

The Risen Christ

reconnects us in peace

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BISHOP BRIAN MASCORD'S EASTER MESSAGE 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers

As we come to celebrate the feast of Easter in 2022, there is great cause for reflection on what has been happening in our world. The war in Ukraine, the lasting effects of COVID-19, and the damage inflicted by severe flooding continue to sorely test the strength and capacity of people to respond to these devastating events. Many people can only ask: "Where is God in all of this?" It is the same question that Jesus asked in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross.

The answer to that question is discovered in our response of faith. Jesus asks a very human question—our question—and God answers it with the Resurrection. For it is in this experience that God overcomes all that would separate us from God. Everything that Jesus experienced in his suffering we are seeing in our world today. We live in a fragmented world—a world in continual need of personal reconnection and integration. The final words of Jesus on the cross, words of forgiveness and words of entrustment, are exactly what we are called to do in our broken and disunified world.

Living as disciples of Jesus does not mean that we are exempt from pain and suffering. Rather, our discipleship calls us to be even more conscious of it in our world and carefully respond to it. This is where our prayer enables faith to become active and life giving to others. Our prayer and our outreach to those afflicted with pain and sorrow can be a sign of God's presence—a continuation of the goodness and mercy of Christ.

As we continue to reconnect as communities of faith and hope, we are called to help others move away from isolation to a life of communion and reconciliation. The whole importance of the Resurrection is found in God's love calling us back into friendship with Christ and each other as the family of God. This is something that is often accomplished, not through great works, but by many small words and deeds. As St Teresa of Calcutta said: "Do small things with great love." In the gift of the Holy Spirit's love,

let us reconnect with our families through gentleness and patience. Let us call on our families, friends, neighbours and the vulnerable. All these actions are signs of the presence of God who raised Jesus to life and enkindled faith and love in the hearts of Mary Magdalene, Peter, John, Thomas, and the disciples walking to Emmaus. Jesus restored these disciples in their hearts and helped them to reconnect to each other as they shared their experiences of the risen Lord, listened to his explanation of the Scriptures, and received the Bread of Life.

Easter reminds us that nothing of faith makes sense unless Jesus is at the centre of everything we do and are. By his sharing of himself in the holy Eucharist, we are drawn into a deeper friendship with him. Invited into his life, death, and resurrection, we are commissioned to be a sign of his resurrection to our world. It is here we are given the courage to walk with others, from the darkness of unknowing and confusion, into the light God offers us. Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter and the beloved disciple saw the tomb—it was empty of the Body of Jesus. Into this emptiness, God gave life. Instead of sorrow, God made their joy overflow. Meeting them in the experience of a life darkened by death and loss, the risen One gave them his saving presence and his love.

In the Gospel of Luke, when Jesus meets the disciples on that first Easter night, his words to them were words of peace: "Peace be with you" (Lk 24:36). In these troubled times, locally and internationally, personally and as communities, these are the words that I pray for you. May the peace of the risen Christ be with all those you love and all those who need God's healing and forgiveness. The Lord has truly risen! May the gift of his life-giving peace be with you all!

Yours in Christ

+ Brian Mascord

Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD

BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

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