



Easter Message 2023

*“So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”
(Colossians 3:1-2)*

April 4, 2023

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Jesus’ rising to Heaven calls us to look up, setting our minds on things that are above and finding our strength in him. He reaches into our lives, with all that we carry and the unique challenges we face and walks alongside of us, taking our burdens upon himself. Because of his suffering, death and resurrection we can live with the confidence of knowing that we are never abandoned.

Everything worthwhile starts with and emanates from a friendship with Jesus. We encounter Jesus most especially in the Sacraments of the Church, which are indispensable for the sanctification of our souls. The Eucharist, the source and summit of the Christian life, is the greatest of all the Sacraments because we receive Jesus – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. The Eucharist is a taste and a glimpse of Heaven on earth as we commune with Jesus who rose from the dead on Easter Sunday. The sacrifice of Calvary is not a distant memory but a present event that is re-presented in every Mass, when Jesus gives himself to each one of us. What a miracle that we can know God so intimately.

Jesus, our Lord and God desperately wants to bring about the diocesan renewal and revitalization that we all desire. We need to look for him, to encounter him anew and bring others into a relationship with him, especially through the Eucharist and Adoration. We need to provide moments of encounter for people to meet Jesus, through tools such as Alpha, CCO, and other faith studies, and growing together in small discipleship groups, being equipped for the mission. When we encounter Jesus and the hope that he promises, we are compelled to share him with others, inviting them into that life-changing relationship with him.

The Resurrected Christ is alive and on the move in our diocese. We see signs of this everywhere, and especially at the mother church, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. We have seen an increase in the number of people approaching the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which is offered daily before every single Mass. Mass and Adoration are offered every single day, and we are seeing the growth of prayer and outreach ministries, serving the most marginalized people in the diocese.

Easter is an exciting time in our diocesan family with much to look forward to. There are many catechumens, including eight at the Cathedral, who will be welcomed into the Church at the Easter Vigil. I will also begin conferring the Sacrament of Confirmation during the Easter season to young people across the diocese who have been preparing for the past two years. On May 12, I will be ordaining two men, Deacon Stephen Mawhinney and Deacon David Rioux, to the order of priesthood. During the third week of May our diocesan priests will spend much-needed time on retreat, to be filled and replenished from the many ways in which they pour themselves out during the year.

As we enter the season of Easter, I am asking all parishes to join me in spending at least one hour per week in Eucharistic Adoration praying for diocesan renewal and revitalization and for vocations to the priesthood, moving forward with a renewed hope and joy that is only possible in Jesus.

Jesus is alive, he's real, and he cares for you. Let us rise as Easter people giving God permission and claiming what he longs to lavish upon us as a diocesan family. May we be "steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because [we] know that in the Lord [our] labor is not in vain." (1 Cor. 15:55-58)

Jesus Christ is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christian Riesbeck". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John