

Rejoice in the Lord

**By Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark**

We are invited to experience, share the joy of Easter—even in troubled times



This past Sunday, we celebrated the great feast of Easter and we began the season of joy.

And yet, our long Lent continues. We are still deprived of so many things that we have come to depend on, including the opportunity to join with our brothers and sisters for Easter Mass, large family gatherings, Easter parades, and the sports and entertainment festivities that are so popular this time of year.

This year—more than any in recent memory—we are reminded that the Lord’s resurrection did not totally eliminate the consequences of sin and death. Instead, our Lord’s rising from the dead has transformed life as we know it—giving it new meaning and a future full of hope. Although we are still battling a worldwide crisis that threatens our health and well-being, which physically distances us from one another and effectively has turned our lives upside down, we are people who can rejoice!

This Easter our joy is real, but it has an aspect of anticipation rather than immediate fulfillment. Christ has conquered sin and death, but their effects remain. Wars, famines and plagues still threaten us despite the fact that we have been redeemed—once and for all—by the self-sacrificing love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Easter celebrates the great mystery that, while natural disasters, pandemics, and hardships of every kind still remain, they have been transformed by the grace of God and can no longer condemn us to lives of misery and doom. We rejoice at Easter time—whatever our present circumstances — because the Lord is risen and remains close to us now and always.

Even in these troubled times, Easter joy should give us the confidence we need to overcome our anxious fears. Fundamentally, things are not awful because God has reached out to us and loved us.

We are not doomed to disaster. Christ died for us and set us free. We are not alone. Although “social distancing” is still in effect, we remain the gathering of God’s people, the Church, united in Christ. We need not be afraid. He is with us always.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus’ friends experienced mixed emotions at the time of his passion, death and resurrection. They were afraid, bitterly disappointed, hopeless, full of doubt and uncertainty. And then came the joy of the resurrection. For some, like the women who went to the tomb on Easter morning, the experience of joy was immediate (even if it was mixed with confusion about what really happened). For others, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, joy came more slowly—after they experienced the Lord’s presence in the Scriptures and the breaking of bread.

For Peter and most of the disciples, the joy of Easter was intermittent; it came and went with Jesus’ appearances in the upper room and in Galilee. It was not until they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that the joy of Christ’s resurrection became deeply rooted in their hearts. I suspect that’s what we should expect this Easter season—intermittent joy as we deal with inconvenience, hardship, even sorrow.

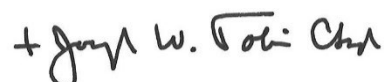
As an archdiocese, we have had to adapt to the challenges—and opportunities—of pastoral ministry during a time of pandemic. Our mission remains the same: to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, to hand on our faith to future generations and to serve the needs of all God’s people, especially the poor and vulnerable. What’s changed is the way we carry out this mission in the severely restricted circumstances imposed on us by civil authorities and by the demands of pastoral charity as we struggle to contain the spread of this deadly disease. Now more than ever, our faith in Jesus Christ calls us to solidarity with our sisters and brothers who are sick and dying, lonely and afraid, out of work and anxious about the future.

The joy of Easter coincides with the coming of spring and the emergence of new life. This year, more than most, we have suffered through a painful winter, and we are more than ready for a new beginning. Once things return to whatever the “new normal” will be, life will go on, decisions will need to be made, and the Church’s ministry will continue to adapt and change as needed. For now, we play all our trust in the Lord. May His healing power strengthen us to face the future with hope and with Easter joy.

Christ our Redeemer is the source of all new life. May this season of grace bring us lasting joy. May we share this joy generously with others during this Easter time and beyond!

Happy Easter! Felices Pascuas! Wesolych Świąt Wielkanocnych! Maligayang Pasko ng Pagkabuhay!
Buona Pasqua! Bon Fet Pak! 행복한 부활절! Haengbokhan buhwaljeol!

