



Easter Message 2023

The Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB Archbishop of Perth

Dear brothers and sisters,

Once again, this year, the joy of Easter rings out with the cry: **Christ is risen!** This is the source of our hope, the unshakeable conviction of our faith, and the inspiration for our determination to bring the beauty and promise of our faith to anyone who will listen. It is a message which our society needs desperately. So do not be afraid, in whatever ways you can, to share this good news with others.

In the end, of course, this message of hope is an extraordinary confirmation that all that Jesus taught about God – about God’s merciful love, God’s offer of healing and liberation from sin, of God’s infinite patience with us as we travel the journey of our lives – all this is true. When the disciples of Jesus, who had come to know, to love and to trust Him, were confronted by the terrible sight of His dead body on the cross, they must have begun to doubt what they had previously come to believe: that God really was as Jesus said He was. The death of Jesus must have been, at least for some of them, the death of their faith. But that faith was born again in the risen Christ, and they were transformed from people ruled by fear and overcome by disappointment to people who were filled, through the gift of God’s Spirit, with new hope and a courage that enabled them to be fearless witnesses to the God whom Jesus had revealed to them.

Like those first disciples, we, too, can easily be overcome by fear and by discouragement. At this particular time, many of you who are listening to me may yourselves be in this situation. Although the worst seems to be behind us, the Covid-19 virus is still present in our community and its effects are still being felt. Rising interest rates are putting great pressure on many families and the uncertainty and insecurity this brings can be very hard to bear. Homelessness in our seemingly affluent society seems to be increasing, leaving many people vulnerable to neglect and even violence.

As we look around the world, we remember that it is more than a year since Russia invaded Ukraine, and we are conscious of the terrible suffering this war is inflicting on so many. Recently, Pope Francis, commenting on this, implored us to *“open our eyes to the world; the whole world is at war!”* He mentioned ongoing conflicts in some parts of the African continent, in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, Latin America, and Ukraine and asked, *“Will humanity have the courage, the strength, or even the opportunity to turn back?”*

We know, too, that natural and “man-made” disasters continue to afflict so many. Recently, the bishops of Australia attended a meeting of all the bishops of Oceania in Fiji and were able



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to see with our own eyes the terrible toll unregulated mining is taking on the natural environment and therefore on the lives of so many people.

In the face of all this, we could so easily become discouraged and depressed, just as the disciples were when Jesus was tortured and killed. Such discouragement is understandable, and it is insensitive and unjust to dismiss it or minimise the suffering which so many people are enduring at this time.

Nevertheless, we Christians do remain people of hope. It is not, of course, a fanciful or unrealistic hope, or at least not as long as it is grounded not in ourselves and our own capacities but, rather, in God. Pope Francis asks the question, "*Will humanity have the courage, the strength, or even the opportunity to turn back?*" Perhaps we can personalise this a little more: *will I and will you have the courage, the strength and even the opportunity to turn back?*

Easter gives us the answer to this question. The answer is "yes" – if we are ready and willing to open our lives, our minds and our hearts to the transforming power of God's grace within us.

This is, perhaps, the great challenge of our Christian lives. God is always ready to come to us, to be with us and to accompany us on our life's journey. God is the giver of all good gifts – but God does not force these gifts on us: we must say "yes" as Mary did, with openness and trust, ready to abandon the fiction that we can manage quite well without the Lord in our lives and, instead, be eager to allow the Lord to fill us with His love and lead us forward.

In the Book of Revelation, there is a beautiful image which can perhaps help us to understand all this a little better. "*Look,*" says Jesus, "*Behold I am standing at your door knocking. If one of you hears me and opens the door I will come in to share a meal, side by side with you*" (Rev 3:19-20).

Easter assures us that the Lord is alive today. He is risen from the dead and He stands before His Father praying for us. But, at the same time, He stands at the door of our lives and of our hearts and continues to knock, asking us to let Him in. He wants to make His home within us. Say "yes" to this gift. Accept this offer made in generosity and love. Begin to live your lives in Christ and allow Him to enrich the lives of all you love. Let your restless hearts be stilled by the power of His gift of Easter peace.

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