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### **Bishop Vincent's 2023 Easter Message**

Dear sisters and brothers,

In the Gospel of Mark, the Resurrection takes place in silence! The three women went to the tomb in the silence of the night. They met an angel who told them Jesus, the Crucified One, had risen. Then, trembling and bewildered, they fled.

There is almost something modest and ordinary about it. There was a quiet, with a stillness that only love and fear can create.

Some in the early Church apparently had difficulty with the 'silence' of Mark. The ending was too sharp and abrupt for them. How could the Resurrection, which had begun in fear, not end in joy? How could it end in silence and even fear?

But maybe our Resurrection faith like that of Thomas must always include an aspect of questioning, for the Easter mystery is so dazzling; it is beyond our rational comprehension.

Our Trinitarian God is a mystery. A mystery is not a problem. A problem is a puzzle to which techniques can be applied, intuition brought to bear, and a solution found. Science tackles problems. It's great at it. But a mystery is not amenable to that strategy. And life is littered with them.

We especially see all around us the terrible mystery of evil, as it manifests itself in the chaos of the war and conflict in Myanmar, Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of the Congo to name only a few places. And how can we ignore the grinding poverty of so many people and the ecological plight of our fragile, precious planet? Human life is brutally devalued in the plight of refugees fleeing their homelands and in the tragedy of so many human beings whose precious dignity and vulnerable lives are threatened from 'the womb to the tomb.'

We are also constantly bewildered by the ongoing injustice still perpetuated against Indigenous peoples and the horror of violence, especially against women and children. Not to mention the horrors of natural disasters like the recent tragic earthquakes in Türkiye (Turkey) and Syria.

Where can we turn as Easter people full of hope?

Jesus is our only answer to these great mysteries that sometimes seem to overwhelm us. For all that we know of God is, of course, revealed definitively in Jesus of Nazareth.

But have you noticed how many times in the Gospels Jesus himself asks questions, rather than gives answers? Our journey living the Paschal Mystery is often more about the questions than the answers. Pontius Pilate asks Jesus a series of questions and Jesus answers cryptically as if to say, "you are really missing the point."

Or have you noticed that our Holy Father, when unjustly criticised, also prefers to remain silent – rather than repay pettiness with revenge?

Let's recall then, this Easter 2023, that the Easter Mystery moves us through the terrible suffering and death of the Son of God, the profound love and courage that kept the women by his side despite their own fears, and the time in the tomb, that in-between space in which we spend much of our own lives.

It invites us to rest in mystery, and then the movement to the joyful moment of Resurrection where even the disciples do not have the right set of questions anymore because they fit the old answers.

Is this not the journey of our whole lives: the movement from sorrow to courage, to grief, to waiting, to joy, often holding elements of each at the same time?

What are the questions stirring your soul these days? Can we make space to live in them, not needing to have the answers? The Synodal path we are on as a Diocesan local Church, is one way for us to listen to those on the margins and make room for the Holy Spirit in our busy lives.

In the face of painful transition, let us be empowered by the presence of the Risen Lord, calling us beyond the fear of the unknown. The Paschal rhythm summons us to die to the old and rise to the new.

My sisters and brothers, Jesus is Risen, indeed! Let's journey with Him once more on the road to Emmaus and encounter His mysterious presence in the breaking of the bread.

I wish you all and your family and your loved ones a blessed, peace-filled and joyous Easter in the Lord. Alleluia!

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