



## Easter: Our Homecoming

It is quite remarkable that none of the stories of the resurrection of Jesus actually recount his coming out of the tomb and how he was raised by God from the dead. But, we do have stories about what happened to his disciples. Easter created in them a sense of belonging and the awareness that instead of living for themselves, they were being called to a mission that would be nothing less than changing the course of history. This is a story we need in our time. Today, many people question the meaning and purpose of life and their identity as human beings. They live with the feeling of alienation, being disconnected from others, a community or past traditions. They feel abandoned in a world of hostile challenges and aimless pursuits.

Easter offers an antidote to these feelings of malaise. It provides a resounding answer to the questions about our meaning and purpose in life by drawing us out of our isolation and inviting us to live within the story of God's love for us – a love that knows no bounds. The message of Easter is simply this: Even though we killed the Son of God, God has not abandoned us. On the contrary. God raised Jesus so that he could come back from the dead to be with us, reminding us that we too are God's sons and daughters. God never abandons us and we should never abandon one another. Easter is our coming home to be God's family.

As we celebrate Christ coming back from the dead to be with us, there is a special joy in being able to return to our parish communities this year after two years of separation due to the pandemic. I urge you to experience that joy. It is the joy the first disciples experienced in being reunited with each other after being scattered in fear and division with the death of Jesus. It was a homecoming in which Christ, who first brought them together along the shores of Galilee, was now calling them to be with him and with each other in a new way.

I invite you to look upon this Easter as new homecoming after being separated by the pandemic. This Easter, discover once again the presence of Christ as your parish community gathers for the Eucharist. Let Easter be a new opportunity to share with your fellow parishioners the experience of having a common purpose, identity and call to leave behind fear and death and make a difference in the world. Take up with fresh energy the task of making disciples, building community and inspiring witness through service in a Church that acts as a field hospital in a suffering world. We need to come together to encounter Christ anew and to rediscover who we are as an Easter People who make a difference in the world. It is in making a difference in the world that we find the answers to the questions about the meaning and purpose of life and our identity. And we do this together, as the disciples of Christ who are raised from the death of fear and isolation to live in relationship with each other, in community. Our parishes depend on each of us to make the personal commitment to form that community of disciples that acts as field hospital for one another and the world. So, as I urge you to return to your parish for in-person worship beginning this Easter, think of it as a homecoming, in which we gather to celebrate Christ rising from the dead because we too have risen from the dead. Happy Easter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mons. Card. Cyprian".

Archbishop of Chicago