

Holy Week and Easter Message 2025
Bishop William Bower

Beloved, we now find ourselves in that most sacred time of Holy Week as we journey together towards Easter. For us it is a rollercoaster of thoughts and emotions as we contemplate the passion of our Lord Jesus.

We begin this time with Palm Sunday, where we enter in with our Lord to Jerusalem and those shouts of acclamation “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!” Palm branches and olive branches are strewn in the path of our Lord who makes His entry into the city in humility.

Just as He enters the city in humility, He enters our hearts, and into the dark places of our fallen humanity to share His divinity with us. In this moment, we who have been baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection, place before Him ourselves, our souls, and our bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto Him.

But like in our life in this veil of tears, the joy doesn’t last long. The sinful nature of mankind quickly puts an end to joy and moves towards the betrayal, trial, mocking and scourging, and finally the crucifixion. This week, the holy Church throughout the world will recall each of these things in detail. We do this not to dash our sense of joy and hope, we do this to understand the price paid for us by a loving Savior who takes away the sins of the world. We do it to enter into those moments which encapsulate the depth of our Lord’s love for us.

The betrayal by Judas begins this time which the Church calls the sacred Triduum, or three days. We recall those events whilst simultaneously recalling the prophecies from the Old Testament. It had to be this way. There is no other path for the redemption of mankind. We are so depraved that it requires an action that we cannot do alone – God must become man, so that man can become united to the will of God. This process is a singular act, the death of the *Theos Antropos*, God made man, to die on the Cross and to rise again on the third day. For mankind, it would be impossible, but for God, all things are possible.

The crucifixion of the Christ is the exact moment of our salvation. Christ takes upon Himself our sin and endures the punishment of death for us. He loves us so much that He stretched out His arms and dies for us. If the story ended there it would be magnificent but not transformative. For it goes on to the empty tomb and the resurrection of our Lord.

We celebrate Easter with so many trite customs. Easter eggs, hollow chocolate bunnies, Easter baskets for the children and new hats for the ladies. For many, this may be one of only a couple of times when going to Church, followed by an Easter luncheon or dinner, is the only exposure to the mystery of faith. The faithful must embrace those who know the resurrection only by the externals that they may come to know the centrality of the faith. And what is this central message of Easter? It is Christ is risen! We celebrate that not only has Christ risen, but that He will raise us from the dead as well.

Perhaps this mystery is best summed up in the timeless words of St. John Chrysostom, who fell asleep in the Lord on 14 September 407, whenever he writes:

“Enjoy ye all the feast of faith: Receive ye all the riches of loving-kindness. let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon has shown forth from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the Savior’s death has set us free. He that was held prisoner of it has annihilated it. By descending into Hell, He made Hell captive. He embittered it when it tasted of His flesh. And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry: Hell, said he, was embittered, when it encountered Thee in the lower regions. It was embittered, for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was slain. It

was embittered, for it was overthrown. It was embittered, for it was fettered in chains. It took a body, and met God face to face. It took earth, and encountered Heaven. It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns. Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen.”

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Arabic: Al Maseeh Qam! – Haqqan Qam!

Chinese: Helisituosi fuhuole! – Queshi fuhuole!

Danish: Kristus er opstanden! – Ja, sandelig opstanden!

Estonian: Kristus on surnuist ülestõusnud! – Tõesti ülestõusnud!

French: Christ est Ressuscité! – En Vérité, Il est Ressuscité!

German: Christus ist auferstanden! Er ist wahrhaftig auferstanden!

Irish Gaelic: Tá Críosa ar éirigh! – Go deimhin, tá e ar éirigh!

Scots' Gaelic: Tha Crìosa air èiridh! – Gu dearbh, tha e air èiridh!

Greek: Christos Anesti! – Alithos Anesti!

Hebrew: Ha Mashiyach qam! – Ken hoo qam!

Italian: Cristo è risorto! – È veramente risorto!

Japanese: Harisutosu Fukkatsu! – Jitsu Ni Fukkatsu!

Latin: Christus resurrexit! – Vere resurrexit!

Norwegian: Kristus er oppstanden! – Han er sannelig oppstanden!

Polish: Khristus Zmartvikstau! – Zaiste Zmartvikstau!

Portuguese: Christo Ressuscitou! – Em Verdade Ressuscitou!

Russian: Khristos voskres! – Voistinu voskres!

Syriac: Meshiha qam! – Bashrira qam!

Ukrainian: Kristos Voskres! – Voistinu voskres!

Welsh: Atgyfododd Crist! – Atgyfododd in wir!