



EPARCHY
OF ST. MARON
CANADA

***Sixteenth Letter of His Excellency
Bishop Paul-Marwan Tabet
To the Maronite Community of Canada
Easter 2021***

*To all Monsignors, Priests, Brothers and Sisters,
To the people Consecrated and committed to the life of the Church and Society,
To all the Parents, Children, Young Men and Young Women,
To all the Parish Communities,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

“HE IS ALIVE...!”

*“When the Sabbath was passed” (Mark 16:1) they came “at early dawn” bringing spices to the tomb (Luke 24:1). The light of the liberated creation dawned from death, the dawn of the “Day” that has no dusk. Christ is Risen, truly Risen! He is alive! It all began from this time forward. **It is the first day; it is Sunday!***

On that morning, the women came to the tomb to ensure that Jesus' journey has ended; so they went back to the apostles to announce the good and joyous news. The disciples did not believe it, so Peter went to the grave and *“returned marveled”*, and they all continued in amazement and great perplexity! The apostles of Jesus have experienced the test of faith when they witnessed the unjust death of their Teacher, who, in the end, died alone. But Christ did not reproach them for their lack of human faith, but rather succeeded in restoring their faith through His victory over death.

Sometimes it is difficult for us to believe that life is stronger than death, and that love is stronger than evil, while the Spirit murmurs to us: *“Why do you seek the living among the dead?” (Luke 24:5).*

A year ago, the Coronavirus pandemic forced us to refrain from gathering even with family members or relatives, since most of us are quarantined and some of us are infected with the virus. We will not meet as usual at our churches to celebrate the Resurrection of Christ as we are living in exceptional times. This pandemic puts our individual and collective perceptions, determination and capabilities to the test. For some of us, it is a test of faith.

However, the question that arises at this stage: What faith do we want? What faith do we live?

We are not approaching the topic from a philosophical and existential point of view, nor are we disputing the existence and essence of God. The essence of the matter is to reflect on: What kind of faith do we want to “testify” of to our children on whom we will depend to preserve this deposit in every situation, they will be facing in their lives? If we are praising the faith of our ancestors, its strength and simplicity, then our faith today must be characterized by the same

spiritual depth, commitment and living testimony. Our testimony does not remain a "theory", but rather becomes a life experience and living at the heart of the day-to-day circumstances and events. A profound absolute faith that prompts us to discover the presence of God in the most difficult of circumstances; manifested in the outcome each believer harvests from the ordeal that he has experienced and that incited him to start over.

This is where resurrection begins and delves into the victorious love that emanates from the Spirit of the Living Christ, carries the divine and humane breath onto humankind and transforms the face of the earth. It begins with the love we experience in our daily life. When we love, we become witnesses of the resurrection, we pass every day from death to life (1 John 3:14), and the Spirit prompts us to live a new life, so that we make those around us live as well.

Some aspects of the resurrection are exemplified:

- When we see how life is reborn around us through the seasons and the renewal of space and time.
- When we see people rise and reject the inevitability of injustice, violence and evil in all their forms.
- When we see Christian communities witnessing for forgiveness and love in the face of persecution.
- When we see people equipped with an internal force that spurs the life stemming in them to triumph despite illness or failure.
- When we see people accepting the light of the Lord in the emptiness of their hearts, and placing it in their homes, workplace and wherever they go.
- When we see people planting peace and joy in the heart of pain and despair.

All this is possible because Christ is alive, and the Church that springs from the heart of the Risen Christ still testifies of this resurrection in her mission.

Dearly Beloved,

The Risen Jesus remains our unwavering hope during the cycle of anxiety we are experiencing. Holding onto Him with faith is the only vaccine that can save us from the virus of fear, pain and death; and that can protect us from the evil virus that afflicted our humanity and our history, from a virus of a life without meaning and without purpose.

Today, while the pandemic continues to shift from one wave to the next, sowing death in large parts of the world, Jesus continues to call upon each of us to bear witness in the example of the women at the tomb (*Matthew 28:10*) ... "Do not be afraid, go tell my brothers that you have met me! Tell them that my tomb is empty! Tell them that fear, sadness, despair and death have been defeated forever! **Tell them that I am alive!** Tell them that life still has a meaning and that the "New Humanity has been born here".

May the Risen Christ take care of you and give you hope, and pour out upon you the blessings of His resurrection, His peace and His joy.

Christ is Risen...! He is truly Risen!

**+ Paul-Marwan TABET
Bishop**