

Headline **Pope leads Easter celebrations**
Date **14. Apr 2009**
Media Title **Borneo Post**
Section **World**
Circulation **57529**
Readership **166173**

Language **ENGLISH**
Page No **A4**
Article Size **245 cm2**
Frequency **Daily (EM)**
Color **Black/White**
AdValue **1411.41**



HAPPY EASTER DAY: Pope Benedict XVI delivers the traditional 'Urbi et Orbi' (To the City and the World) Easter message from the central loggia of St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. — AFP photo

Pope leads Easter celebrations

VATICAN CITY: Pope Benedict XVI sought to assuage the grief of Italy's earthquake survivors during his Easter blessing, as Christians across the world celebrated the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Tens of thousands of pilgrims on Sunday filled St Peter's Square as Benedict — fresh from a controversial first trip to Africa — issued an appeal for peace in that continent and in the Middle East, ahead of a trip to Israel and Jordan next month.

Elsewhere, pilgrims flocked to the spot where Jesus is believed to have been resurrected in Jerusalem after his crucifixion on Good Friday, while Christians celebrated Easter in war-torn countries such as Iraq.

However, priests and activists maintained that 60 years of government

repression of those loyal to the pope shows no sign of easing in China, where an "underground" church remains illegal.

Under an overcast Vatican sky, Benedict delivered a message to the survivors of the earthquake that killed nearly 300 people in the Abruzzo region last week as he addressed Easter greetings to Catholics around the world in 63 languages.

"Happy Easter to you, men and women of Italy, in particular those who suffer because of the earthquake. May the risen Christ... inspire in all the necessary wisdom and courage to proceed united in the building of a future open to hope," he said in Italian.

Benedict had sent chocolate eggs to children living in tent camps in the quake-devastated Abruzzo capital of L'Aquila, where Italian Prime Minister

Silvio Berlusconi attended Easter mass.

The pontiff also said reconciliation among rival factions in the Middle East was "difficult, but indispensable" while appealing for peace in Africa.

"Africa suffers disproportionately from the cruel and unending conflicts, often forgotten, that are causing so much bloodshed and destruction in several of her nations," he added.

Benedict provoked controversy en route to Africa last month when he said the use of condoms could aggravate the spread of AIDS there.

Christian pilgrims from across the globe filled every nook of the cavernous Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, considered by most Christians as their holiest site. — AFP