

EASTER MESSAGE 2019
Most Rev Robert Rivas O.P.
Archbishop of Castries

“HE IS NOT HERE; HE HAS RISEN”

-Luke 24:6-

Who doesn't want to look into the tomb? Who doesn't want evidence? Who doesn't want to know what happened to Jesus three days after His crucifixion and death? Surely, the first place to go is to the tomb and the first place to look is in the tomb. However, the tomb is empty. The message of the angels to the women is: *“He is not here; He has risen”*,

We are told by St Luke in chapter 24:1-12 that Peter, the leader among the Apostles, went running to the tomb: *“He bent down and saw the binding cloths but nothing else; he then went back home, amazed at what had happened” (Luke 24:12).*

He saw *“nothing else”*. What did he expect to see? A corpse! An apparition! He came to the tomb of death and expected to see the signs of death but the tomb was empty. Peter's first reaction to the empty tomb in St Luke's story was 'amazement' at what had happened. What really happened?

The angels said to the women at the tomb: *“why look among the dead for someone who is alive. He is not here”*. The tomb was, indeed, empty. Death had given way to life. Luke said that when Peter bent down to look into the tomb he saw *“the binding cloths but nothing else”*. The Good News was already out. *“He has risen”*, the angels had said to the women. They were the first to hear the Good News and to run and tell Peter and the others.

If we want to know what happened, we too have to shift our gaze and our search from the tomb, a place of death, to the risen, living Lord. His resurrection and His presence brought joy to the disciples and became the core of their faith.

Jesus Christ is Lord. He is alive. This is the core of our Easter faith. Where do we encounter the risen, living Christ today? He is in the Eucharist as the Bread of Life. He is in the Word. When we read the Scriptures and break the Word, He speaks to us and comes close to us. Where two or three are gathered together in His name he is there. He is present. In our works of solidarity and justice; in almsgiving and in works of mercy when we reach

out to the most vulnerable, the weakest, the neediest, the excluded and the littlest, in so far as we do it to the least we do it to Him (*cf Mt 25:42 ff.*).

Christ the risen Lord is not, however, limited to some recognized places of encounter. Where humanity suffers, He suffers too. Where there is disaster, destruction or despair He is there too. Where there is hurt, pain and abandonment, He is there too.

This Easter Christ is in Yemen. His is the face of the suffering child dying of hunger because of the atrocities of war and the blockade of humanitarian aid meant to help those in need. His is the face and mutilated body of a youngster who was dragged out of the rubble after a bombing in Aleppo in Syria. The faces of grieving mothers and fathers who have lost their daughters and sons to the tragedy of war and violence are the faces of Christ. He is alive and He continues to suffer with those who suffer.

This Easter Christ is in Sudan in Africa where young people are prepared to risk their lives to bring about social and political change in the face of oppression and corruption. He is in Algeria where the people have taken to the streets clamouring for social transformation and a more just, respectful and democratic society where the young can have hope and a future. In all these situations of violence, human suffering, and a clamour for change and social transformation the risen Lord is present and He is saying: 'It is enough; only love can transform and bring about lasting peace, true justice and non-violence'.

On Monday in Holy Week this year, He was in the sad hearts of the people of France as they watched their iconic Cathedral of Notre Dame engulfed in a disastrous fire. He shared their loss and grief. Recently He was in New Zealand where thousands of people of different faiths united in support of the Muslim Community after the slaughter of fifty of its members during the time of prayer in their mosque. Before that He was at the Synagogue in America where many innocent and elderly people lost their lives in a hate crime massacre. Every day and every moment of our day, in every part of our world, He is with us offering hope, consolation and mercy.

To us in Saint Lucia this Easter, the risen Christ is saying: 'Put away your weapons. No more violence. There is too much killing. There is too much verbal assassination. There are too many grudges. There is too much hate and vindictiveness. Build a new Saint Lucia where all can live together as sisters and brothers in harmony, respect, unity and solidarity. Quench the flames of anger and hate. Respect life and the dignity of each person. Care

for the environment. It is enough. Choose life. Choose the better way for all'.

My sisters and brothers in Christ, where are we looking this Easter? Are we looking in the tomb of death or into the barrel of a gun? The risen Christ is directing us to new horizons of hope and calling us to a fuller and better life. Keep your gaze on him. He has conquered death. He is alive and is with us! The true champion of life!



ALLELUIA!