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The Church in Central and Southern Indiana

Leadership Briefing

By Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

God walks with us, sharing his love and mercy

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Scripture readings for the Easter season remind us that God is always with us, accompanying us (as Pope Francis says), as we make our way on a synodal journey to eternal life with our triune God. The road seems long and difficult at times. The effects of a two-year global health crisis, combined with unjust, violent aggression in Ukraine and in various regions of Africa and the Middle East, are deeply disturbing. We need the reassurance of God's closeness to us now more than ever.

The early Church had similar problems. As Paul and Barnabas admonished the disciples in the Acts of the Apostles (14:22), "It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." Still, as missionary disciples of the risen Jesus, the first Christians were challenged, as we are today, to persevere in proclaiming the Good News, placing all our hope in the fact that the risen Lord walks with us every step of the way.

As Easter people, we Christians believe that the world as we know it now with all its pain and sorrow is passing away. In the world to come, there will be no more tears, no more suffering or anxiety, no more sin and evil. This is the "new Jerusalem," the heavenly city that we long for with all our hearts. It is a totally new reality made possible by the Passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Unlike the old order that is passing away, the new world is characterized by fidelity to the Lord's commandment: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:34-35). If we love one another, God dwells with us, making us one with him and with each other. And when God dwells with us, there is no more death or mourning, wailing or pain. There is peace and joy beyond measure!



What a magnificent vision! What a positive, hope-filled way to understand our destiny as children of God the Father, as disciples of Jesus, and as pilgrims journeying to our heavenly home with the guidance of the Holy Spirit!

The warning given to us by Paul and Barnabas in Acts remains, however. It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships before we can enter our heavenly home. Fortunately, we are not alone. God dwells with us. He is not dead; he is risen. He is not far away from us; he is close.

God is not indifferent to our loneliness and pain; he gives us all that we need—his grace—in order to love ourselves, love one another and love him. This is the truth that sets us free: God is love and if we live in love, we live in God, full of hope and joy (cf. 1 Jn 4:16).

No one has promised us that our lives will be easy or free of pain and sorrow. Easter joy doesn't wipe away all our tears, but it does assure us that sin and death do not have the last word. They have been overcome (once and for all) by our Lord's triumph on the cross, and we have been assured of a better world to come, a new Heaven and a new Earth, which can be ours if only we can accept God's grace and learn to live in his love.

This Easter season, let's rejoice in the grand vision we have been given of the Heavenly Jerusalem, but let's also accept graciously the hardships and disappointments that will inevitably come our way as we journey together in faith, hope and love. The Good News is that God dwells with us; he walks with us and shares with us his boundless love and mercy.

+Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis

An Easter Message from Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

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Easter Greetings to All in Christ!

This is our third Easter since the onset of the COVID pandemic. During Easter 2020, very few were able to gather in churches. For Easter 2021, many were still anxious about gathering with others. While there are lingering effects of the virus, especially in the form of variants, we are ready to celebrate Easter 2022 with great joy and solemnity.



Our pastors and parish staffs continue to provide tremendous care and safety for our liturgical celebrations. All are welcome to join in the celebration of the Sacred Triduum—Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil—as well as Mass on Easter Sunday and throughout the Easter season, the apex of our entire liturgical year.

This year's celebration of Easter occurs within the first of a three-year Eucharistic Revival for the Catholic Church throughout the United States. It is the long-standing teaching of our Church that the Eucharist is the “source and summit” of Catholic identity and mission. At the heart of this teaching is our core belief in the Eucharist as the Real Presence of Jesus Christ—His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity.

It is through the Passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that we are saved. It is through the Institution of the Eucharist as His Body and Blood at the Last Supper—which we commemorate on Holy Thursday, in anticipation of His crucifixion as commemorated on Good Friday—that His Church founded upon St. Peter and the Apostles comes about and remains.

In the Eucharist, we do not celebrate a thing but a person. The celebration of Mass is an event, an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ.

Easter is the pivotal moment of encountering His victory over sin and death, as realized in the transformation of the cross as a sign of our redemption rather than a means of condemnation. It is for this reason that we have cause to rejoice.

Indeed, we proclaim Jesus Christ as Risen! Alleluia, Alleluia! May the Risen Lord Jesus Christ raise our minds and hearts in praise of the Holy Trinity—God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—in communion with the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. In Him, we are saved!

Blessed Easter!

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

A Message from Pope Francis

URBI ET ORBI MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS (Easter, 17 April 2022)

Dear brothers and sisters, Happy Easter!

Jesus, the Crucified One, is risen! He stands in the midst of those who mourned him, locked behind closed doors and full of fear and anguish. He comes to them and says: “Peace be with you!” (Jn 20:19). He shows the wounds in his hands and feet, and the wound in his side.

He is no ghost; it is truly Jesus, the same Jesus who died on the cross and was laid in the tomb. Before the incredulous eyes of the disciples, he repeats: “Peace be with you!” (v. 21).

Our eyes, too, are incredulous on this Easter of war. We have seen all too much blood, all too much violence. Our hearts, too, have been filled with fear and anguish, as so many of our brothers and sisters have had to lock themselves away in order to be safe from

bombing. We struggle to believe that Jesus is truly risen, that he has truly triumphed over death. Could it be an illusion? A figment of our imagination?



