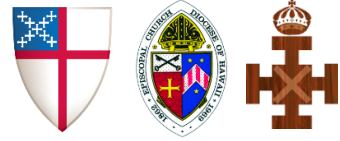


## From the Bishop

The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick  
The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i



### BISHOP'S EASTER MESSAGE 2024

I am on Maui for Holy Week 2024. While here, I am spending time with all of the congregations, A Cup of Cold Water, the clergy, and especially God's people of Holy Innocents' Church, Lahaina. The months since the August fire have been very difficult for the people of Maui.

I also am praying for the 'Iolani School 'Ohana as they continue to recover from the murder earlier this month of senior Sakura Oda along with her two siblings and mother by her father before he took his own life. The School community has responded with care, but it is a time of grief.

This all comes as war rages in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, and too many places in our world. The political discourse of our nation is filled with hate and vindictiveness.

What does Easter 2024 bring us?

For me, these words from Paul's Letter to the Philippians (2:5-11) best express the meaning of Easter. Paul is likely sharing an "hymn" or "affirmation" of the very early Church. This passage is sometimes called the "Christ Hymn":

*Adopt the attitude that was in Christ Jesus,*

*Though he was in the form of God,  
he did not consider being equal with God something to exploit.*

*But he emptied himself  
by taking the form of a slave  
and by becoming like human beings.*

*When he found himself in the form of a human,  
he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death,  
even death on a cross.*

*Therefore, God highly honored him  
and gave him a name above all names,  
so that at the name of Jesus everyone  
in heaven, on earth, and under the earth might bow  
and every tongue confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Paul urges us to take on the attitude of Christ. How do we do that? Look at the three verbs of the Christ Hymn: “Emptied,” “Humbled,” and “Obeyed.”

Jesus Christ emptied himself not in the sense of a loss of self but in the sense of pouring out his grace and love to creation — to and for us. He humbled himself not in a condescending or fake way. He willingly entered into solidarity with us. He bridged the great gulf between God and humanity to heal creation. He voluntarily obeyed out of love. He was not coerced by force but freely consented to the will of God for the benefit of humanity — of you and me — and for creation. As the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann wisely writes, “God is not greater than he is in this humiliation. God is not more glorious than he is in this self-surrender. God is not more powerful than he is in this helplessness. God is not more divine than he is in this humanity.” (*The Crucified God* [New York: Harper & Row, 1973], p. 205).

Easter celebrates that we are a “New Creation.” In 2 Corinthians 5:17-19, Paul writes, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.” An Easter faith does not bring rest; it brings love. The ministry of reconciliation is sharing the love of God with others and the whole of creation.

So, on Easter 2024, we can pray and cry with the people of Maui and the ‘Iolani School ‘Ohana. We can strive to bring peace to our world beginning with ourselves. Every word and action of our lives reflects the love of Christ. We are called to live Easter every day. All things have been made new!

In the words of my favorite Easter hymn:

*Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.*

*The cross stands empty to the sky.*

*Let streets and homes with praises ring.*

*Love, drowned in death, shall never die.*

*Christ is alive! No longer bound*

*to distant years in Palestine,*

*but saving, healing, here and now,  
and touching every place and time.*

*Not throned above, remotely high,  
untouched, unmoved by human pains,  
but daily, in the midst of life,  
our Savior with the Father reigns.*

*In every insult, rift, and war  
where color, scorn or wealth divide,  
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,  
and lives, where even hope has died.*

*Women and men, in age and youth,  
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,  
and find the way, the life, the truth,  
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.*

*Christ is alive, and comes to bring  
good news to this and every age,  
till earth and sky and ocean ring  
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.*

-- Words by Brian A. Wren as found in hymn #182, *The Hymnal 1982*.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: “It is not abstract argument, but example, that gives the [church’s] word emphasis and power” (*Letters and Papers from Prison* [New York: Macmillan, 1971], p. 383). It is only by our example — yours and mine — each and every day that this world can have a hint of our Easter joy.

With my prayers for glorious and grace filled Easter!

+Bob

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