



天主教澳門教區

DIOCESE DE MACAU

## 2020 H.E. Bishop Stephen Lee Easter Message Do Not Be Afraid

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

### **"Do not be afraid" (Mt 28:5)**

At the beginning of 2020, COVID-19 has made many things in the world seem heavy and difficult. To prevent the spread of the virus, we have seen the increase and modification of various anti-epidemic measures, the shortage of medical resources, the closure of public facilities and schools, city curfews in many countries and other regions, etc. We have also experienced a different Lent, for, with the closing of the churches, the faithful could only stay home to watch the broadcast of Mass while not being able to enter the church to pray. The solemn and devout liturgy of Holy Week can only be celebrated online. This is really a "storm of epidemics"!

However, the universal Church is celebrating the "The Lord is risen, Alleluia", echoing the angel's words to St Mary Magdalene, "Do not be afraid...". Our Lord Jesus suffered and was crucified. He is now arisen! Easter is the foundation and hope in our faith. No wonder St Paul said in his letter to the Romans, "Omnia in bonum - everything is for the good." (1)

So is this not the time to test our faith, hope, and love?

The risen Lord Jesus, as Pope Francis reminds us, "will not hide his face from us" or "keep silence" because he "never forgets us" and always keeps "his love for us" (2). At 6pm Roman Time on 27th March we prayed together with the Pope for relief from the global epidemic. Through the episode in the Gospel of Mark, we heard the Pope explaining to us that the only time the Bible records Jesus sleeping soundly was in the middle of a storm. He was then woken up to calm the storm, and rebuking his disciples, said, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" (3). Do we have this faith?

The risen Lord Jesus will take the burden of this present epidemic on his shoulders. He will tirelessly seek us, comfort us, guide us, and support us. In prayer for relief from the global epidemic, facing the emptiness of St Peter's Square, the Pope encouraged us to embrace faith, not to panic, and to plead Jesus to extend His hand to help us. Do we hold on to His hand?

The risen Lord Jesus will give us special grace to live up to the Pope's expectations. He will enable us to exert the power of our love, to give ourselves up in aid of our



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relatives and friends, and to perform plenty of acts of spiritual and corporal mercy, especially at this moment of adversity. His grace will allow us to "respond, dedicate your life. With the action of the Holy Spirit, you have shaped all kinds of brave and generous sacrifice ... " like those in the medical services, police, cleaners, drivers and other personnel who risk their lives on the front line of the epidemic. "In such suffering, we find and experience the prayer of Jesus the High Priest: May all be one!" (4) Bring a loving warm climate to this special Easter: prayer and obscure service are our weapons of victory . Do we have this love?

The risen Lord Jesus will continue to bless the world, to bless his people, so that the epidemic will soon die down, and that health and energy will soon be restored. Through this world-wide tragedy, people should be warned and stirred up to a thorough and penitential cleansing of pride, greediness, depravity, indifference, and to a renewal of minds and hearts.

At this glorious moment of the resurrection, we once again plead with the risen Lord Jesus to give us the day of peace and joy. Alleluia! Alleluia!

+Most Rev. Stephen Lee Bun Sang  
Catholic Diocese of Macau

- (1) Ref Rm 8:28
- (2) Pope Francis, Catechesis, Public Audience 16th January 2019; Rm 8:14-16
- (3) Sermon, Extraordinary Prayer Service, 27th March 2020; Mk 4:40
- (4) Jn 17:21