



**2017 Easter message**  
**by the Most Rev. Douglas Crosby, O.M.I.,**  
**Bishop of Hamilton and President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops**

At the Easter Vigil, we celebrate the light of Christ which we carry, filled with hope, into a world of darkness and uncertainty. In the shadow of the Sainte-Foy massacre this past February, with tensions escalating between nuclear powers and refugees on the move, the invocation of hope seems premature to some and dangerously naïve to others. More personally, the spirits of some may be dampened this Easter by illness, bereavement, family breakdown, addiction, and unemployment. When hope begins to slip away, fear takes its place and we are robbed of peace.

Easter is meant to leave us with a very different sense of the present and the future. It offers a reality that is full of joy. Easter proclaims that fear and terror and death are not the end of the story. Indeed, the prayers of the Easter Vigil are unequivocal in the assurance they convey: “If we keep the memorial of the Lord’s paschal solemnity in this way, listening to his word and celebrating his mysteries, then we shall have the sure hope of sharing his triumph over death and living with him in God.” (*Roman Missal: The Blessing of the Fire and Preparation of the Candle*)

When life has let us down or when old struggles are succeeded by new ones, we may find it challenging to trust in the victory of God. This is the reality for many people, even those who have unremittingly devoted themselves to the love of God and neighbour. Saint Mother Teresa offers a sobering reminder of this in her private writings. The loss of hope for some can even lead to a sense of bitterness or a feeling of God’s betrayal.

As with the sudden blast of a trumpet, Easter interrupts this downward spiral with the unexpected: “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” (Luke 24.5). This paradoxical question was posed to the three women who arrived at the empty tomb at early dawn on the first day of the week. What they eventually discovered could not be predicted from life’s natural cycles; for just as old age is not followed by youth, so Jesus’ death could not *naturally* be followed by life.

But there is nothing natural about the Resurrection. It is an event in which time and nature are themselves turned upside down and inside out. Only as an act of God is the Resurrection possible; and like all acts of God, it is a wakeup call to each of us, that God who raises the dead is more real, more powerful than any crisis or setback we can ever encounter.

For all of us standing at the empty tomb – whatever the circumstances – there is unfathomable hope. There is hope for those on the peripheries of society; hope for governments and leaders; hope for the Church in this time of purification and renewal, hope for you and for me striving to lead a holy life (cf. Jeremiah 29.11).

This Easter, with our hearts lit by the unquenchable fire of God’s love, we are asked to entrust ourselves to Christ’s care as we hope in the divine power that “dispels wickedness, washes faults away, restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners, drives out hatred, fosters concord, and brings down the mighty.” (*Roman Missal, Longer Form of the Easter Proclamation*)

To each of you, I wish to extend my prayers and blessings for a hope-filled Easter Season.

+ *Douglas Crosby, OMI*

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