



March 31, 2021

CARDINAL SEÁN'S EASTER MESSAGE

Easter is the center and core of Christian faith. Christian faith is Resurrection faith; the Risen Christ, having conquered sin and death, remains with us across the ages. When we celebrate “the Triduum” — the great feasts of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday — we recall and present again through words and worship the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord.

The Lord’s Easter gift to the Church and the world is the gift of hope. Because the Risen Christ remains with us personally and collectively, we never face the challenges of life alone. Christian hope teaches us that we are destined for eternal life, and hope also is meant to sustain us in the concrete realities we face each day. As we celebrate this Easter, no truth is more relevant than hope built on Christian faith.

The past year, lived in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, has tried our sense of hope personally, socially, and as a country. The process of recovery and rebuilding our society will test us again in new ways. In some form, we have all been impacted by this silent and elusive but deadly virus. No community has been spared, and some communities have been devastated. Recovery will require a spirit of collaboration, cooperation and compassion. Easter tells us we will not be alone in this effort; the Risen Christ calls us to be very good neighbors to each other.

Throughout the past year, there have been multiple examples of what being a good neighbor means. We have seen health care workers risk their lives to save lives; we have seen front-line workers in stores, delivery agencies and police and fire departments show up every day, even at personal risk, so basic needs could be met and life could be sustained. These examples inspire hope in human terms; we will need this kind of generosity on an even wider scale in the days and months ahead.

Nationally and locally, the pandemic illustrated again that, even when broad structural issues like a pandemic affect us all, they impact some in catastrophic fashion. African American and Hispanic communities suffered dramatically greater losses — of life and welfare — than the general population. Often, these communities have been where many front-line workers live; they kept faithfully serving others even as they suffered disproportionately themselves. National recovery should reward this service appropriately in gratitude and in public policies focused on these communities.

Any assessment of how we have responded to the pandemic will need to address two realities. There have been countless acts of charity and compassion offered quietly and effectively each day to those in need. And, by contrast, there have been intensified expressions of racism in our public life; historic patterns aimed at Asian Americans, African Americans, and immigrants. Children and youth perceived as different are often the object of bullying that can push young people into depression, risky behaviors or suicide. There will not be lasting healing and recovery unless we are committed as a society to expand the circle of compassion and charity manifested by many and resist, by word and deed, by law and policy, the forces in our society which refuse to acknowledge the dignity of every person. Easter offers hope: it also calls us to be signs of hope, not hatred, on the road to recovery. This Easter is time to make clear choices to renew our common life.