**Easter Message – 2026 The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem**

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . ."1 Peter 1:3

In the weeks leading up to this year's commemoration of Christ's death and resurrection, a new and devastating regional war has once again plunged the Holy Land and the wider Middle East into turmoil. From the blackened smoke of this expanding wreckage, a deep darkness has engulfed our region, as stifling as the air inside the sealed tomb of the crucified Christ. Hope itself appears to have abandoned us. Yet, as Scripture teaches and our faith reveals, the desolation of the tomb was not the end of the story. Death did not have the final word. By the power of God, Christ rose victorious from the grave, bursting the bonds of sin and death. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "In fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). As a consequence, for those who look to the Risen Lord in faith, God grants them "a new birth into a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3, above).

In keeping with this profound truth, we bid the faithful and all those of goodwill to work and pray ceaselessly for the relief of the countless multitudes throughout the Middle East and beyond who are suffering severely from the ravages of this war. In the midst of our own torments, let us exchange with each other that ancient Easter greeting that continues to echo across eternity: "Christ is Risen! He is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!"