



***Eighteenth Letter of His Excellency
Bishop Paul-Marwan Tabet
To the Maronite Community of Canada
Easter 2022***

*To all Monsignors, Priests and Brothers, Nuns and Sisters, Deacons,
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,*

“Death for life, and life from death...it is the resurrection!”

As we are used to every year, spring arrives to change the characteristics of winter, which covers nature with manifestations of monotony, distress, and even death. When spring is here, it feels as if life is being renewed and good tidings are brought upon us, despite the wars, diseases and difficulties that may surround us. And in terms of faith, spiritual life and piety, the process of death and resurrection in Christ prevails. His death and resurrection are a living symbol of the death and resurrection of God, humankind, society, and the entire universe. Christ died, and everything died with Him. He rose, and everything resurged, *“Christ revives everything”*. **Our sadness became joy... It is the Resurrection!**

There are numerous reasons for rejoicing in the Resurrection:

1. The disciples were terrified, and when they saw the Lord, they rejoiced. The deep sadness and anxiety the disciples were experiencing on Friday turned into joy and rejoice. The Lord's words to them were fulfilled: *“But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy”* (John 16:22).
2. They were relieved from the malicious pleasure of their enemies and can now go out and confront and wholeheartedly speak about the resurrection of Christ. The cross was not the end of the story, but the beginning of a joyful journey to resurrection. A turning point in the history of their lives, and in the history of Christianity thereafter. *“And if I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself; that where I am, you may also be”* (John 14: 3).
3. The disciples regained confidence in the Lord's promise to send them the Holy Spirit (John 16:7), and about the power that they will obtain when it comes upon them (Acts 8:1). They trusted his promise: *“Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:20), and all these promises provided them with strength, faith, and joy.
4. The resurrection became a joy for all believers. Saint Paul the Apostle was able to express this joy by saying: *“What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived, the things God has prepared for those who love Him”* (1 Cor 2:9).

5. They rejoiced that they are the disciples of Christ, after they were afraid of being His followers! Instead, the goal of their lives was to be where he is, just like *"the disciples of Emmaus."*
6. They rejoiced that the Lord had appeared to them (for forty days), in the upper room in Jerusalem, at the Sea of Galilee, speaking to them and reassuring them, forgiving Peter for his denial and convincing Thomas when he was in doubt... He spent some time with them and *"has shown himself alive to them with many sure proofs"*.
7. The disciples rejoiced, because they were entrusted, after the resurrection, with a mission; the Lord said to them: *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them all that I have commanded you"* (Matthew 28:19-20). This has become a mission they live for and strive to accomplish, a mission for which they are crowned. The Lord's words were fulfilled: *"I will make you fishers of men"* (Matthew 4:19).

***Resurrection has filled Christian preaching with confidence and faith.
With the Resurrection, the Cross became a crown and glory.***

We are therefore invited again today to believe and rejoice that the Lord is walking with us along the journeys of our lives. It is the secret of Christianity that transcends faith in the teachings and promises of a person who lived, taught, died and left us a book! It is a life in a person who has risen from the dead and who will stay by our side so we could live through Him: *"I am the vine, and you are the branches"* (John 15:5). This is the meaning of the sacraments in Christianity. They were instituted to lift us from death so we could live and rejoice, to fulfill in us the Passover of Christ and to carry us through to His Resurrection.

Perhaps the majority of the challenges to human relations are related, in one way or another, to the loss of trust that hinders us from sharing, walking and reaching Christ. We contemplate on the words of Saint Peter, who lost confidence in himself and in his companions and screamed: *"Master, we worked hard all night and haven't caught anything"* (Luke 5:5). We contemplate on how he regrouped his scattered thoughts upon hearing the words of the Lord Jesus. He regained his self-confidence because he listened to Christ: *"But because you say so, I will let down the nets"* (Luke 5:5). By doing so, Saint Peter and his companions, who were accompanying him and sharing both his fatigue and disappointment, caught fish in abundance, and their fatigue turned into joy.

Dearly Beloved,

Following the example of the Redeemer, the Church is invited to flow out to the world because it is based essentially on the equation of love that Jesus instituted for his disciples, which is *"Love one another as I have loved you"* (John 13:34). This love was poured onto their hearts on the Day of Resurrection. We cannot love without progressing. For when the doors are closed and fear and despair prevail, Christ must come and transfigure in the souls as he did with Thomas and say: *"Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe"* (John 20:27). This side is the heart of the Lord, which will remain open to the faithful humanity. Let us then be among those who deserve this beatitude, to touch the Lord and rejoice in Him and with Him.

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

**+ Paul-Marwan TABET
Bishop**