



Easter Message 2015

from the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB, Catholic Archbishop of Perth

The giving of gifts as everyone knows is associated with Christmas. And yet it has increasingly become a feature of our Easter celebrations. More often than not, Easter gifts take the form of chocolate, and especially of chocolate eggs.

The connection between Easter and the giving of eggs (chocolate or otherwise) is quite obvious: eggs are a symbol of new life and it is precisely new life which we commemorate through our celebration of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus himself offers us an extraordinary gift. Each time we celebrate the Eucharist we unite ourselves with the prayer of the celebrant who, just before Holy Communion, prays: "Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, "Peace I leave you; my peace I give to you"." This promise and this gift, offered to the Lord's first disciples, continues to be offered to all of us today. It is the outpouring of God's love released through the resurrection of Jesus to new life. It is the gift of his Spirit.

The world around us might at times seem engulfed with violence. Even in our own hearts we often carry disharmony and restlessness. We may be left wondering whether the Lord's promise of peace is little more than empty words or an unrealistic dream.

We can resist this temptation to embrace cynicism or hopelessness. As disciples of Jesus, we believe he is worth following and we certainly believe that his word is faithful. If he promises us the gift of his peace then we can be sure that he intends to fulfil that promise.

It is important that we remember that what the Lord offers us is a gift. It is freely and generously made available by him. Gifts sincerely offered, however, need to become gifts gratefully received.

We might ask ourselves whether we feel this presence of the Lord's peace within us or if we have really, and wholeheartedly, reached out to receive this gift. The Lord will not force it upon us – but he will never stop offering it to us.

In the Book of Revelation (Rev 3:20), we find the risen Jesus proclaiming to those desiring to be his disciples, "Behold I stand at the door, and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me".

Jesus' message couldn't be clearer. He, our Lord, is ready. The Lord is waiting. He is at the door. The gift of peace, "a peace the world cannot give" (John 14:27), is in his hands. He wants to give it to us. But it is up to us to rouse ourselves, to go to the door of our lives and hearts, to turn the handle and to invite the Lord to enter.

What does this mean in practice? It means pursuing a relationship with Jesus more fully, so that in knowing him as he really is we can love him more deeply, and in loving him more deeply we can follow him more authentically.

It means allowing ourselves to be drawn more fully into the life of his Church where we can encounter the Lord and come to love and serve him. "Come to me", says Jesus, "all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28). "Make your home in me", he says, "as I make my home in you" (John 15:4).

The promises of the Lord are real. The gifts he offers are unique and precious. The new life he wants to share with us is priceless. All we have to do is reach out, accept the gifts he brings, and allow him, through his gifts, to transform our lives.

May this Easter be a time when the new life of Jesus fills each one of us with hope, with joy, and with the special gift of his peace.

A happy Easter to you.