

“DO NOT BE AFRAID; GO AND TELL MY BROTHERS THAT THEY  
MUST LEAVE FOR GALILEE; THERE THEY WILL SEE ME” (Matt.  
28:10)

2022 Easter Message of His Lordship Most Rev. Peter Ebere Okpaleke, Bishop  
of Ekwulobia

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with joy that I wish you a happy Easter. Jesus Christ, our Lord and redeemer, is risen from the dead. In joy we shout, ‘Alleluia!’ Death had no power over him, because he was obedient even unto death. God vindicated him; raised him from the dead and gave him a name which is above every name (Phil 2:6-10). Through his obedience, he has become the source of eternal life to all who believe in him (Heb 5:9) and fulfilled what he said about himself, “I am the resurrection and the life.” (Jn 11:25).

We can only imagine the disillusionment faced by some of his followers at his death. Simon Peter invited the rest of the apostles, “let us go fishing” (Jn 21:3); nwa anyị biara iku, anwugo, (the project we were gathered to participate in has failed), let us go back to our original profession. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35) were in a similar frame of mind. Cleopas narrated that they had hoped that Jesus would liberate Israel, but he met a shameful death. To add salt to injury, some women brought the news that they could not find his body in the tomb. Probably to escape the confusion and suffocating cloud of disappointment, the two disciples decided to move out of Jerusalem.

Many of us can identify with the disillusionment of these apostles. We proclaim that Jesus has liberated us and has come to give us life in abundance. Yet, death – physical and emotional – stares us in the face daily. Violence is common place on the roads, in relationships and in the homes (domestic violence). We proclaim that Jesus has come that we may have life and in full (Jn 10:10), yet many people are barely surviving and holding on to life. Because of such experiences, some people embark on their personal journeys to “Emmaus” to escape the seeming disillusionment either by embracing the form of Christianity that promises prosperity or going over to traditional religion, secretly or manifestly.

Jesus continues to pursue all, including the deserters, with His love and makes it possible for those who seek him with love to encounter him. Mary of Magdala and the other Mary were privileged to be the first to meet the risen Lord. Jesus told them and continues to tell us: “Do not be afraid.” (Matt 28:10). In the midst of the violence and all that tend to diminish life within us and in our communities,

Jesus tells us: “do not be afraid.” “Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God and trust in me.” (Jn 14:1). He is also sending us on a mission: “Go tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; there they will see me.” We can fulfill this mission if, like St. Paul, we open ourselves to the love of God made manifest in Christ, and out of the experience of this love, realize the priceless privilege of knowing Christ Jesus our savior on account of which everything counts as nothing (Phil 3:8). This is why St. Paul proudly proclaimed that, “nothing can separate us from the love of God” (Rom 8:35-39) and invites us to go about life “scourged but not executed; in pain yet always full of joy; poor and yet making many people rich; having nothing, and yet owning everything” (2 Cor 6:9-10). In sum, it is only by living in such a way as to carry the scars of Jesus Christ on our bodies (Gal 6:17), that we may be witnesses to the power of his resurrection.

In the light of the above and cognizant of the challenges posed by our context, I present the Prayer of St. Francis for our reflection and guidance:

Lord make me an instrument of peace  
Where there is hatred let me sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon Where  
there is doubt, faith. Where there is  
darkness, light Where there is sadness,  
joy.  
O Divine master grant that I may  
So much seek to be consoled as to console To  
be understood as to understand.  
To be loved as to love  
For it's in giving that we receive And it's  
in pardoning that we are pardoned And it's  
in dying that we are born..  
To eternal life. Amen.

May you have a happy Easter celebration and may the power of the risen Lord move you to witness to His unending love - Amen!



✠ Peter Ebere Okpaleke  
Bishop of Ekwulobia