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“...HE HAS RISEN...”

Easter Message, 2018, by LWF President Archbishop Dr Panti Filibus Musa

The message of Easter makes clear that truth lives, hope endures, love triumphs, and salvation has come. (Matthew 28:1-10)

Sisters and brothers, once again as followers of Christ worldwide, we pause to contemplate the message of the risen Christ. With the eyes and hearts of faith of both the three women who went to the tomb very early in the morning of Easter and with the disciples, we look to the place where Christ's body was laid and encounter afresh the response of the angel: “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” (v 5-7). Let us be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as we contemplate the resurrection narrative to gain fresh insights that empower us to engage in life-giving actions wherever we may be.

On Friday, Jesus' followers watched him die on the cross. They watched how a huge stone was rolled to seal his dead body in the grave. At the sight of the stone that covered the tomb, their hope was gone, despite the assurances by Christ of his resurrection. We would have been in same hopeless disposition.

Early Sunday morning these sisters went to the tomb of Jesus, sad, depressed, confused and grieving. Then they were met with the news that transformed their moody condition into joyful galore: that Jesus has been raised! The tomb was empty. With exceeding joy and gladness the women ran back to the disciples with the good news of Christ's resurrection and victory over principalities of sin and death.

Faith in Christ overturns all fears and doubts. Easter proclaims life for the whole of humanity because of Jesus' victory over sin and death. We have been set free and by faith shall we live now and always. This also reminds us that God's salvation to humanity is free and should by no means commoditized as it is written, “...freely you have received; freely give” (Matthew 10:8b).

As we contemplate the resurrection of Christ, may the stones of human affliction and infirmity like diseases, poverty, hunger, homelessness, statelessness, and the crises of refugees and internally displaced people that prevent us experiencing fullness of life, be

rolled away. May we be empowered to contend with forces and principalities such as violent religious extremism, corruption, illicit drugs and human trafficking, ecological crises, domestic and gender-based violence, child abuse, racial discrimination, brutal inhumane acts against fellow humankind and many others that stand in the way of true freedom, justice, peace, equal opportunities and human dignity for all.

May the message of the risen Christ be a source of comfort and hope to those who have been forced to flee their homes and those persecuted for their faith and minority status.

As the angel charged the three sisters who arrived hesitantly at the tomb to “go quickly and tell his disciples that he has been raised from the dead”, may we also go and tell the story of life in a very broken world and may we bring healing across all divisions. I pray that we who have tasted of the mercy of the risen Christ live victoriously and graciously towards fellow humankind. Amen.

Jesus who was crucified ... has been raised!