Easter Message 2025

April 2025

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we draw nearer once again to the celebration of Easter, I invite you to reflect with me, in this Jubilee Year of Hope, on the words of Saint Paul who assures us that "Hope is not deceptive because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us". It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to pray as Jesus did, calling God our *Abba*, our Father.

The Power of Prayer as a source of hope

Although the noisy busyness of our world can make prayer difficult, it remains true that prayer, that deep communication with God, is the bedrock of our faith. It is in our prayers that we can rediscover our bearings when we lose our way. It is in prayer that we can find the strength to face the often daunting challenges of our lives.

In his letter to the Philippians Saint Paul advises them, and also us, in this way: *do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God* (Phil 4:6). Many of us will have tried our best to devote a little more time to prayer during Lent. With the celebration of Easter, this invitation to a deeper prayer remains. "*Come to me*," the Lord says, *"when you labour and our overburdened, and I will give you rest. Take up my yolk and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls* (Matt 11:28-30). This is the Lord's own invitation to us to enter into communion with Him, to be drawn into a dialogue of love with Him, to turn our gaze away from ourselves and on to Him, to allow Him to shed light on the difficulties and challenges we face.

Hope in the Face of Challenges

The virtue of hope is central to the Easter message every year but takes on a special importance in this Jubilee Year of Hope.

Christ's resurrection is the ultimate testament to the triumph of hope over despair, of life over death. It is a promise that no night is so dark that it cannot be overcome by the dawn of a new day, or that no experience of evil is so powerful that it cannot be overcome by God's grace.

Like peace, the peace of Christ which the world cannot give, hope too is both a gift and a task. The hope which is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit is very similar to what Saint Paul calls *"the love of Christ which urges us on*" (2 Cor 5:14). It is what enables us not to give up in the face of difficulties and adversity. It is what inspires us to persevere in our efforts, however insignificant they might seem to others or even to us, to do our best to meet the concrete needs of concrete people, in the concrete realities of their own often broken and fragmented lives. It is what encourages us to be those "healers of people's wounds and warmers of people's hearts" which Pope Francis once described as the vocation of the Church today.

In Australia, we pride ourselves on the virtue of mateship, and on our readiness to come quickly to the aid of those in crisis. When floods and bushfires ravage the land, and people's lives are turned upside down, the best of the Australian character reveals itself. Because this is true of Australians of all faiths and none, it must certainly be true of those who call themselves disciples of Christ. He, after all, is the one who said, *"I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink*" (Matt 25:35).

Gratitude for hope promised and fulfilled

In commenting on the gospel story of Jesus's healing of the ten lepers (cf. Luke 17:11-19) Pope Francis once commented that when gratitude arises in our hearts it is a sign that we have begun to realise that we are loved. This is the precious gift of generosity: not only does it open our own hearts through the joy of being able to see and respond to the needs of others; it also becomes a source of new life and hope for those who receive whatever gifts we share. This is especially true when we give with the mind and heart of Jesus, which expresses itself with tenderness. This tenderness, says Pope Francis, "is the very sign of Jesus's presence". The Easter greeting of Jesus - *peace be with you* - was for His disciples, after the horror of His crucifixion, a greeting of tenderness, or renewed hope, and of love. Our own gratitude to God for this Easter gift of peace can fan the flame of our desire to share this gift of peace with others. From this sharing of the peace of Christ, not just in words but in actions, wounds will be healed and hearts will be warmed.

In concluding these reflections, I want to thank you for the many ways in which our Catholic communities here in the Archdiocese are already signs and bearers of the peace and hope of the Risen Christ for so many people, both within our Catholic communities and beyond.

Pope Francis, in leading the Church along a Synodal path - along a path of faith which we all travel together - reminds us that we are all brothers and sisters united in the one faith and in the one hope. It is, Pope Francis insists, a faith and hope which the Lord has planted in our own hearts so that, through us, the same faith and hope can be shared with others. We are all, he

says, missionary disciples called to bring the light of faith into the darkness of people's lives. May we continue to be together, and become more and more together, bearers of the Lord's gift of hope to all.

Happy Easter to you all.

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