

EASTER LETTER 2016

My dearly beloved parishioners,

Last year when it came to celebrating the great liturgies of Holy Week and Easter I was still very much a stranger to you. As we celebrate the great Festival of Easter this year I feel that I have grown to know so many of you in a more personal and meaningful way. I continue to rejoice that I have been given the gift of serving you as parish priest here at Holy Redeemer. It has been a wonderful experience of grace in my own personal life, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of you for your kindness, and encouragement and prayer, which sustains me in so many ways.

Of course, each of us as individuals, and as families, as well as the parish community as a whole, has gone through many experiences since last year. Many of these experiences have been joyful: we have celebrated births and baptisms, weddings and spiritual exercises in our Church. For all of this, we give thanks to God.

But, as we all know too well, life is not an endless series of joy and light. Many of us have gone through times of great difficulty and sorrow over the past year too. We have had so many deaths and losses in our parish community, leaving family members often devastated by grief and struggling to cope with the loss of a loved one. We have also known many family difficulties; people becoming unemployed, struggles in relationships with those we love most, and the ordinary struggle of every human life. We have many who have been through, or are going through, times of poor health, or stress or loneliness. So there are times for all of us when we struggle to feel the joy and the light of the Resurrection.

On a wider scale, none of us can be unaware of the troubled nature of our world. Here in South Africa, we continue to struggle to become a nation that truly upholds the dignity of everyone. There is still far too much violence and hatred and corruption in our midst. There is often a sense in which the sacredness of life is something which is radically undermined, through the ongoing horrors of abortion and senseless killing of innocent people.

More globally, there is much in our contemporary world that causes us to concern. There are so many places all over the world which continue to be wracked by violence. There is the migrant crisis, where so many people remain completely indifferent to the sufferings of others. We live in an age

of manifest injustice, where more and more of the world's wealth and resources are enjoyed by fewer and fewer people. Hunger and drought and lack of the basic needs for a good life are denied to countless people.

This might all sound very depressing and giving each of us a reason to lose hope for the future. But it is precisely in times of darkness and struggle that we are called to bear witness to, and to believe in our Easter faith. The whole meaning of Easter is that the Resurrection of Our Most Holy Redeemer occurred in the darkest moment of human history. And our Easter faith is not simply a belief that Jesus is risen from the dead. It is also the belief that every possible experience of darkness in our human condition, whether personal or at the family level or globally, has already been infused with the Light of the Risen Christ, who has overcome all darkness and evil.

May we celebrate this Easter in the trust and knowledge that we are never alone in our difficulties. Our Risen Saviour has carried all the suffering of the world, and redeemed it through His rising to new life.

As we celebrate this great feast of Easter, on behalf of our Redemptorist community, I wish each and every one of you, and all your loved ones, the joy and the peace that only comes through the love of God.

Christ Our Lord Is Risen. Let each of us rejoice. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Fr Gerard,

Parish Priest.