



Archbishop's Easter Message 2017

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Archdiocese recently hosted the exhibit, “The Man of the Shroud,” a reproduction of the Shroud of Turin with explanatory panels. Many were moved by what they saw as an icon of the wounds of Christ who died out of love for each person in human history—who died for me.

What is more marvellous is that Christ is now risen! In the gospel message of Easter we see the Lord's body still bearing the wounds made in His hands and side by the nails and the spear. But now they are glorified as proof of God's victory over death and sin.

Jesus goes forth to meet His disciples and every man, woman and child throughout the ages, including our own. He comes and shares with us His joy, His peace, the Holy Spirit and the special gift of Himself “in the breaking of the bread”—in Holy Communion.

With this in mind, we will hear during this Easter season how Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples in so many touching ways. At the Easter Vigil we hear Matthew's account of the discovery of the empty tomb and on Easter morning of the meeting with Mary Magdalene.

All the resurrection accounts hint at the reversal of the tragedy of Jesus' death. The ritual of mourning and acts of respect toward the body of Jesus by the faithful women turn to perplexity when they discover the empty tomb, then amazement at the angelic message and, finally, overwhelming joy when at last Jesus comes to meet them.

The promise of God's power has been realized, but the story appears unbelievable to the disciples who thought the resurrection would happen only at the end of time. Peter had learned that Jesus' surprising sayings regularly came true. So on the first Easter, he marvelled at the linen grave cloths but did not at first come to faith. That had to await his personal encounter with the Risen One, as it must for each one of us.

John the Evangelist suggests what this encounter means for us as he tells of Mary Magdalene's meeting with Jesus. The risen Lord appears both *different* from the one Mary knew (she thought He was the gardener), yet *the same* person who knows her by name ("Mary!"). Jesus told Mary that henceforth she and others share a new relationship with God, who has become "your Father and your God". Jesus commissioned Mary to bring the good news of the resurrection to the Apostles who would bring it to the world. Jesus asks us to do the same today.

My Easter wish for all in the Archdiocese is that we experience anew, and discover fresh ways to share, the Good News of Jesus' resurrection. May we all become what Pope Francis urges us to be "missionary disciples" who have encountered the Risen Lord and are eager to share our experience with those around us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Terrence Prendergast".

✠ Terrence Prendergast, S.J.
Archbishop of Ottawa