



## Ramallah Friends Meeting (Quakers)

Holy Week 2018

**“Let us pray and fast for peace, and for all the victims of war. O God of peace, grant us peace.”  
+Pope Francis**

Dear Friends,

In Palestine and throughout the Middle East, we contemplate the historical events of Holy Week and Easter from the vantage point of our homeland. We look out over the same hillsides, walk the same streets, touch the same stones. The suffering of long ago and the suffering we endure today often appear seamless. Identification and living experience run deep. The continuity of history is strong.



*Garden of Gethsemane, Jerusalem.*

We kneel and cry out from the depths of Gethsemane. We tell of our experience as Palestinians, as women, as mothers, and as youth. We grieve those no longer with us. We call out for freedom for those imprisoned, displaced and under siege. Our hearts break, over and over again. Our collective anxiety, hurt, and despair represent a modern-day version of the psalms of lament. Yet, surely my friends, they also convey the strength of our courage to overcome the darkness of Gethsemane and affirm resurrection and life in all its glory.

How do we experience the cross in today's world? Like Mary, the mother of Jesus, mothers of today must also let their sons and daughters go. Like Mary, we stand by the cross in compassionate witness. We watch, and we pray; we risk becoming crucified ourselves.

As women, we experience many cultural practices, patterns and restrictions as imposing an extra burden upon us. Too often, they hinder us from living out our commitments and priorities, as well as using our gifts to address the pressing concerns of our communities. Many of us feel a sense of urgency to transform cultures of patriarchy and male domination. Now is the time. Now is the time to move and take action that increases love and justice in the world.

Augustine calls Mary Magdalene the apostle of the Apostles. She is mentioned in each one of the narratives about the empty tomb. She and other women seem to have had remarkable courage. They went to the place of execution. They saw Jesus suffer and die on the cross. They saw where he was laid in the tomb. Whereas, the male disciples were frightened and ran away when the armed crowd came to capture Jesus. They were not present at the cross. But the women were there!

Sometimes, the Christian churches seem to have forgotten that there would be no church without women. Women have always been the story tellers, the carriers of tradition, and the messengers of life in the midst of affliction, death and suffering.

Easter prepares us for life in expectancy. To not give up. To take bold action the leads to an ever-widening solidarity of justice and compassion. Let us encourage one another in every way possible to become a renewed community, celebrating the resurrection and the life.

In doing so, we honor the spirit that leads us to reject all forms of war and structures of violence —working to transform them, through non-violent means.

Easter is a time of hope, and if we hope for something, we must work for it. If we hope for peace, we must work for peace. If we hope for justice in our communities, we must work and pray for that justice. All is indeed possible. For who would dare to say that the love and imagination of God were exhausted?

To hope is a duty, not a luxury. Hope compels us to turn dreams into reality. As Cardinal Suenens stated, “Happy are those who dream dreams and are ready to pay the price to make them come true.”

May this Easter season bring you hope, renewal and commitment to work and pray for the reign of God on Earth as it is in heaven.

Thy Kingdom come, they will be done!

+ Jean Zaru

