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2020 EASTER MESSAGE FROM THE GHANA CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

Theme: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, and with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phil. 4:6, NIV).

Introduction

Dearly Beloved in Christ, as we celebrate Easter, the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we, the members of the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference (GCBC) bring greetings of peace and blessings of God to you our Catholic faithful, Christians of other churches and all men and women of goodwill in our dear country Ghana.

We rejoice and are glad because we are celebrating Easter, the summit of salvation history, the Feast of feasts and the Solemnity of solemnities. During the Easter season, the Church's year reaches its supreme moment in the celebrating of Jesus Christ, who is risen in our human flesh, glorified in that flesh and triumphant over the mortality of that flesh. Christ has indeed risen from the dead and by his resurrection has conquered the power of death, sin, evil and won for us a new life. He is the author and perfecter of our faith. As believers in the resurrection, let us always keep in mind the heavenly dimension of our Christian lives and continually seek to build a risen world, become better people, new people liberated from the shackles of sin, people destined for the life hereafter.

Easter 2020, the Covid-19 Pandemic and the Challenge of Faith

During this unusual moment and time when we celebrate Easter under dire circumstances, it is not unusual for no-believers and even people of faith to begin to ask questions concerning the omnipotence, omnipresence and goodness of God, and to entertain doubts on whether God really cares for His people in the face of much suffering and evil in the world. While we believe that no quick answers would fully and adequately respond to the presence of evil and suffering in the world, we also believe that the presence of evil and suffering in the world does not in any way detract the goodness and omnipotence of God who continues to care for the wellbeing of all people.

In his special *Urbi et Orbi* blessing given on March 28, 2019, the Holy Father, Pope Francis', assured us and the world that "God turns everything to our good". Reiterating these words of the Holy Father, we wish to assure you all that God is with us and will see us through this tempestuous storm, for with God, "Nothing is impossible" (cf. Lk. 1: 37).

In the light of the faith we have in God, we should not doubt the power of God to help us to overcome the current pandemic. The current Covid-19 pandemic should not rob us of our faith in God. Instead, we should continue to keep our trust and hope in God the Father who did not spare His only Son but offered him for the salvation of the world.

Easter and the Hope of a New Life

The Covid-19 Pandemic has provoked a new lease of life and creativity that we were not aware that we had. In following the Directives from the President of the Republic, the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference and Health Authorities, we are, in some cases, re-learning some of the basic things we need to do out of consideration for others in public and how to stay healthy. We are re-discovering the importance of caring for each other in the family, of reading the Word of God and praying together as a family. The Social Media has made us realise how interconnected and interdependent we are and how much we can and do learn from each other. We do need each other in order to save our Common Home.

In the light of Christ's victory over sin and death, let us use these renewed skills to love God and the neighbour more intensely so that these God-given skills help us to renew and re-build the Family of God. We should work together as one common humanity and pray to God to help us to stem the tide and eventually uproot this virus from our midst even as we continue to take all necessary health precautions that will help halt the spread of the disease.

We share in the pain of all in the face of the Coronavirus Pandemic that brings a halt to most of the things we do as human beings. We pray for all scientists, researchers, medical experts that they may find remedy for this pandemic. We continue to pray for those who work at the hospitals and health sectors, paramedics, the security services, the leaders in our world and all who are at the frontline of this pandemic that they may be well protected in the discharge of their duties. For those who have been taken ill because of the virus, we pray for their healing. Finally, we pray for the repose of the souls of those who have passed on as a result of this virus. May the Risen Lord grant them forgiveness of their sins and eternal life.

Easter and the Call to be Each Other's Keeper

As we entreat all to observe the restrictions imposed by the President of the Republic and also follow the precautionary measures laid down by the Ghana Health Service and the GCBC, we crave your indulgence not to leave any stone unturned as we all battle on to fight this pandemic. If Christ died for us, we too should be willing to do what we can to protect ourselves, family members and every Ghanaian. If there is anything that the Covid-19 pandemic has taught us, it is a reminder of our common humanity where there is no distinction between race, religion, gender or status.

Following the successful meetings between the President and the various Religious leaders and leaders of Political Parties in Ghana, it remains our hope that all Ghanaians will unite and collaborate as citizens of our dear nation to do what is expected of us to help contain the spread of the virus in the country. There should be no politicization of the epidemic since the coronavirus has no political colour or preference. As our own Cardinal Peter Appiah Turkson admonishes, “For each person, believer or nonbeliever, this is a good time to understand the value of brotherhood, of being linked to one another in an indissoluble way.”

To be each other’s keeper also requires that we stop taking advantage of the situation to make more money for ourselves by exploiting others. This is not the time to make more money but to go to the help of the needy and suffering. God invites us to make an introspection into our lives as individuals, as a nation and as a world. He invites all of us to live as people of the resurrection so we shirk off the yeast of sin which is the most 'deadly virus' to attack body and soul. We all need to retrace our steps to the Lord and live as salt of the earth and light of the world to effect a change in our world. This is what it means to live as people of the resurrection. Let us change our way of life for the better and bear the fragrance of Jesus who died and rose again; for when a person is in Christ, the old is gone and the new has come (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Conclusion: Looking to the Future with Hope

In conclusion, we entrust ourselves to God who is able, the one who came so that we may have life and have it to the full. We are optimistic that soon God will eradicate this pandemic entirely from among us; we pray that the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ will indeed make all things new for each and every one of us. Let us not live in fear for the resurrected Christ says to us 'Peace, do not be afraid.' His peace is not one that will allow us to stay behind closed doors.

His peace surpasses everything. It takes away our fear and brings true freedom from every form of bondage. We trust in His mercy, for, He is full of mercy. May the triune God protect each and every one of us. May our dear and Blessed Virgin Mary, health of the sick and the comforter of the afflicted intercede on our behalf. ***“Christ now raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has power over him.”*** (Romans 6:9).

Happy Easter!



MOST REV. PHILIP NAAMEH
METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOP OF TAMALE &
PRESIDENT, GHANA CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

ISSUED ON MONDAY, APRIL 06, 2020.