



Archbishop's Easter Message 2018

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Easter Mystery is the foundation of Christian faith. Without the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, says St. Paul, “our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain.” (I Corinthians 15.14)

In the celebration of the three holiest days of our liturgical year, the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday), Catholics participate in moments of great joy—such as the first Mass Jesus instituted on Holy Thursday. We also participate in the profound suffering He endured on Good Friday.

The culmination of these special days is the Easter Vigil on the evening of Holy Saturday. It is the most powerful liturgical celebration. Christians share an experience of the mystery, beauty, and joy of Easter.

Easter affirms that God's love triumphs over death. God's grace and mercy defeat sin.

Easter is a time of rejoicing that Jesus, who shared in family life with Mary and Joseph, shares too in our family life.

This is especially the case in those moments where we share our faith together with each other: grace at meal times, family rosary, prayers before bed, and celebrating Mass together on Sunday. We do not have to be the perfect family to invite Him into our lives.

Pope Francis writes in his apostolic exhortation on family life (*Amoris Laetitia: The Joy of Love*), “I thank God that many families, which are far from considering themselves perfect, live in love, fulfil their calling and keep moving forward, even if they fall many times along the way.”

Jesus, who partook in our humanity to the point of death, does not hesitate to journey with us through the family struggles we encounter.

Our family is God's gift to us and good news for the world. This vital institution is the building block of society and of the Church. We can describe the family as "the domestic church" — church life lived in the home — where we practice Christian virtues, love, and pray with and for each other. At home, we learn the value of mercy, reconciliation, and forgiveness towards one another.

Pope Francis writes, "all family life is a 'shepherding' in mercy. Each of us, by our love and care, leaves a mark on the life of others" (*AL*, n. 322).

One of the gospel readings on Easter Sunday recounts the experience of Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John at the empty tomb on that first Easter morning. Jesus had left the grave and had risen from the dead. This is a source of marvel and hope!

Because Jesus is risen from the dead, He can be present to us now in our family life: "if a family is centred on Christ, He will unify and illumine its entire life" (Pope Francis, *AL*, n. 317).

Easter is a time to celebrate God's love for us, a love that He definitively proves in the death and resurrection of His Son. We mediate that love to each other in our family. God calls us to reflect it to the world.

May the joy of the Risen Lord infuse your family with blessings this Easter Season.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Terrence Prendergast".

✠Terrence Prendergast, S.J.
Archbishop of Ottawa