

MESSAGE FOR EASTER

# This is our feast of light

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,' she said, 'and we don't know where they have put him.'

John 20:1-2

If we place ourselves in the position of Mary of Magdala, what startling thoughts might cross our minds?

On that first Easter morning Mary was seeking Jesus, whom she loved deeply, to ensure his body received a proper burial.

Do we seek Jesus in our lives today just as Mary did on that Easter Sunday morning?

This Easter season can be a sacred time for all of us to reflect on seeking Jesus.

Like the first disciples, we too live in times where there is much fear and confusion. There is turmoil in the world as we see political upheaval, continued wars and so many refugees worldwide desperately seeking a new future and peace.

Closer to home, in many of our communities there is violence and discord.

In recent weeks, we have all been upset and saddened at the extent of the crimes, damage, pain and harm done by too many ministers of our Church. Our need for repentance and a renewed commitment to be vigilant and proactive in protecting our children have never been more urgent.

Such great evil and sin in our midst can threaten to overwhelm us.

Add to this that many of us also go through daily personal struggles. We can all experience darkness, often caused by concerns about health, finances, tensions within our families or workplace or broken relationships.

We can also be afraid as we embrace our own illness, the illness of another, or a recent death. There is fear when we experience disappointment in someone we love, when we are afraid of the future, or when we feel like we have failed. We experience weariness when we confront our own weakness, a sin that we keep falling into.

Yes, fear and pain can often seem to overwhelm us. But the Resurrection of Christ consoles us. We are not alone!

This Easter let's all acknowledge that darkness and acknowledge that Christ comes to bring light and hope into the darkness.

Like Mary of Magdala, God calls each of us by name to become part of the new thing he is doing as the whole cosmos is being renewed. It is why, as we face death, either our own or of those nearest and dearest to us, we have nothing to fear.

Yes, we weep and mourn when those we love die. But as Paul says to the Thessalonians, we mourn 'not as people who have no hope.'

When we feel these emotions of fear and despair, we need to turn to prayer and run to the tomb of Jesus, like Mary.

Let's not forget that there was also great confusion on that first Easter morning. But what became clear to the women and the other disciples was that Jesus had overcome death, sin and evil.

Easter is our feast of hope. It reminds us that as Catholics, we can never despair. It is our feast of light—we will never ever live in darkness. It is summed up in the Easter Vigil ritual. Into our darkened St Patrick's Cathedral comes one single light—the Easter candle.

And as that candle breaks the darkness, we sing, 'Christ, our light.' This is the feast of light. As we embrace the sufferings and deaths of our own lives and in our own world, we have been promised that Christ, our light, comes to scatter the darkness and bring us his light, which gives meaning and depth to our lives.

Where is this risen Christ to be found in Easter 2017? Not in the tomb. We meet the risen Christ especially when he becomes present to us in the words of the Scripture and as he becomes intimately present to us in the Eucharist. We also meet him in the suffering ones all around us.

The risen Christ is in you and in me. He is among us now! And we can join St Paul who said, 'It is not I who live but it is the risen Christ who lives within me.'

This Easter we are sent forth as messengers. It is no longer the angels of old or those men with dazzling clothes at the tomb or Mary of Magdala or Peter. In 2017, you and I must become the messengers.

We know the story. He was crucified and he breathed his last. His body was dead and lifeless. He rose from the dead. The tomb was empty. He lives in you. He lives in me. And we are the messengers who bring his light to others in the world—to family, to our parishes, to co-workers and to friends. Christ is our light! This is our feast of hope. This is our feast of light, and we will never ever live in darkness. Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed.

† Denis J Hart  
Archbishop of Melbourne