



## **Arising from the Darkness**

*Easter Message 2021*

“On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark...” (Jn 20:1). This is the beginning of the Gospel reading for Easter Sunday. I have always been fascinated by the detail that it was “still dark.” I believe this speaks to the presence of hope when things do not seem promising. Over the past year, we have experienced darkness in so many ways: over half a million persons in the United States who have lost their lives to COVID-19; millions who have lost jobs; millions of acres destroyed in wildfires; children who have lost opportunities to learn, grow, and socialize; countless persons – young and old – who have seen a decline in mental health; growing division in our country and racial violence; a devastated economy; and the list goes on.

It was Mary Magdalen’s love and appreciation for Jesus that motivated her to go to his tomb early in the morning when it was still dark. Jesus had been responsible for restoring Mary’s sense of dignity by forgiving her sins and accepting her person. She was thus able to realize that she was loved by God and capable of loving others in a truly joyful and enriching way. Mary had listened to Jesus’ words in conversation, in his public teaching and preaching. She hung on every word he uttered as they brought hope and joy to her mind and heart. Jesus’s words and actions were like an ointment for her wounded soul, bringing her forgiveness, restoration, and healing. That hope sustained her through the heart-wrenching experience of witnessing Jesus forsaken by his own people – even by his own disciples. It was that hope in Jesus, who taught of a life beyond death, and her love for him that brought her to his tomb “while it was still dark.”

To her surprise, she noticed the stone rolled away and the tomb empty! She would run to share this news with the disciples. They would understand that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead as he had foretold.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the central mystery of the Christian faith – that Jesus overcomes the darkness and gloom of death and brings light and hope in the resurrection, with life everlasting! As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life” (no. 654).

As we cautiously make our way out of the pandemic in the coming months, may we be encouraged as we celebrate with joy the rising of Jesus Christ from the dead! St. Paul reminds us, “If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him” (Rom 6:8). Jesus’ resurrection gives us the hope of rising with him to life everlasting, as well!

My prayers remain with you in this Easter Season! A happy and blessed Easter to you and your loved ones!

Most Reverend Oscar Cantú  
Bishop of San José