



Diocesan Centre
Coursington Road
Motherwell
ML1 1PP

Rt Rev. Joseph Toal STB KC*HS
Bishop of
Diocese of Motherwell

Easter Message 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As Holy Week approaches each year I always experience a strong sense of anticipation, a looking forward again to the liturgical celebration of these great events so central to our faith - the Last Supper, the Passion and Death of Our Lord, and his Glorious Resurrection. These feelings of gratitude go back to my childhood in Roy Bridge, where we celebrated the Paschal Triduum in a very full and uplifting manner in our parish church of St Margaret's. The Easter Vigil really was the highlight of the Church's year, probably of the village's life as well. There were no short-cuts as the whole Catholic community gathered to proclaim Our Lord Risen from the Dead and to celebrate with great joy his living presence with us in the Easter Eucharist.

Sometimes we can feel nostalgic about what happened in the past, especially when we were young, but it is very necessary for us to be aware of the important experiences which have formed us. When we have been brought up to know and love our faith, and to have experienced it in the worship and life of our local Catholic parishes, we realise this is a precious gift which we must hold on to for the whole of our lives. Hopefully the yearly celebrations of the great feasts of Our Lord, Our Blessed Lady, and Our Saints, renew our enthusiasm and our desire to persevere in our own faith journey and to put our faith into practice in every area of our lives. At Easter we are specially aware that Jesus, who died on the cross to save us, has risen and his Spirit is alive within each one of us, and among us as members of his Body, the Church.

Because our faith in the Risen Lord brings us such interior joy and hope, despite our own crosses and difficulties, it is something we wish to pass on to the children of today, and surely there is no better gift we can give them. As was the case for me as a child, this gift is lived and shared in our own homes, and is blessed and strengthened by sharing fully in the life of the Church - in the prayers, the celebration of Holy Mass and the Sacraments, and in the spiritual and social activities of our parishes. Pope Francis in his recent exhortation, "Christus vivit" (Christ is living) encourages all in the Church to work fully with our young people and strive to enthuse them with the knowledge that Jesus is alive in their lives and that is indeed the most precious relationship we have. The Lord will never leave us, he is deep within our being, and we are called by Him to love and serve him with all that we are and in all that we do. This passing on of our Catholic faith, in a full and happy way, needs to be fostered within our families and I encourage parents especially to share and live their faith fully with their children. In a world where so many things appears at times to be breaking down it is the best and most stable thing we have to offer.

As the Church across the world celebrates with joy the Lord's resurrection, I pray for his blessing upon you, especially on all your families and homes. May his love and peace penetrate deep into our hearts and souls, and through us spread to others.

+Joseph Toal
Bishop of Motherwell

T: +44(0)1698 269114 F: +44(0)1698 275630 W: www.motherwelldiocese.org E: chancellor@rcdom.org.uk

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