Excerpts from the CCCB’s *Easter Message 2017*

At the Easter Vigil, we celebrate the light of Christ which we carry, filled with hope, into a world of darkness and uncertainty. In the shadow of the Sainte-Foy massacre this past February, with tensions escalating between nuclear powers and refugees on the move, the invocation of hope seems premature to some and dangerously naïve to others. More personally, the spirits of some may be dampened this Easter by illness, bereavement, family breakdown, addiction, and unemployment. When hope begins to slip away, fear takes its place and we are robbed of peace.

Easter is meant to leave us with a very different sense of the present and the future. It offers a reality that is full of joy. Easter proclaims that fear and terror and death are not the end of the story. Indeed, the prayers of the Easter Vigil are unequivocal in the assurance they convey: "If we keep the memorial of the Lord's paschal solemnity in this way, listening to his word and celebrating his mysteries, then we shall have the sure hope of sharing his triumph over death and living with him in God." (*Roman Missal: The Blessing of the Fire and Preparation of the Candle*)

There is nothing natural about the Resurrection. It is an event in which time and nature are themselves turned upside down and inside out. Only as an act of God is the Resurrection possible; and like all acts of God, it is a wakeup call to each of us, that God who raises the dead is more real, more powerful than any crisis or setback we can ever encounter.

For all of us standing at the empty tomb – whatever the circumstances – there is unfathomable hope. There is hope for those on the peripheries of society; hope for governments and leaders; hope for the Church in this time of purification and renewal, hope for you and for me striving to lead a holy life (cf. *Jeremiah* 29.11).

This Easter, with our hearts lit by the unquenchable fire of God's love, we are asked to entrust ourselves to Christ's care as we hope in the divine power that "dispels wickedness, washes faults away, restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners, drives out hatred, fosters concord, and brings down the mighty." (*Roman Missal, Longer Form of the Easter Proclamation*)

To each of you, I wish to extend my prayers and blessings for a hope-filled Easter Season.

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