



The Divine Gardener

EASTER MESSAGE FROM BISHOP BRIAN MASCORD



In the first Preface for Easter, we hear the words:

"...at all times to acclaim you, O Lord, but on this day above all to laud you yet more gloriously, when Christ our Passover has been sacrificed."

Through this celebration of Easter, we are overcome with paschal joy and our churches resound with celebration and praise to our God whose love has destroyed death forever and filled us with the life of the Resurrection!

This Easter celebration beckons us to approach the empty tomb and encounter the risen Jesus, "The true Lamb who has taken away the sins of the world" (Preface I for Easter). It is no accident that St John's account of Easter tells us that his crucifixion and burial occurred in the same garden (Jn 19:41), for to meet the risen Jesus, we cannot bypass the Cross. Our celebration occurs in the shadow of the Cross and Christ's victory for us—evidenced by the empty tomb. We cannot have one without the other.

On that first day of the week when Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb, she, in her grief, mistakes the risen Jesus for a gardener (Jn 20:11–18). Perhaps Mary was not mistaken. In many sacred artworks depicting this scene, Jesus is shown with the weeping Mary, a shovel or spade in hand, as if he is already set to work. But what is he working on? Jesus becomes a gardener, not of a physical place but of our hearts. Just as Adam,

through the curse of sin, was destined to work the land for food, Jesus, the New Adam, through his victory over sin, becomes our food, the Eucharist. Jesus, the Divine Gardener, comes to dwell in us—nourishing and feeding, pruning the branches that have become wild, and binding up all that is weak and broken—because he loves us and sees in us a garden that can, and will, bear fruit under the guidance of his gentle hand.

He does this for us individually, but he also tends the garden of our communities. Will we let him make something ever more beautiful with us? Will we allow

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him to transform, nourish, guide and heal us? Can we become a place that draws people to the Good News of the garden where sin and death were conquered by Love himself? Is this not what it means to be "bearers of Christ's love"?

My prayer for you and us this Easter season is that we would allow the Divine Gardener to do in us what he did for those disciples who had walked from the Cross and discovered the empty tomb: till the soil of our hearts and communities and allow us to bear fruit in his timing.

May he who is risen from the dead and alive in our Church bless you all at this time and always.

Amen! Alleluia!

Yours in Christ

+ Brian Mascord

Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD

BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

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