No, it is not an illusion! Today, more than ever, we hear echoing the Easter proclamation so dear to the Christian East: “Christ is risen! He is truly risen!” Today, more than ever, we need him, at the end of a Lent that has seemed endless. We emerged from two years of pandemic, which took a heavy toll. It was time to come out of the tunnel together, hand in hand, pooling our strengths and resources... Instead, we are showing that we do not yet have within us the spirit of Jesus but the spirit of Cain, who saw Abel not as a brother, but as a rival, and thought about how to eliminate him. We need the crucified and risen Lord so that we can believe in the victory of love, and hope for reconciliation. Today, more than ever, we need him to stand in our midst and repeat to us: “Peace be with you!”

Only he can do it. Today, he alone has the right to speak to us of peace. Jesus alone, for he bears wounds... our wounds. His wounds are indeed ours, for two reasons. They are ours because we inflicted them upon him by our sins, by our hardness of heart, by our fratricidal hatred. They are also ours because he bore them for our sake; he did not cancel them from his glorified body; he chose to keep them forever. They are the indelible seal of his love for us, a perennial act of intercession, so that the heavenly Father, in seeing them, will have mercy upon us and upon the whole world. The wounds on the body of the risen Jesus are the sign of the battle he fought and won for us, won with the weapons of love, so that we might have peace and remain in peace.

As we contemplate those glorious wounds, our incredulous eyes open wide; our hardened hearts break open and we welcome the Easter message: “Peace be with you!”

Brothers and sisters, let us allow the peace of Christ to enter our lives, our homes, our countries!

May there be peace for war-torn Ukraine, so sorely tried by the violence and destruction of the cruel and senseless war into which it was dragged. In this terrible night of suffering and death, may a new dawn of hope soon appear! Let there be a decision for peace. May there be an end to the flexing of muscles while people are suffering. Please, please, let us not get used to war! Let us all commit ourselves to imploring peace, from our balconies and in our streets! Peace! May the leaders of nations hear people's plea for peace. May they listen to that troubling question posed by scientists almost seventy years ago: "Shall we put an end to the human race, or shall mankind renounce war?" (Russell-Einstein Manifesto, 9 July 1955).

I hold in my heart all the many Ukrainian victims, the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, the divided families, the elderly left to themselves, the lives broken and the cities razed to the ground. I see the faces of the orphaned children fleeing from the war. As we look at them, we cannot help but hear their cry of pain, along with that of all those other children who suffer throughout our world: those dying of hunger or lack of medical care, those who are victims of abuse and violence, and those denied the right to be born.

Amid the pain of the war, there are also encouraging signs, such as the open doors of all those families and communities that are welcoming migrants and refugees throughout Europe. May these numerous acts of charity become a blessing for our societies, at times debased by selfishness and individualism, and help to make them welcoming to all.

May the conflict in Europe also make us more concerned about other situations of conflict, suffering and sorrow, situations that affect all too many areas of our world, situations that we cannot overlook and do not want to forget.

May there be peace for the Middle East, racked by years of conflict and division. On this glorious day, let us ask for peace upon Jerusalem and peace upon all those who love her (cf. Ps 121 [122]), Christians, Jews and Muslims alike. May Israelis, Palestinians and all who dwell in the Holy City, together with the pilgrims, experience the beauty of peace, dwell in fraternity and enjoy free access to the Holy Places in mutual respect for the rights of each.

May there be peace and reconciliation for the peoples of Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, and in particular for all the Christian communities of the Middle East.

May there be peace also for Libya, so that it may find stability after years of tensions, and for Yemen, which suffers from a conflict forgotten by all, with continuous victims: may the truce signed in recent days restore hope to its people.

We ask the risen Lord for the gift of reconciliation for Myanmar, where a dramatic scenario of hatred and violence persists, and for Afghanistan, where dangerous social tensions are not easing and a tragic humanitarian crisis is bringing great suffering to its people.

May there be peace for the entire African continent, so that the exploitation it suffers and the hemorrhaging caused by terrorist attacks – particularly in the Sahel region – may cease, and that it may find concrete support in the fraternity of the peoples. May the path of dialogue and reconciliation be undertaken anew in Ethiopia, affected by a serious humanitarian crisis, and may there be an end to violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. May prayer and solidarity not be lacking for the people in the eastern part of South Africa, struck by devastating floods.

May the risen Christ accompany and assist the people of Latin America, who in some cases have seen their social conditions worsen in these difficult times of pandemic, exacerbated as well by instances of crime, violence, corruption and drug trafficking.

Let us ask the risen Lord to accompany the journey of reconciliation that the Catholic Church in Canada is making with the indigenous peoples. May the Spirit of the risen Christ heal the wounds of the past and dispose hearts to seek truth and fraternity.

My Prayer for You

Let us pray with Pope Francis:

“Dear brothers and sisters, every war brings in its wake consequences that affect the entire human family: from grief and mourning to the drama of refugees, and to the economic and food crises, the signs of which we are already seeing. Faced with the continuing signs of war, as well as the many painful setbacks to life, Jesus Christ, the victor over sin, fear and death, exhorts us not to surrender to evil and violence. Brothers and sisters, may we be won over by the peace of Christ! Peace is possible; peace is a duty; peace is everyone’s primary responsibility!”

+ Charles C. Thompson