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## Good Friday in Moscow. Archbishop Pezzi: "Only in the Cross can peoples reconcile"

"The impact of the sanctions is starting to be felt in Russia. It's undeniable. In contrast, based on surveys, the special military operation in Ukraine is backed by the majority of the population. And Easter appears to be somewhat overshadowed this year. The good and the bad divide risks growing stronger when in fact Christ is risen for all. I believe that acknowledging the Resurrection may be the path to reconciliation". Contacted by SIR, Monsignor **Paolo Pezzi**, Archbishop of Moscow and President of the Bishops of the Russian Federation, describes the general atmosphere of this year's Easter season, marked by the "special military operation in Ukraine", according to the wording imposed by the Russian government. The Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate Easter on a different day than Western churches. This year Easter falls on Sunday April 24 according to the Julian calendar, while Latin Catholics are already celebrating the Easter Triduum this week, culminating on Sunday April 17. Also the Way of the Cross in the city's diocese has been already experienced by Catholics in Moscow on the Saturday before Palm Sunday to allow people to participate, since Good Friday afternoon is not a public holiday. It is a well-established tradition that has been in place for the past fifteen years. **Bishop Pezzi, let us start with Good Friday. Which "Stations" of sorrow are closest to your heart this year?** This year I have emphasised two points. The first is reconciliation and forgiveness. Jesus on the Cross reconciles the world unto Himself. And thus it is only in the Cross that peoples can reconcile. The second element is the figure of Mary Magdalene. This year I have reflected on the presence of women along the Way of the Cross, including Mary, but focusing specifically on Mary Magdalene, on her fervent longing to be close to Christ, so much so that, as we read in a hymn in the Eastern tradition, her bitter tears became burning tears. In the Risen Christ Mary Magdalene discovers that this fervent desire is expressed in service, in mission, in evangelism. **The decision to include a Russian and a Ukrainian woman at a Station of the Cross was met with widespread criticism. Were you expecting these protests?** *I personally do not considerate to be inappropriate. Indeed, precisely because there are deep wounds, it provides an opportunity to look at those wounds reflected in the wounds of the Cross.* To me this represents the possibility to start anew. Our gaze today is directed at the wounds of the Crucified One: wounds of fear, of despair, of anguish, of fatigue, of soldiers wounded and dead, of mothers who have become widows, of children who have become orphans, many of whom are refugees who have had to hastily abandon their homes and their possessions not knowing where to go, not knowing whether they will ever be able to return one day **Among the sorrows this year there is also an ecumenical challenge and difficulties in understanding the positions of the Moscow Patriarchate. The dialogue has drowned in peace. Is that so?** *The dialogue has not drowned, on the contrary. I believe that the very need for peace is a factor that rekindles the dialogue.* **What is your wish for this year's Easter?** For this Easter, my wish is to celebrate the Resurrection and to witness that the fervent love that flows from the Cross is stronger than wars, conflicts, hatred and death itself. The impossible communion that the Resurrection enacts is the most striking demonstration that reconciliation is possible and that it is possible for people to recover and start anew.

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