



CORPUS CHRISTI COMMUNION

+His Eminence Jose Israel, DD, CDM.

Presiding Archbishop

PASTORAL LETTER —EASTER 2018

Most Reverend Archbishops and Bishops, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Venerable Brothers and Sisters in Monastic and Religious Life, Dearly Beloved Laity in the Corpus Christi Communion:

Christ is Risen—Alleluia-Alleluia!!!

David, ancestor of the Lord, danced and made music before the Ark, which was only a symbol. As God's holy people let us witness the symbol fulfilled, And rejoice in spirit, for Christ, being almighty, is risen!!!

Beloved in Christ!!

In my recent Lent Pastoral Letter, I invited all our priests and pastors to become mediators between the people and our Lord. At that time I reminded you all, that you must be recognized amongst other men on how you are able to anoint the people you reach out to with the love and heart of our Lord.

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified". [Is, 61:1-3](#)

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free". [Lk 4:18](#)

Today all Christians are filled with an inexpressible joy. From the moment we first hear our traditional Easter greeting "Christ is risen!" in each one of us, from the youngest to the oldest, our soul undergoes a profound change. We feel how all life's problems and challenges disappear, how all cares and sorrows are washed away "as wax melts before the fire." This joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and a true sign, that the risen Lord is present in our hearts.

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In the sixth chapter of the second book of Samuel, we read how King David at the beginning of his reign arranged for the transfer of the Ark of the Covenant to his capital, Jerusalem. In this relic were contained the tablets of Divine Law, received by Moses: they were the most precious possession of Israel. The Ark was a guaranty of invincibility for the people of the Old Testament, of strength for the king. For this reason, David greets it with great joy, with dance. This presence of God in the midst of His people and their sense of duty to live according to the Lord's commandments will later allow the Psalmist to say: *"Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to His holy name!"* (Ps. 97:11-12).

Our Paschal Matins see in the behavior of the king an image of our paschal joy today. And while the Ark-symbol was lost in the time of the Babylonian onslaught in the VI century B.C., the risen Lord is eternally present in our midst: *"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Mt 28:20). This is no symbol or prediction of some unsure or unreachable future. Christ Himself, who rose from the dead, comes to us, His disciples, as a source of our strength and victory over evil. In the Resurrection, in the news of His victory over death is found the summit of our joy and the fulfillment of all prophecies and human aspirations.

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To rejoice in God is to allow the victory of the risen Lord to penetrate our hearts, to be fulfilled in my personal life. This is not merely some temporary feeling, but real participation and communion in Christ's Resurrection. Saint Paul wrote: *"For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His"* (Rom 6:5). To celebrate Easter is to rise together with Christ, to triumph in Him and with Him. Thus, our joy in Him and with Him is no passing emotion, but the permanent state of one who lives in the faith of the risen Lord.

As God's holy people let us witness the symbol fulfilled...

Today, the Lord himself is inviting us to follow Him. On this Easter celebration I want to especially remind you the words of Jesus when he said:

PROMISE

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Matthew 25:35-40

My beloved Brothers and Sisters: ***Caring for our neighbors; helping those who are poor, those who suffer in body and in the soul, those who are in need--- it's our call and mission. Because whatever you neglected to do unto one of these least, you neglected to do unto me—said the Lord. Where are you—as an individual and/or as a Corpus Christi Communion clergy or lay member in this matter?***

Many years ago, when ending my Carmelite formation in Teotihuacan Itzcali, Mexico, I was handed a handcrafted cross with the words depicted in the gospel of Matthew that I just highlighted. That cross made me always remember the reason of my call—to help others—no matter what their need was. Because of that, my first mission as a Carmelite took me to Colombia. Working for five years with the needy children of the streets was a challenge for me—who had never experienced poverty to such an extent. During five years I worked rescuing kids from hunger, drugs and a miserable life in the streets. I can still see their happy faces when we offered them a safe shelter, provided food and a caring environment. This pastoral experience marked me for the rest of my life—and deeply hope made a real difference in this children lives. ***My question for you now is: -- how is your ministry making Jesus be part of other people's lives? Are you actively providing to help them get their needs taken care off? How are you involving the members of your congregation? How are you mingling with other people and detecting how and when to provide for their physical or spiritual needs?***



Priests ...Pastors...Deacons... --- have you placed in your shoulders the people you have been confided--- become a Good Sheppard... keep all their names in your hearts, that is to become the live tabernacle of our Lord within yourself?

Priests ...Pastors...Deacons...--- Are you a humble servant, who can feel the weight of your people's needs every time you celebrate mass or pray?

