

Covid-19: Christians, Jews and Muslims join in prayer in Jerusalem



Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders pray together in Jerusalem (Andrea Krogman)

The Franciscan Custodian of the Holy Land reflects on the significance of a common prayer raised to the Lord by believers of the three Abrahamic religions in the sacred city of Jerusalem.

Linda Bordoni, *Vatican News*, 26 March 2020

The leaders of the three Abrahamic religions – Christians, Jews and Muslims – prayed together in Jerusalem on Thursday amid the global Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic.

The initiative, taken by the Mayor of the Holy City, took place at 12.30 pm local time at Jerusalem City Hall and saw the presence of representatives of other faiths as well, including Druze and Bahai.

Speaking to Vatican Radio before the common prayer, the Franciscan Custodian of the Holy Land, Father Francesco Patton, highlighted the significance of this moment and explained that every religion was to recite a prayer according to its own tradition.

“We will be together to pray to the Almighty God that this pandemic may stop,” Fr. Patton said explaining the initiative has a deep spiritual significance. “It is important in itself because we are all believers with the same roots; and thanks to this same root we can express with faith and with confidence our prayer to God the Almighty,” he said.

The common prayer comes on the heels of a joint communiqué, issued on 21 March, in which the leaders of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Latin, Greek Orthodox and Armenian) expressed their hope that "in this dangerous situation all the children of Abraham could pray together to the Almighty to ask for protection and mercy".

What kind of Easter will this be?

Fr. Patton looked ahead to Easter in Jerusalem pointing out that it will not be as solemn as usual because “it will be with few celebrations, without pilgrims and with small local communities,” but he said, “it will be Easter all the same.”

His words reverberate as the city’s Church of the Holy Sepulchre, revered by Christians as the site of Jesus’ crucifixion and burial, has been closed as a precautionary measure to curb the spread of the coronavirus, meaning that Easter celebrations at the Sepulchre will take place behind closed doors.

“At Easter we don’t celebrate the number of faithful,” Father Patton concluded, “we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and it is in the Resurrection that we can find hope, not in the number of those celebrating!”