



Diocese of Norwich  
Office of the Bishop  
201 Broadway  
Norwich, Connecticut 06360  
(860) 887-9294

MOST REVEREND  
MICHAEL R. COTE, D.D.

## 2017 Easter Message

My dear sisters and brothers in the Risen Lord,

Happy Easter! Welcome to this Easter Liturgy. You have come today to your parish Church to celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord and to experience in this Easter Mass the gift of new life and renewed hope that His triumph assures each one of us. The Angel who was at the empty tomb announces the good news of Jesus' Resurrection. "Do not be terrified! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth Who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here." No, he is no longer in a tomb. Jesus lives, and He lives forever.

On Easter, we celebrate the victory of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, Who has taken away the sins of the world and destroyed death. Jesus' sacrifice pays the wages of our sins. "In His rising (from death), the life of all has risen." (Easter Preface II) In the greatest act of love known to humankind, Jesus' death on the Cross is freely offered as a gift to His heavenly Father in reparation for our sins. His is the sacrifice, made in love, acceptable to the Father. Only when Jesus' disciples saw the empty tomb, in which His lifeless Body had been laid, did they begin to believe in His Resurrection from the dead.

In our celebration of the Easter Liturgy, we go with the disciples to the tomb. Like them, we see the stone rolled back and the empty tomb. We hear the words spoken by the Angel, "He is risen; He is not here." Indeed, Jesus has risen as He said.

The faith of the Apostles and disciples is rooted in that experience of the empty tomb. From that moment, new life began to fill their hearts and strengthen their faith. On Pentecost, that faith bore fruit as the Church was born and the Apostles were empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, from that day to the present, Jesus' Resurrection fills the hearts of all believers with the gift of newness of life.

The Easter Liturgy instructs us, "Through the Paschal Mystery, we have been buried with Christ in Baptism, so that we may walk with Him in newness of life." For the catechumens, their journey with the Risen Lord, walking in newness of life, begins when they receive the Sacrament of Baptism at the Easter Vigil. For the baptized, our journey continues as, each Easter, we renew Jesus' gift of new life by reaffirming our Baptismal Promises. In making these promises, we vow to renounce Satan and his works, and, we promise to serve God faithfully in the holy Catholic Church.

We walk in newness of life, when we pledge to be faithful to the Lord, to live, to work, to pray, in short, to do everything, in union with Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord. Remember the words of the Easter Preface, "In His rising (from death), the life of all has risen." We rise to a new life when we unite with Jesus' sacrifice to put the needs of others before our own. In so doing, we share Christ's gift of new life when we help our sisters and brothers who are persecuted and needy, weak and vulnerable, despairing and sorrowing. United with Jesus, we experience their need for our support, our encouragement, and our consolation.

With Jesus, we experience His Resurrection and walk in newness of life, when we "rise up" to serve God in serving others by witnessing to the greatest act of love, God's love for us, revealed in Jesus' Passion, Death, and Resurrection. In our families, our parishes, our schools, our places of work, and our communities, we have so many opportunities to strengthen the bonds of love by walking with Jesus in newness of life. In an earlier Easter Message, Pope Francis writes, "In Jesus, love has triumphed over hatred, mercy over sinfulness, goodness over evil, truth over falsehood, and life over death." On Easter, we celebrate the triumph of God's love and renew our Baptismal promises to walk in newness of life.

This Easter, I pray that you will appreciate anew in what Font you have been washed clean of sin, by whose Spirit you have been reborn, and by whose Blood you have been redeemed!\* May the Risen Lord grant you and your loved ones a joy-filled and holy celebration of Easter!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop of Norwich