Priests ...Pastors...Deacons... --- Are you taking the Lord's anointment to the poor, to the oppressed, to the sick...?

Priests ...Pastors...Deacons...Laity ---Are you spending time in health care facilities – hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living centers, the homes of parishioners or schools? Are you spending time with people who are vulnerable?

Therefore, let us view our personal, family, community, and national sufferings in light of our paschal journey led by the risen Christ, in light of our transformation into joy, our movement towards hope on this lightsome day, made by the Almighty. The Lord's Pascha opens up for our people the truth that through our struggle we enter into His joy. Our love for the Fatherland, which calls us to self-sacrifice in the name of its freedom and independence is, indeed, a path to Resurrection. Our invincible spirit bears witness before the world that one need not be fearful before deadly falsehood and violence, for "Christ is risen, being almighty!"

Today the Lord Himself gladdens us, changing our sorrow into joy, as it was for the myrrh-bearing women. They went to the Lord's tomb crying and returned filled with authentic joy in God. They went in the darkness of hopelessness and received the light of the Risen One and proclaimed to the Apostles and the entire world that Christ was truly risen. May we be transformed by this "miracle above all miracles," and through us-our society and land, wherever we may live.

Beloved men and women of God:

1. Don't you ever forget that you are anointed vessels of God; you have been cleansed by God and been filled with the Holy Spirit. Not only is He in you but also He is upon you, to reach out to others
2. As the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost in the upper room and anointed them for service, you too have been anointed by God with the Holy Spirit for Christian service. You have been anointed for Christian ministry while you live in this world.
3. You have been enabled, entrusted, and empowered to accomplish God's will:
 1. You will be able to discern truth - 1 Jn 2:27.
 2. To testify of the truth - 1 Jn 5:6 "This is the one who came by water and blood __ Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth."
 3. You will be able to pray - Rm. 8:39 and Ephesians 6:18 which says, "*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. . .*"
 4. You will be able to live a righteous life - Rm 8:4 "*in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*"
 5. You will be strengthened with power in your inner being - Eph 3:16 "*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,*"
 6. You will be led by God - Rm 8:9 "*You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*"
 7. You are to live in joy - Rm 14:17 "*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,*"

8. You will live in hope - Rm 15:13 *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

9. You will receive spiritual gifts - 1 Cor 12:4 *"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit."*
10. You will be able to bear spiritual fruit – Gal 5:22-23 *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."*

Hopefully, with a better understanding of what God has given you in Christ and by the Holy Spirit, you will be better able to live for God, better able to pray to Him, love Him, trust Him, and better able to dwell in hope and joy amongst the people He has entrusted you.

The Metropolitan Archbishop of the Corpus Christi Communion—His Beatitude Marcis Heckman, has convoked for a Holy Synod to take place in the month of April of this year of the Lord. This should be an important moment to –as a church- analyze our local and global missions; our outreach programs; our individual and congregational missions in the sake of Matthew 25: 35-40. ***"Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me"***.

Every member of the Corpus Christi Communion has a responsibility to see that we follow through with the Lord's mission. We cannot sit back and wait for the children of God come to us--- we must reach out and evangelize door-to-door, if necessary. We need to feed the hungry, give a drink to the thirsty, cloth the naked, help the needy, and anoint the sick. In short, be active members of the body of Christ—everyone must put his and/or her talents to the service of the least of his children.

When we show pity, compassion, and kindness to those in difficult straits, we are practicing the merciful attitude that our Lord expects each of His children to exhibit at all times. Of course, He does not want us to be so soft-hearted that we become an easy mark for those who would take advantage of us, but He does want us to develop a keen sense of discernment that realizes when mercy is a better option than the strict application of rules.

Undoubtedly, each of us would lend a helping hand to another who was in physical need, but there are other situations in which a physical need is not apparent that also require us to extend mercy. Particularly, we need to learn to employ mercy in our dealings with each other on a daily basis. To put it into today's language, everyone has bad-hair days, and on some days, even a normally lovable person can be very difficult to live with.

What does God require of us? He tells us plainly in Micah 6:8: "*He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God*".

Halleluia!
Jesus is risen!
He is risen indeed!

May this declaration resound
not only in our hearts
but also touch the lives
of all we meet and forever be
the truth of which we speak.

Your love,
once sown within a garden,
tended for your own people,
neglected and rejected,
now spreads its sweet perfume
in our lives and wherever it is shown.

Halleluia!

The grace of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Christ is risen! - Truly, He is risen indeed!

**+Abp. Jose Israel
Presiding Archbishop**

**April 1st , 2018
Easter Sunday
Toledo, Ohio**

