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Office of the Bishop

## **Easter Message 2020**

Dear Faithful of the Diocese of Saint John,

Christ is risen, Alleluia! We have just concluded the celebration of our Easter Triduum and we are now within the octave of Easter. The first eight days or octave specifically celebrate the solemnity of Easter every day. With the whole Church we rejoice at the resurrection of Christ! We will hear the resurrection narratives from the Gospel throughout the Sundays of the Easter season, which lasts for 50 days until the solemnity of Pentecost.

We have never experienced an Easter like this – with churches closed to public worship and prayer, and people confined to their homes, for the most part. Each day on the news we hear and see the suffering caused by this pandemic in our country and the world. Many of us have been separated from family and friends due to physical distancing measures. We yearn and pray for an end to this pandemic.

Yet, as St. John Paul II remarked almost 35 years ago, “We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song.” We rejoice that through his death and resurrection Jesus has triumphed over evil, sin and death. The first words we hear from the resurrected Christ are, “Do not be afraid.” Those who put their trust in God and accept Christ will be raised from the dead.

We are invited in these days to enter more deeply into the good news of Easter and to encounter the risen Christ anew. In that encounter with the risen Lord, our fears and anxieties give way to joy, just as it did for the first witnesses of the resurrection, a joy that is rooted in hope, which is central to our Christian identity, a joy that is steeped in the awareness of God’s deep and abiding love, even in the midst of our suffering. God is alive and with us. We are not alone.

In these times, may we be truly faith-filled and hope-filled people. May the light of the risen Christ shine brightly in each of us so that others will come to know the risen Lord and see that he is truly risen, Alleluia! In the words of Pope Francis, “May Christ, who has already defeated death and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, dispel the darkness of our suffering humanity and lead us into the light of His glorious day. A day that knows no end”.

Happy Easter!

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC  
Bishop of Saint John