

## ARCHBISHOP'S EASTER MESSAGE 2020

### SHATTERING GOOD NEWS!



For the past few weeks ago, the whole world has been in awe of the arrival of the Corona virus in our midst. Each day and all day, we hear of and see the suffering as COVID-19 wreaks havoc in our country and the world.

We are holding our breath and hoping that all will be well; indeed the message for the Province of Quebec facing these challenges is: “Ça va bien aller”—“It’s going to be all right.”

Recently, many people have remarked to me their conviction that after this lockdown nothing in our world will be the same. And that includes our experience of church and our life of faith.

The Bible describes the Paschal Mystery—the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—in similar terms, one of epic proportions and shattering significance.

Two earthquakes revealed that the end times had broken into our world. The evangelist Matthew tells us that at Jesus’ death and again at His resurrection the earth shook (Matthew 27.54; 28.2).

We don’t know the magnitude of these seismic movements, only that they touched people’s lives profoundly.

On Calvary, when the centurion and those with him keeping watch over Jesus saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified. Then they confessed, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”

On Easter morning after the earthquake, the guards shook and became like dead men when the angel rolled back the stone from the tomb.

The angel urged the women who had come to anoint the body of their Lord not to fear. Jesus the crucified, he announced, had risen. They were to go and report this to His disciples.

Our faith experience should parallel that of the women and disciples who, on encountering the risen Lord, became believers. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they began spreading the good news of God’s love and forgiveness.

The news of Jesus' resurrection, when it touches peoples' lives, has similar effects. First, the experience of the Risen Lord shakes us up. Then it challenges us to share the news we have come to believe.

Such sharing of the Christian message will be difficult in a culture like ours. Our current world circumstances require us to conceive a new way of evangelizing—of spreading the Good News. In recent days, priests and people have taken to social media to express our religious life “virtually” on Zoom, Facebook, and by other means.

Researchers are striving to find a vaccine to help our bodies produce antibodies that will protect us from the virus. We might say that some people we know seem to have been immunized against the Christian faith.

Perhaps earlier on in their lives, they got a mild and ineffective dose of the Christian story, which they took to be the real thing. Unimpressed, they turned away, looking elsewhere for meaning and purpose in life.

Knowing Christ changes us to the core of our being! I see this whenever I hear young people speak of the transformation Christ works in their lives. Older people, too, tell what happens to them when notions about God, Christ, and the Church become real.

This health crisis has helped us find new heroes in the medical field, in pharmacy and grocery store workers, in truckers moving goods.

We should realize that none of the people of our world are completely resistant to grace, to the beautiful message of Jesus, and to examples we can give of genuine service and forgiving love. This should give us hope at Easter and help our resolve to proclaim Christ where we study, work, and play.

It helps to recall how the Christian message spread rapidly in the ancient Roman Empire—one at times officially hostile to Christianity—in a society which was much more cruel, uncaring, violent, and sexually chaotic than today's society.

The Good News of the Kingdom—of Christ and His message—can still bring healing, health, and peace. In our financial, familial, and health struggles and in our disappointments, we must remember this and still dare to proclaim what we have seen, heard, and touched in God's word and in the sacramental life we pray will soon be restored.

May God give you and all Christ's followers Easter joy and zeal to share the Good News we have received as God's gift! Happy Easter!

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