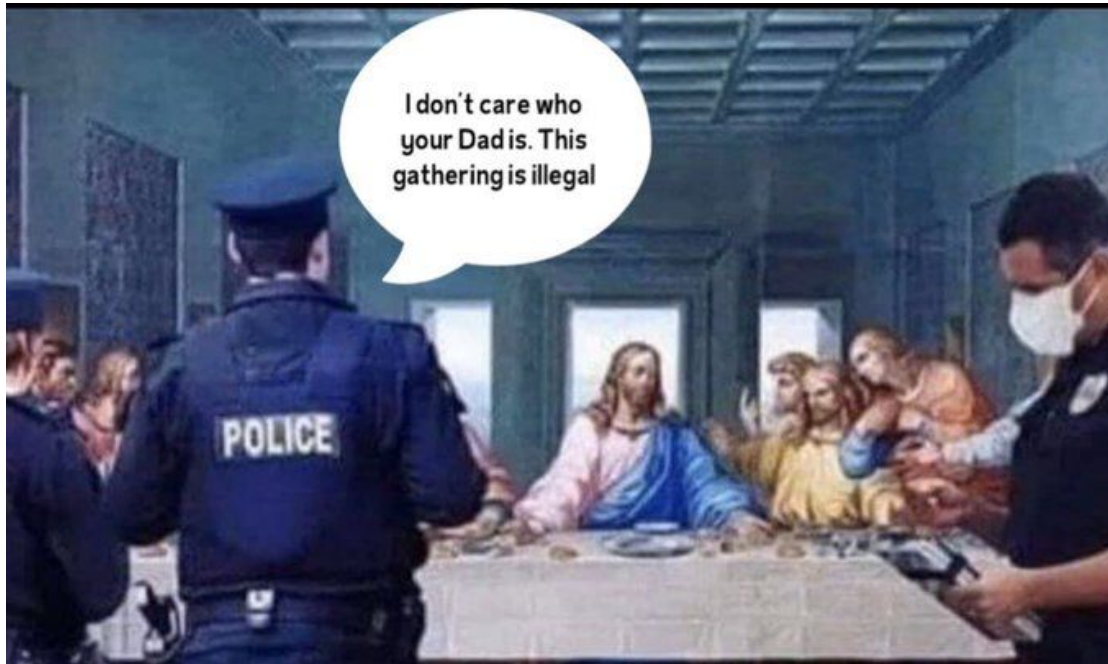


Greetings from Bethlehem Greetings from the Holy Land

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Apr 2020



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Yesterday [Apr 10] we celebrated Good Friday, when Jesus was crucified, died and was buried. Let us contemplate, while on this road to resurrection... Jesus was born in a cave warmed by animals....Herod was in Jerusalem conspiring to kill him... The Angels helped the Holy Family flee to Egypt, escaping Herod and the Roman Occupation.

Jesus is the first Person to exercise the right of return. He came back to Nazareth then went up to Jerusalem. He was triumphant ascending to Mount Olives and then continued onto the Holy City. He rode a donkey, as a humble down-to-earth savior, conquering Jerusalem with Agape . Despite this, Peter denied him, Judas betrayed him, and many forsook him. He was then handed to the Occupation, tortured, spat on and crucified . Jesus died and was buried ... But, this was not the end of our story...

These are some of our lessons learned:

- 1) Simon was there and carried the cross with Jesus... We appreciate our many partners, friends and whomever help us carry our cross and lessen our burden. Such partners give us, our message, and work more meaning, depth and hope.
- 2) There are people like Joseph from Ramah, part of the underground... who helped bury Jesus... Therefore, there are still good persons all over the world who work quietly, day and night to help people everywhere without being noticed or recognized.
- 3) There are the women who remained loyal to Jesus despite the overwhelming fear that was everywhere. They were at the cross, visited the tomb and sacrificed so much, especially our Holy Mother, Virgin Mary. Today we see our sisters, mothers, aunts, grandmothers and daughters and other women everywhere still committed to the cause of Justice, in spite of decades, centuries, and years of practiced inequality and injustice towards them. There can be no freedom, until all are freed.
- 4) There are still those like Judas, Herod and the matrix of control practiced by the Occupation. Many Peters deny, and have forsaken justice and ignored our cry for help ...There are also persons like the enthusiastic Peter who cut off the ear of the Roman soldier... Yet, Jesus came to give all life, from the first person who denied him, to the last who struck his side with a spear. It is this leader and inclusive message that we are in need of. Indeed, we are in dire need of committed leaders and people willing to combat all aggression, oppression, and suppression.
- 5) Jesus resurrected from death on the Third Day... Will the authorities yesterday and today understand that we will resurrect from death and conquer occupation, and all injustices suffered.
- 6) Despite flagellation, imprisonment, torture, and humiliation of our Lord Jesus Christ, he conquered all with love and sacrifice. Non-violence, resilience, steadfastness and compassionate agape will breed justice, and justice will have the last word over hate, racism, discrimination, violence, war and Occupation.
- 7) When religious leaders and others tried silencing the crowd screaming Hosana, Jesus replied *"I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out". It is a warning. This statement still speaks loudly and is directed toward leaders and institutions. Whether leaders of*

an institution, or government, or state, or the world, there will be a driving force challenging all establishments and perpetrators of injustice and oppression. We hope that this much needed change will come about nonviolently, and will be characterized by inclusivity, restorative justice, and pluralism. Today, we humans and stones cry out together for justice! As Jesus assures us, Justice delayed, is not justice denied.

- 8) Pontius Pilate washed his hands off, as he knew of Jesus' innocence, but he still caused pain and suffering. He showed indifference and remained silent. This is a caution from the Bible, speaking clearly saying that silence and inaction are complicity. It is also here that we pray so that our leaders around the globe may no longer remain silent and complicit, but instead hold responsibility for our shared and global humanity and become patrons of justice and equality.
- 9) Jesus was the first Palestinian refugee, who took refuge in Egypt, and came back to Nazareth. Inevitability and our faith assure us that one day we shall all be united again, especially as a family and will practice our right of return. We hold firmly in the living Jesus Christ and he has not failed us.
- 10) The masses who welcomed Jesus with hosanna in the highest, were some of the same persons who shouted "crucify Jesus and release Barnabas the thief". We still have these same people ... Thus we also know that these voices, these people may also and will one day add to the collective voice and stance for justice and equity for all. As Martin Luther King Jr. said:

["Injustice anywhere is a Threat to Justice everywhere"](#)

Yes, we can declare it loudly, that Jesus has risen! Indeed he has risen!
He came to give us life and to give it abundantly.

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