



Easter Message 2022

“‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised. Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified, and rise on the third day.’ And they remembered his words.” (Luke 24:5-8)

April 11, 2022

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

With the approach of the Easter Triduum, I am mindful of the great suffering of this present moment. Over the past few years, we have seen the rise of many difficult circumstances – war, pandemic, depression, anxiety, fear, division. There is so much darkness in the world that can easily weigh us down. Yet as we enter this holiest of weeks, we do so with the firm conviction that Jesus rose from the dead, conquering death now and for all eternity. We have great reason to hope!

We have something the world cannot give, a dynamite message that every person desperately needs to hear and embrace! Our privileged task is to receive his words, live them out, and pass them on! Jesus Christ has the victory, and this changes everything. This message of hope pierces the darkness of our times as clearly as it did two thousand years ago when the curtain of the temple was torn in two, the earth trembled, the rocks were split, the tombs were opened, the bodies of the saints were raised and those present exclaimed, “Truly this man was God’s Son!” (Matthew 27:51-53) Because Jesus rose from the dead we can have hope even in the most desperate situations.

We have to keep our eyes on Jesus and stay close to him, especially in prayer and through the sacraments. Otherwise, this reality becomes easily forgotten and overpowered by the negative forces in the world. We all need to be constantly reminded and reassured, especially in these challenging times, that God is real, that he’s alive, that he never abandons us.

It is through the Eucharist especially that Jesus remains faithful to his promise of Matthew 28:20 to be with those he loves, until the end of the world. We find in the Eucharist the nourishment we need to persevere as his missionary disciples, sharing the fullness of the Christian life with others. At every Mass we witness and participate in the miracle of the Resurrection – Christ risen from the dead and present to us now in the flesh – and we have a deeply personal encounter with the living God. Jesus is truly alive, he is with us in our difficulties, and each one of us can confidently believe that Jesus Christ came to conquer sin and death.

The Resurrection is not merely an ancient fact but a present event, one in which we participate every time we celebrate the Eucharist, “the seed of eternal life and the power of the Resurrection” (CCC 1524). This is what the world so desperately needs in this time of great uncertainty. Death and darkness do not have the last word – Christ truly risen from the dead and incarnate in our lives is the ultimate victory!

Let us give God permission to use us powerfully to bring hope to the world around us, and with the apostles, be amazed at what Jesus continues to do through the power of the Resurrection. May our voices resound in joyful praise – He is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christian Riesbeck".

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John