

# Presiding Bishop Curry: Easter 2022 Message

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“Easter is the celebration of the victory of God,” Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop and Primate Michael B. Curry said in his Easter 2022 message. “The earth, like an egg, has been cracked open, and Jesus has been raised alive and new, and love is victorious.”

The festive day of Easter is Sunday, April 17.

The following is the text of the Presiding Bishop’s Easter 2022 Message:

In Matthew’s gospel, the resurrection of Jesus is introduced this way: “After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord had descended from heaven, came and rolled back the stone before the tomb until it was open.”

A number of years ago, when I was serving as the bishop of North Carolina, one of our clergy, the Rev. James Melnick, offered a workshop on the Saturday before Palm Sunday on how to design, and color, and make Easter eggs.

I attended the workshop with a number of other people from around the Raleigh area and did my best to make an Easter egg. But Jim was a master at doing so. You see, Jim’s family hailed from Ukraine, and he had been making those Easter eggs from childhood, and spoke of his grandmother and the family tradition that hailed from Ukraine, the making of those Easter eggs. I knew the significance of the Easter egg and Easter. I knew the stories and the truth and the teachings about the coming of new life into the world, and the connection of life emerging from an egg, and Jesus rising from the dead, bringing new life and hope into our world.

But it became clear to me, in the last month or so, in this time when the people of the Ukraine are struggling for their freedom, struggling to be what God intends for all people to be, free people, that, that egg, which is deeply embedded in the life and the consciousness of the people of Ukraine, that those Easter eggs are not just mere symbols, but reminders of the reality of the resurrection of Jesus. Think back. On Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem, as we know, riding on a donkey. That was a deliberate act on his part.

He entered Jerusalem at about same time that Pontius Pilate, the governor of Rome, would've been entering the city from the other side, from the other gate. Pilate would've been riding a war horse, accompanied by a cavalry and infantry. He would've been riding in the streets of Jerusalem at this, the dawn of the Passover, which was a celebration of Jewish freedom. Harking back to the days of Moses and the Exodus, Pilate knew that the people would remember that God decreed freedom for all people, and that the Roman empire, which held Judea as a colony, would need to put down, by brute force, any attempt to strike a blow for their freedom.

So, Pilate entered Jerusalem on a war horse, and Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey. The way of humility, the way of the love that we know from the God who is love, the way of truth, the way of compassion, the way of justice, the way of God, the way of love. That way faced the way of the world, brute force, totalitarian power, injustice, bigotry, violence, embodied in Pontius Pilate, governor of Rome. And the rest of the week was a conflict between the way of the empire and the way of the kingdom or the reign of God's love.

On Friday, the empire struck. Jesus was executed on the orders of the governor of Rome. He was killed, and hope seemed to die with him. His followers fled, save those few women who stood by the cross, and save old Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who provided a tomb for the body of Jesus. The Scripture says they placed his body in the tomb and rolled the stone in front of the tomb. And there he lay dead, lifeless. There their hopes dashed on the altars of reality, their truth was crushed to earth. Their love itself seemed to die.

Then early Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene, and at least one other, and maybe a few other women, went to the tomb to anoint his body, to do the rites of burial that were customary. But when they got there, they realized that there had been an earthquake, that the earth, if you will, had been cracked open, and that the tomb was empty. The tomb was open and empty. The earth had been cracked open, and they would soon discover that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The earth cracking open, the tomb opening like an egg cracked open, and new life emerging from it.

That is the victory of life. That is the victory of love. That is the victory of God. The resurrection of Jesus is the victory that we can believe in and live by.

Many years before South Africa ever saw its new day of freedom, I heard Desmond Tutu in Columbus, Ohio. This was in the mid-1980s. This was while Nelson Mandela was still in prison, while there was no hope of deliverance. I heard him say in his speech that I believe

that one day my beloved South Africa will be free for all of her children, Black, white, colored, Asian, Indian, all of her children.

I believe it, because I believe that God has a dream for South Africa, and nothing can stop God's dream. And I believe that because I believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, and nothing can stop God. Easter is the celebration of the victory of God. The earth, like an egg, has been cracked open, and Jesus has been raised alive and new, and love is victorious.

In the year 2020, in that first Easter during the pandemic, when our church buildings were closed, we broadcast an Easter service from the National Cathedral, and members of our communication team organized for, what may have been the first time in our church's history, organized an online choir.

And they sang an ancient Easter hymn. And they will sing it for you now. It sings of this victory, this victory of love of God. The strife is o'er, the battle done. The victory of life is won. The sound of triumph has begun. Alleluia, alleluia. The victory is won. Our task is to live in that victory, to live out that love until the prayer that Jesus taught us, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And so this Easter, behold, the Ukrainian Easter egg, for the victory of love and life is one.

(Virtual choir sings)

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

The strife is o'er, the battle done,  
the victory of life is won;  
the song of triumph has begun.  
Alleluia!

The powers of death have done their worst,  
but Christ their legions has dispersed:  
let shout of holy joy outburst.  
Alleluia!

The three sad days are quickly sped,  
he rises glorious from the dead:

all glory to our risen Head!

Alleluia!

He closed the yawning gates of hell,  
the bars from heaven's high portals fell;  
let hymns of praise his triumph tell!

Alleluia!

Lord! by the stripes which wounded thee,  
from death's dread sting thy servants free,  
that we may live and sing to thee.

Alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!