



Message for Easter 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem,

This year Easter, which encapsulates the essence of the Gospel message and generates Christian hope, by a providential astronomical coincidence, is celebrated by all Christian denominations on the same Sunday: April 20, thanks to the concordance between the Julian calendars (used by the Orthodox Churches and the Ancient Eastern Churches) and the Gregorian calendar (followed by the Catholic Church and the Churches and Denominations born from the Reformation).

The Council of Nicaea, the 1700th anniversary of which we are celebrating this year, in addition to approving a common profession of faith, gave the good news of the unity re-established among the various Churches around the feast of Easter.

Pope Francis on 25 January, at the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, said: "The anniversary of the Council of Nicaea must not only be celebrated as a historical memory, but also as a commitment to bear witness to the growing communion between us. We must make sure that we do not let it slip away, that we build solid bonds, that we cultivate mutual friendship, that we are weavers of communion and fraternity. [...]. I renew my appeal that this coincidence may serve as a call to all Christians to take a decisive step towards unity, around a common date for Easter; and the Catholic Church is willing to accept the date that everyone wants to make: a date of unity."

Our Order, characterised by its ecumenical vocation, hopes that a common date for Easter would have a symbolic value, in a world in need of unity.

The joint celebration of Easter in 2025 must offer the opportunity to put the Resurrection of Christ, whose light of love pierces the darkness of the world often steeped in hatred and violence, at the centre of the confession of faith that involves all Christians.

Let us allow ourselves to be renewed by the certainty of God's mercy, so that, like a river, it can irrigate the deserts of our world and transform us into messengers of mercy, committed to being close to every person who suffers in body or spirit.

I hope that the Easter light will illuminate the life of every member of the Order of St Lazarus, to help build a common home that has the Risen Christ as its cornerstone and each one of us as "living stones", called to bring the hope of new life to all humanity.

Monreale, Palm Sunday 2025

Michele Pennisi EGCLJ, Archbishop Emeritus of Monreale & Ecclesiastical Grand Prior