

Faithful must be “more diligent”

JERUSALEM – The faithful must be “more diligent” in searching for the light of God in order to use it to build a better future, said religious leaders in Jerusalem in an Easter message.

“We re-search for the light that comes from God, illuminates all creation, guides every true believer in his search, and helps him to find God’s freedom for all his people together with his peace and justice,” the heads of Jerusalem churches said in a statement April 2.

Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah of Jerusalem, Franciscan Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa, who is in charge of Christian sites in the Holy Land, Maronite Archbishop Paul Nabil Sayah of Haifa and Melkite Bishop George Baker were among the signatories of the Easter message.

People around the world, including those in the Holy Land, recently have suffered hardships, they said. Many of the burdens have come from “man’s inhumanity to man” and the “deprivation of basic human dignity and rights,” they said.

If they are to be Jesus’ disciples, the faithful of the Holy Land must take on the challenge to “take up (their) cross and follow him,” they said.

“In the midst of suffering, we reach the power of the Resurrection and the power of the Spirit that enables us to take away the oppressions that are imposed upon us,” the religious leaders said.

At the celebration of the joy of Easter and the power of the Resurrection, the faithful must carefully examine where they stand in relation to God, giving up all notions of self-sufficiency or other “world hopes” that hide the power of heaven and of the Spirit, they said.

“If we believe in the Resurrection, we must affirm that our security is with God and in the power of the Resurrection,” they said. “Despite our weakness and despite the unjust circumstance imposed upon us, the power of God can free us if we come to understand the logic of the Spirit in us, and if we accept, we have to behave

accordingly.”

Sending Easter greetings to Christians around the world, the church leaders asked that Christians pray that God guides political leaders, and “shows them the path of justice and equality between all.”

“Pray for the newly formed unity government of the Palestinians, together with the Israeli government and the Arab initiative, to work (toward) taking away fear and hence all oppression, the walls, the barriers and prisons so that hearts become full of trust and all can enjoy the same freedom and the same dignity,” they said.

The leaders urged members of the international Christian community to encourage their governments to stop the international embargo imposed on the Palestinian government last year after the political faction Hamas won the election. That government was replaced by the unity government in March, but many say it is still led by Hamas.