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark

Stay with us, Lord



Pope St. John Paul II died 15 years ago, on April 2, 2005. Here is his final Easter message to the City and the World (*Urbi et Orbi*). Although the pope was unable to speak, he appeared at the window as his message was read by his secretary of state, Cardinal Angelo Sodano.

Mane nobiscum, Domine!

Stay with us, Lord! (cf. Lk 24:29)
With these words, the disciples on the road to Emmaus
invited the mysterious Wayfarer
to stay with them, as the sun was setting
on that first day of the week
when the incredible had occurred.

According to his promise, Christ had risen;
but they did not yet know this.
Nevertheless, the words spoken by the Wayfarer
along the road
made their hearts burn within them.
So they said to him: "Stay with us".

Seated around the supper table,
they recognized him in the "breaking of bread"
- and suddenly he vanished.
There remained in front of them the broken bread,
There echoed in their hearts the gentle sound of his words.

Dear brothers and sisters,
the Word and the Bread of the Eucharist,
the mystery and the gift of Easter,
remain down the centuries as a constant memorial
of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ!

On this Easter Day,
together with all Christians throughout the world,
we too repeat those words:
Jesus, crucified and risen, stay with us!
Stay with us, faithful friend and sure support
for humanity on its journey through history!
Living Word of the Father,
give hope and trust to all who are searching
for the true meaning of their lives.

Bread of eternal life, nourish those who hunger for
truth, freedom, justice and peace.

Stay with us, Living Word of the Father,
and teach us words and deeds of peace:
peace for our world consecrated by your blood
and drenched in the blood of so many innocent
victims:
peace for the countries of the Middle East and
Africa,
where so much blood continues to be shed;
peace for all of humanity,
still threatened by fratricidal wars.

Stay with us, Bread of eternal life,
broken and distributed to those at table:
give also to us the strength to show generous
solidarity
towards the multitudes who are even today
suffering and dying from poverty and hunger,
decimated by fatal epidemics
or devastated by immense natural disasters.
By the power of your Resurrection,
may they too become sharers in new life.

We, the men and women of the third millennium,
we too need you, Risen Lord!
Stay with us now, and until the end of time.
Grant that the material progress of peoples
may never obscure the spiritual values
which are the soul of their civilization.

Sustain us, we pray, on our journey.
In you do we believe, in you do we hope,
for you alone have the words of eternal life (cf. Jn
6:68).

Mane nobiscum, Domine! Alleluia!

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope



Like a new flame this Good News springs up in the night: the night of a world already faced with epochal challenges and now oppressed by a pandemic severely testing our whole human family. In this night, the Church's voice rings out: "Christ, my hope, has arisen!" (Easter Sequence).

This is a different "contagion", a message transmitted from heart to heart – for every human heart awaits this Good News. It is the contagion of hope: "Christ, my hope, is risen!". This is no magic formula that makes problems vanish. No, the resurrection of Christ is not that. Instead, it is the victory of love over the root of evil, a victory that does not "by-pass" suffering and death, but passes through them, opening a path in the abyss, transforming evil into good: this is the unique hallmark of the power of God.

The Risen Lord is also the Crucified One, not someone else. In his glorious body he bears indelible wounds: wounds that have become windows of hope. Let us turn our gaze to him that he may heal the wounds of an afflicted humanity.

The Lord asks us and, in the midst of our tempest, invites us to reawaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be floundering. The Lord awakens so as to reawaken and revive our Easter faith. We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love (Pope Francis, Message Urbi et Orbi, April 12, 2020)

You can read Pope Francis' entire Message here:

www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/urbi/documents/papa-francesco_20200412_urbi-et-orbi-pasqua.html

My Prayer for You: A Spiritual Communion

Dear Jesus, I believe that you are truly present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive your Body and Blood. Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. Stay close to me, Jesus, so that I may be close to all our sisters and brothers, especially those who are most in need of your loving care. Amen. †



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