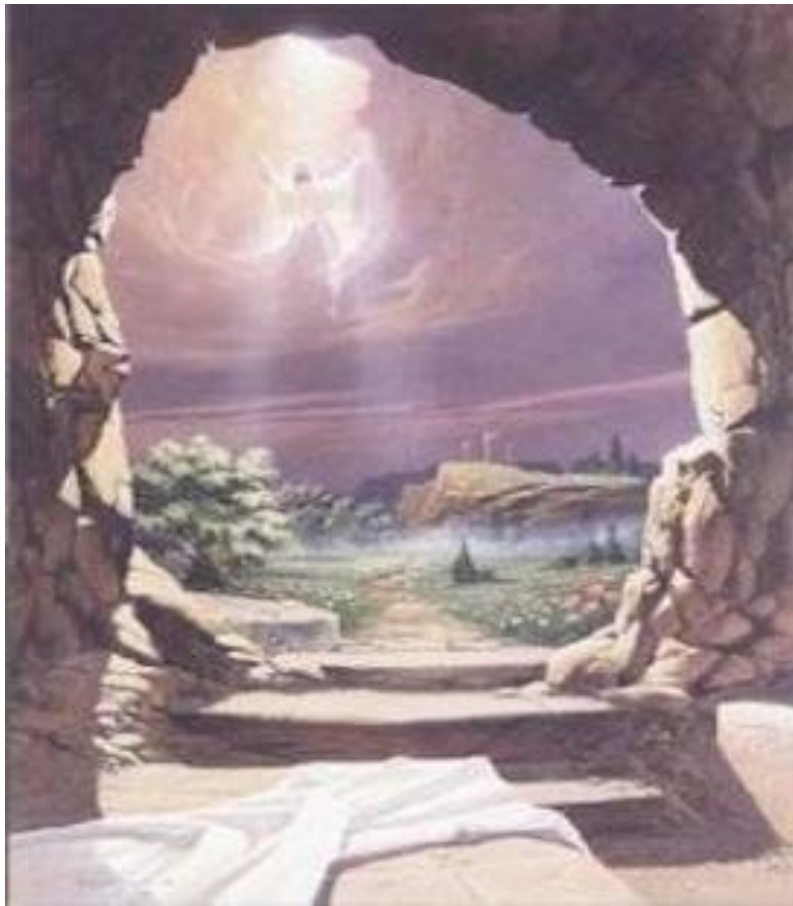


## 2017 Easter Greetings from the Presiding Bishop



16 April 2016 Anno Domini

*1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? 2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (Isaiah 53:1-3)*

*Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. (Luke 24:46-49)*

I am not sure if everyone else is as apprehensive as I am at my final bodily appearance before passing from this life. I pray that I will still have my teeth, will not be a babbling idiot, and not appear more grotesque than the Hunchback of Notre Dame. If I do present such a disgusting appearance, I hope that my caretakers will admit no friends or extended family members into my room to be so astonished as to spread the word from here to eternity. Even in death, we desire to retain a modicum of dignity, do we not? But the crucifixion of Christ was not so. He was disrobed before the multitudes, and lifted high upon the cross for all to see. His modesty must have burned His virtuous heart with humility. He had no form of comeliness while hanging naked on that cross. His physical pain was excruciating (*ex* – from; *cruci* – cross); His spiritual

hurt exceeded any means of our comprehension; and his modesty, too, suffered a severe embarrassment.

When I consider all of that, I am ashamed of worrying about how emaciated my body may appear at Last Call. The important matter is not how we appear when we close our eyes at the curtain call in this life; but how joyous and beautiful we shall appear the very next morning in Paradise. It is for this reason that Christ bore our sins, our shame, our suffering, and our guilt on the brow of Calvary's Mountain.

The Sabbath Eve of His crucifixion was a dark and sorrowful time; but consider how that sorrow disappeared at the Empty Tomb. The tears of grief of Mary were turned to tears of great joy. . . . *weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.* (Psalm 30:5) Weeping, not joy, comes first in the dark and lonely night; but joy comes after in the bright and light-adorned morning and erases every tear.

Every event of our Lord's life is of great gravity. Had He never been born at Bethlehem, there would have been no Easter. Had he not suffered and died on Good Friday, there would have been no Resurrection. Had there been no resurrection, we would still be in the bondage of sin and death. But He arose according to the Word of God, and we are saved!

I have heard it preached from too many pulpits that 'salvation is free' without further qualification. Though that statement is half true, it is not altogether true. Salvation is free to the sinner who repents and turns to God, but it was bought and paid by an incredible sacrifice. God the Father offered His only begotten Son to die a horrible death for our redemption. The Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, gave Himself for us in love and obedience to His Father's Will. Though Salvation is free to us, it cost Heaven such an enormous price that its measure cannot be calculated in earthly values.

During the joys of our Easter worship and celebration, let not our minds venture too far from considering the cost of our salvation, and to whom our all is due.

Happy Easter – All Year!



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