

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

A blessed and holy Easter to you all, for Christ is risen. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Once again the Church stands before the empty tomb and hears a voice that has come to us through the centuries with undiminished power: “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” The crucified Lord has been raised from the dead. Jesus Christ, who passed through suffering and death, lives for ever. The stone has been rolled away. The darkness of the grave has given way to glory. And so the light of Easter shines upon the whole world.

This is the source of the Church’s joy, the ground of her confidence, and the hope that does not disappoint. Because the resurrection of Jesus is the decisive act of God in history, and the living truth by which the Church now stands. Christ is alive, and because he lives, no darkness is absolute, no wound is beyond his mercy, no future is closed to grace.

How greatly our world needs to hear that message! There seems to be so much in our common life that troubles the spirit: conflict and uncertainty among nations, anxiety in our communities, and in so many hearts the more hidden burdens of grief, illness, loneliness, disappointment and fear.

Easter speaks into all of this with clear and unshakable simplicity. It proclaims that sin does not have the last word. Suffering does not have the last word. Death itself does not have the last word. The last word belongs to God, and his word is life.

The Gospel accounts of the resurrection are full of tenderness as well as triumph. The first Easter morning begins in grief and bewilderment. Mary Magdalene stands weeping. The disciples are uncertain and afraid. The risen Lord comes to them not with reproach, but with peace. He calls Mary by name. He shows his wounds. He breathes his Spirit upon the Church.

He still comes in that same way, to hearts that are searching, to lives that are burdened, and to communities that need courage for the road ahead.

And so, I wish to say to the whole Diocese of Clifton: be renewed in hope. The risen Christ walks with us. He is present in the proclamation of the Scriptures, in the breaking of the bread, in the communion of his Church, and in the fidelity of ordinary Christian life. He is with us in our parishes and schools, in our homes and chaplaincies, in our service of those in need, and in every act of prayer and love offered in his name.

I give thanks this Easter for the faithfulness of so many across the diocese: our priests and deacons, our religious, our teachers and catechists, our parish volunteers, our chaplains, our school staff, and all whose generosity sustains the Church’s life and mission here. A lot of this service is offered quietly and without recognition, but it is precious before God and bears fruit in ways only fully known to him.

In this holy season, we welcome anew the call of the risen Lord. May we worship God with greater reverence and love. May we know and proclaim the faith with renewed confidence. And may we remain close to the poor, the forgotten and the wounded. The Church is born from the wounds of Christ and lives by his risen life. She belongs to him, and he will never forsake her.

May the joy of the resurrection fill your hearts and homes. May the risen Lord grant peace to our troubled world, consolation to those who mourn, strength to the weary, and fresh courage to all who seek to follow him. Mary, Mother of the Risen Lord, pray for us and accompany us.

And may Almighty God bless you all in this Easter season.

With my affection and prayers,

Rt Revd Bosco MacDonald
Bishop of Clifton