bureau***

*Sabeel* has been flooded with requests for speakers who could share their experiences and faith with interested pilgrims and visitors. Since the beginning of the year over five hundred people from Britain, Sweden and the USA have met with members of the local living church, and have returned home with the promise to inform their churches and constituencies of the true story.

Due to the increasing demand for speakers, we are considering a fixed schedule twice a week, whereby more visitors could be present at each session.

### ***Youth Work***

In order to implement all its plans, *Sabeel* is in urgent need of a youth coordinator who would organize programs throughout the year. It is imperative that the youth feel supported and encouraged in their Christian identity, especially as they are faced with distorted so called 'Christian' views that smear the image of the Palestinian Christian.

Profiting from the visit of the Rev. Dr. Dean Borgman, a lecturer in Youth Ministry at Gordon Conwell Seminary in Boston, we organized two sessions, one in Jerusalem and one in Bethlehem, for all Youth Work organizers and leaders, in order to revive coordinated Youth Work in the area.

### ***Forthcoming Programs***

### ***Arabic Newsletter***

The first edition of *Al-Sabeel*, our Arabic newsletter, will be available soon. This exciting development will address the interests and concerns within the Palestinian Christian community and reach out to the Arab world.

### ***Friends of Sabeel***

Following the success of the conference, and in order to carry out advocacy in a organized way, groups are being formed in North America and the UK, in addition to the existing Friends of Sabeel group in Sweden.

### ***New Center for Sabeel***

After much prayer and careful consultation, *Sabeel*, which has been operating out of a small borrowed office, has signed a contract to lease a building which will serve as our new center. This will not only enable *Sabeel's* programs to expand, but give a permanent venue for the Bible study, youth programs, speakers' bureau, and clergy meetings, and other activities.

We appreciate your support in this new and exciting phase of *Sabeel's* ministry.