

12 April 2017

An Easter message from Father Brian Lucas, National Director, Catholic Mission...

I pray that this will be for you and your families a happy, safe and blessed Easter break.

Much has transpired in the twelve months since last Easter and as we celebrate this Holy Week, we do so with a keen awareness of recent world events that have given rise to distress and concern.

In his Easter message, Pope Francis drew comparisons between the suffering of Jesus as he entered into his Passion and that of communities around the world who are also persecuted for their faith.

It is not the first time the themes of Easter have been linked to current world events. In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI said, 'Christ is hope and comfort to the Christian communities suffering most for their faith on account of discrimination and persecution. And he is present as a force of hope through his Church, which is close to all human situations of suffering and injustice.'

As recently as Palm Sunday last weekend, the attacks on the Egyptian Coptic community show us that this persecution is not only age-old, but is ongoing today and will continue tomorrow.

Pope Francis' address, delivered on the day of the bombings in Egypt, echoed that of his predecessor, and added that for those persecuted for their faith, 'Jesus is in them, in each of them, and, with marred features and broken voice, he asks to be looked in the eye, to be acknowledged, to be loved.'

These two Easter messages are composed not on a foundation of fear, but of hope. Pope Francis said Christ can be seen in the anguished faces of those suffering today, which echoes Pope Benedict's voice from five years ago: 'it is Christ that is present as a force of hope through the church, which is there with its people in their time of need.'

These words affirm that Easter is not just a time to reflect on the suffering and sacrifice of Christ. It is also a time of great joy, renewal and forgiveness, where we celebrate the salvation of humankind.

The Easter challenge for Catholics is preparing for the second coming of Christ. At this moment in time, with all that is happening in the world, it is perhaps as poignant a challenge as ever before in our lifetime.

Perhaps we can look to one of Christ's most well-known teachings: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'

My blessings to you this Easter season.

