

Easter 2006

Greetings to the Sisters, Brothers and Friends of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion!

On the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring equinox, Christians throughout the world will gather together in churches and cathedrals, in chapels and other sacred places, to pray, to remember, and to celebrate. We will gather at this time, as we have done year after year for nearly two millennia, to celebrate and proclaim the great mystery of our Christian Faith that, "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!"

At the very heart of our Christian spirituality and witness is the person of Jesus our Savior and the events associated with His life, death, and resurrection, which have become for us the means of our salvation and that of the whole world. His suffering and death culmination in His glorious resurrection and ascension into Heaven is the very center from which all the grace and hope of the Gospel message emanates.

From the very first generation of eyewitnesses until this present generation of ours, Christians have realized that, in some mysterious way, these events in life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth in Jerusalem centuries ago have made salvation possible for all of humanity.

In carrying the cross, Jesus carried all of the fears and pain that burden our hearts. By embracing death, Jesus took hold of that which holds humanity most helpless. By rising from the dead, He opens the door to a new kind of life for humanity: an immortal life, a life not subject to death; a divine life, a life of endless possibility and creative potential; a grace-filled life, a life that is immersed in the greatest power in the universe, the irresistible power of divine love.

Through the gift of baptism we, in some mysterious way, participate in the saving event of Christ. In baptism we die with Christ. In baptism we are raised with Christ to a new, eternal, and spiritual life. Because of our participation through baptism in the death of Christ we possess that sure and certain hope of resurrection in the world to come. "In dying Jesus destroyed our death. In rising He restores our life," that is, the divine life that was always intended by God to be ours. This is the Paschal Mystery. Jesus died because humanity dies; humanity is raised to eternal life because Jesus was raised from the dead, never to die again.

Together, as Christian communities, we will renew and relive this great Paschal Mystery as we gather to proclaim the joyous news that Jesus has conquered death. Together we will celebrate the reality of our salvation through the blessing of fire, the lighting of the Paschal candle, the singing of the Exsultet and the blessing of the baptismal waters. Once again, we shall together partake of the blessed sacrament of Christ's body and blood in our Eucharistic meal which we continuously celebrate until He comes again in glory for the final redemption of all the world.

Although we are separated from one another by many miles we remain joined together in the Spirit through our Ecumenical Catholic Communion as we gather this year in our various faith communities across the nation to observe Holy Week by remembering and reliving the great mystery of Christ's love that has become not only our salvation but the salvation of all the world.

Let us celebrate and rejoice on this most Holy Feast of Easter. Alleluia!

In the bonds of Christ's Love

The Most Reverend Peter E. Hickman
ECC Presiding Bishop