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EASTER MESSAGE 2017**

Brexit, impeached presidents in Brazil and South Korea, new presidents in America and the Philippines, an attempted coup in Turkey, civil war in Syria, mass exodus from Iraq, hundreds of terrorist attacks, including those upon the Bastille Day celebrations in Nice, the Christmas market in Berlin, and most recently the mother of parliaments at Westminster... a lot has happened since last Easter! There've been seismic shifts in the politics of the nations, fears for the planet, instability in the world economy, a tense security situation.

Closer to home, leaders come and go, the Royal Commission is winding down after many shameful revelations, there've been storms and floods to the north, and the transpacific partnership is over. Many experience financial or emotional insecurity, feel underappreciated or exploited at work, the shops, even at home, or are eaten up by grudges, envy or addictions.

We can often feel like the first disciples on Good Friday: disenchanted or demoralised. Our faith in our leaders, our companions, even ourselves, can be sorely tested. We look into the tomb of our lives and see nothing but emptiness, look into our hearts and find nothing but longing.

But Easter says: look again! Even amidst the cruelty of the crucifixion, Jesus hoped against hope. In his words and deeds, his passion and death, above all in his resurrection, Jesus is revealed as God's irrevocable commitment to humanity. Jesus anticipated our hope to survive our trials and ultimately to transcend the grave - for God will not let go of us!

As many of you know, only a year ago I was suffering a crippling, even life-threatening condition called Guillain-Barré Syndrome. But by the grace of God and the prayers of many, through the wonderful care of professionals and support of those near to me, I have very largely recovered. It has been a very personal foretaste of resurrection for me. I pray that there will likewise be experiences of healing and new life, whether physical, psychological or spiritual, for all those in need, in our families and communities this Easter.

However sorely tested we may sometimes be, Easter speaks of hope. Hope for a world of more than blind natural forces and blinding human wilfulness, a world of no more hurt from hate or indifference. Hope for a civilisation of life and love, a civilisation of fidelity and healing.

Easter says to us: look again into the tombs of your hurts and fears, the coffins of your guilt and grudges, the mausoleums of violence and vice. Look beyond the emptiness to experience freedom, freshness, fulfilment.

Christ is alive and ready to raise us up. We are like a vulnerable chick in an egg, an Easter egg, waiting for liberation and new life. May you break out of your shell this Easter as Christ broke out of his tomb, and experience with him the joyful cry of **Alleluia**.