



## The Most Reverend Oscar A. Solis

Dear Friends in Christ: The Lord is risen, and a glorious Easter to all!

Our Church and the whole of humanity is blessed by God's gift of the Risen Christ, who revealed the truth that He is our Lord and Savior of the world. This is the foundation of our Christian joy and hope for our troubled world, where so many people are languishing in fear and uncertainty because of war and senseless violence, poverty, hunger and natural calamities, as well as racism and discrimination based on race, creed, gender or economic status in life. The suffering, death and resurrection of Christ ushers in a new dawn and a fresh start. By taking away the sting of death, shame, despair and self-condemnation because of our past sins and mistakes, Christ gave us new life.

Easter, like springtime, brings freshness and puts an end to the grubbiness of the dead and cold winter. It lifts up our drooping spirit and brings tremendous gladness to our society, which is saddled with brokenness and polarization due to the influence of secular ideologies, relativism, individualistic tendencies, materialism, loss of the sense of transcendence and the denial of the existence of a loving and caring God. Easter reminds us that the noble way of living is through love, service and sacrifice.

It is also of great importance to note that Christ's death and resurrection highlights the preciousness of life and the need to protect its sacredness and dignity. I pray and hope that the power of the Easter grace will bring conversion of hearts to those who blatantly degrade and disregard the value of life in all its stages, especially the unborn, the sick and the elderly. May this divine truth enlighten them that abortion is evil, infanticide and capital punishment are sinful, and our indifference to the needs of the poor, the refugees, the immigrants, the addicts and our homeless brothers and sisters is morally wrong in the eyes of God and the teachings of Christ.

I therefore encourage and exhort the faithful of our diocese to take responsibility in promoting the culture of life and to carry out this sacred mission seriously with courage and determination. Pope Francis exhorted us *"to bring the joy of the gospel to the world by reflecting the Risen Lord in us, by living joyful lives filled with love and compassion, and with an attitude that is positive and forward looking."* Let us heed the call of the Holy Father and seek the grace that Easter brings to help us get out of the tomb of our old selves and rise with Christ above our failures and disillusionment so we can become the glory and warmth of God's light and gift of new life.

In his apostolic exhortation *Guadete Et Exultate*, Pope Francis stated, ***"God is eternal newness. He impels us constantly to set out anew, to pass beyond what is familiar, to the fringes and beyond."*** (#135) Easter is the opportune time to unite our hearts with the Risen Lord and pull ourselves together in order to proclaim with joy and enthusiasm the good news that Christ has died, but He has risen!

He further said, ***"Let us ask the Lord for the grace not to hesitate when the Spirit calls us to take a step forward. Let us ask for the apostolic courage to share the Gospel with others and to stop trying to make our Christian life a museum of memories. In every situation, may the Holy Spirit cause us to contemplate history in the light of the risen Jesus. In this way, the Church will not stand still, but constantly welcome the Lord's surprises."*** (#139)

Through the intercession of our Blessed Virgin Mary, may we become the authentic witnesses of our living and saving God in our world.

A blessed and happy Easter to all! Alleluia! Alleluia!

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