

Easter Message 2022
from the Most Reverend Malcolm McMahon OP
Archbishop of Liverpool

Easter Sunday, the day when we celebrate the resurrection of the Lord, is always a day of joy and of hope – a day when we celebrate the gift of life itself and the triumph of light over darkness, of good over evil, and of peace over war.

The great Easter proclamation, the Exsultet, which is sung at our Easter Vigil, the first service of Easter, says:

The sanctifying power of this night
dispels wickedness, washes faults away,
restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners,
drives out hatred, fosters concord and brings down the mighty

The Easter Vigil is always celebrated in darkness to emphasise the light and glory of the Risen Lord, but it comes at the end of Holy Week, a time when we remember the passion and death of Jesus. It is a time of high drama and emotion, of suffering and of mystery. It begins in triumph as Jesus enters Jerusalem, a king riding on a donkey receiving the adulation of the crowds as they cheer and wave palm branches. The mood rapidly changes to one of darkness and betrayal, mental anguish, suffering and death on a cross. If we lay all before the Lord at the foot of that cross God will take us beyond the cross from darkness to light and from war to peace.

As Jesus died on the cross, he prayed, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'. Violence and war are human failings by people who do not know what they are doing.

In these last months we have witnessed a time of darkness, unjust aggression, violence, war and the death of innocent people. We have been praying for peace for the people of Ukraine and our generosity has united us with them. In the Archdiocese of Liverpool, we have united with the people of Drohobych and their Auxiliary Bishop, Gregory Komar, who wrote to us: 'We have witnessed that God is with us, that we are not alone in our anguish, that throughout the whole world there are many people of good will supporting us.'

Yes, God is with us all the time, even though we may not realise it. The Risen Lord comes to us as we reach out to those most in need.

Through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Easter gives us hope, Bishop Gregory ends his message to us by saying, 'I am asking you, dear brothers and sisters, to be alongside us in this Way of the Cross, in these dramatic days, when the future of Europe and of the whole world is

being decided. Share with us your material blessings and your support, and we in our turn will share with you our love, our gratitude, our faith and our hope.'

Let us accept the love, gratitude, faith and hope of the Ukrainian people as our Easter gift this year as we continue to support them, and may we be empowered by the presence of the Risen Lord today as he calls us beyond the fear of the unknown.

For the people of Ukraine, for those in our world who suffer conflict, hunger, injustice and deprivation, for our families and for ourselves may we make the greeting of the Risen Lord our prayer this Easter – 'Peace be with you'.

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