



BISHOP OF HAMILTON

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” (Luke 24:5)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in the name of the Risen Lord Jesus! This Easter message arrives amidst the seemingly unending news cycle we have all experienced over the past weeks. At times, despite the positive stories we hear, this news has been harrowing and frightening. However, I write to you today to implore you, most especially in this Easter Season: **Do not allow this bad news to obscure your vision of the Good News of Christ!** We cannot allow the darkness of the present moment to cast a shadow on our vision of the light of Christ’s Resurrection! Indeed, the Resurrection is what transforms the darkness of Good Friday, the suffering of the innocent Christ, and the desolation of the Cross. As followers of Jesus we know there is no Easter without the Cross. And yet the Cross always points toward the glory of the Resurrection and God’s ultimate victory over death. Our suffering can point toward salvation as well, if we unite it to the One who suffered all for us.

We may sense a contradiction to the Easter feast this year: how can our celebration and joy be complete when the world is locked-down, isolated, quarantined – when we cannot even gather in our parish churches to celebrate the Solemnity of solemnities? What do we make of this suffering that remains even after the tomb has been found empty and the Risen Lord appeared?

The Easter story provides the definitive example of how God gives meaning to suffering. Through the Lord’s suffering and death, we are liberated from death’s grasp. The Lord will also transform the difficulties of today into profound grace – but we must allow Him to do so. We must open ourselves to the Lord’s voice, and allow ourselves to be instruments of His love when it is so desperately needed.

How can we do this? The foundational way is prayer. The rhythm of our prayer life has been upended in these days, most painfully through the absence of the faithful at Sunday Mass. But our prayer must continue. I encourage you to read the daily scripture readings, to pray the Rosary and other devotions, to watch the Mass being broadcast on television or the internet, making an act of spiritual communion. Pray for your families, for your parish, for healthcare workers, for our political leaders, for those who are sick, and for those who are dying. We must also remember not only to focus on our trials, but to be thankful for our continued blessings. *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (Thess. 5: 16-18)*

We also open ourselves to the Lord when we do good. While we will not be able to make all things well, we can follow the example of St. Teresa of Calcutta to, *“do small things with great love.”* Grow closer to your family and loved ones, being gentle and patient with them during this time together. Call on family, friends, neighbours, and the vulnerable. Help those in need as you are able. Make sacrifices to promote the common good and ensure others have what they need. Remember: *“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”* (Matthew 25:40)

Our parishes and pastors will continue to be here for you during this time. Our priests continue to celebrate Mass for your intentions and, like me, they anxiously await your return to worship at the table of the Lord. Sadly, our parishes are sharing in the damage of the measures to contain the virus. If you are able, continuing to support your parish financially will help them overcome this ordeal. Financial uncertainties abound, and we must ensure we take care of our families; not everyone will be able to maintain their giving. However, our parishes are vitally important, and the support of the faithful is what sustains them. I know Divine Providence directs us at this time and always, and I know those who can will do their part.

The Easter story solidifies the triumph of light over darkness, the victory of life over death, and the culmination of God’s breaking into history to bring each of us to Himself. We know that the suffering of this present moment cannot separate us from God’s love. *“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8: 38-39) While we may be separated from one another, Christ remains close to us. I pray for health, well-being, and peace for you and your family, and wish you an abundance of Easter blessings. May the Easter Alleluia resound in your heart, until such time as it rings out once again from the gathered assembly in the house of God!

Sincerely in Christ and Mary Immaculate,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Douglas Crosby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, OMI
Bishop of Hamilton

Solemnity of Easter 2020

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