

**Easter Message of Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay
Maronite Bishop of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania**

“You will be My witnesses”- Acts 1:8

At Easter, we are led back to the dawn of that holy morning when the Lord rose from the dead. In spirit, we stand once again before the tomb. The stone has been rolled away, the burial cloths lie behind, and the tomb is empty because the Lord is no longer there. Into that silence, a question is spoken that still echoes in our hearts: “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” (Luke 24:5) With these words, fear gives way to hope, darkness gives way to light, and death gives way to life. It is the unshakable truth: Christ is Risen, truly He is Risen.

This is the truth we celebrate today, a truth greater than any other, a truth that has changed the course of human history. This truth is the foundation of our faith and the faith of our Church: that Jesus Christ has conquered sin, evil, and death, and has risen in glory.

Yet Easter is not only something we remember every year. It is an invitation to encounter the Risen Lord because we cannot be witnesses of His Resurrection if we do not have a personal encounter with Him. For when we truly meet Him, our lives cannot remain the same, they will be transformed like the lives of the Apostles.

Before the Resurrection, the Apostles were afraid and hidden behind closed doors. But when the Risen Christ came to them, everything changed. They went out with courage and joy announcing the Resurrection of the Lord. Peter, who once denied the Lord, now professes his love. Thomas, who doubted, after he touches his wounds now believes, crying out: “My Lord and My God” (John 20:28). The disciples of Emmaus, who were lost in sorrow, recognise Him in the breaking of the bread and return to Jerusalem to witness to His Resurrection.

This is what happens when a person truly encounters the Risen Christ: fear becomes courage, doubt becomes faith, and sorrow becomes mission. This same call is now given to each one of us to meet the Risen Lord in prayer, in His Word, in repentance of heart, and above all in the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, where He remains truly present among us.

It is here, as at Emmaus, that our eyes are opened and our hearts begin to burn within us. In this encounter, our hearts are renewed, our sins are forgiven, and we are freed from all that holds us back from loving God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

In a world that often regards the Christian faith as something irrelevant, or as merely one option among many, Easter reminds us of the witness of the Apostles and the holy martyrs. They gave their lives without hesitation, not for a philosophical idea, but because they could not deny the One who loved them unto death on the Cross.

To witness to the Resurrection is not only to speak about it, but to live it each day as children of God. It means allowing the life of Christ to be seen in us.

Above all, to live the Resurrection is to receive the peace of Christ, a peace that the world cannot give. It is not a peace that depends on circumstances, but a peace that flows from knowing that

the Lord is alive and present. Because He lives, we too are given new life and are called to become peacemakers. In this Year of Prayer for Peace in our Eparchy, we turn to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, asking Him to renew our hearts and to make us instruments of His peace in our families, our communities, and our world.

On this glorious feast, we pray for peace and for an end to the wars that afflict our world, especially in the Middle East. We remember in a particular way our beloved Lebanon, that peace may return to its land.

This Easter, I renew my call to stand in solidarity with the displaced in Lebanon and with all those who mourn the loss of loved ones, and I encourage you to continue supporting families in the border villages of South Lebanon.

The Resurrection is not simply an event of the distant past. It is the story of God who became man and who desires to offer every person the gift of the Kingdom of Heaven. Our world today needs witnesses more than teachers. For this reason, we are called not only to know Christ, but to carry Him to others, inviting them to share in the joy of the Resurrection and the gift of new life.

Christ is Risen ... Truly He is Risen!