EASTER MESSAGE OF ARCHBISHOP AUGUSTINE OBIAORA AKUBEZE
ARCHBISHOP OF BENIN CITY AND PRESIDENT OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS
CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA

Dearly beloved in Christ,

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST BRINGS US HOPE

1. I bring you a message of great joy, Christ is risen! His resurrection, time and time again, rekindles our hope; that just as he rose from the dead, we too, will rise again with him in eternity. May this Easter mystery deepen our faith, hope and love.

2. We celebrate Easter this year amidst uncertainties. History will forever remember the year 2020. We began the year with so much joy and expectations. No one knew or planned for the current health crisis bedevilling our world. The COVID-19 pandemic took everyone by surprise and caught the world off guard. Consequently, the celebration of Easter this year will be devoid of its usual pomp and pageantry.

3. Hope is at the heart of the resurrection message. Many of the followers of Christ thought it was over with Christ. Today, many of our people have concluded that it is over with economic recovery, that, it is over with equitable wealth for everyone, that, it is over with security of lives and property, that, it is over with justice for everyone in the land. Despite all these, I say, for the Risen Lord, nothing is impossible. Let us gradually effect changes in the places we work, and live. Let us develop patience, a virtue that is needed if we truly trust in God. We must know that God's time is always the best.
4. Whereas humans want quick fixes and immediate solution to difficulties, the Lord operates on a higher and better timing than ours. The psalmist tells us, our God is in heaven, he does whatever he wills (Psalm 115:3). And his will is always for our good. But we cannot hasten God’s action by our worry. Jesus tells us how futile worry is when he says, ‘you cannot make a single hair on your head white or black’ (Matthew 5:36). God does not direct injustice toward his people, but he can make every tragedy become a blessing.

5. As we celebrate the resurrection of Christ, my dear friends, I encourage us to be joyful in hope (Romans 12:12). That God suffers in solidarity with those who suffer should engender hope rather than resignation. We know that to share in the pains of others is a demonstration of true love. At this difficult and challenging moment, we must endeavour to remember the poor, the needy, the widows and widowers and try to provide material and financial aids for them so they can celebrate Easter. We should also not forget to pray for our Medical Personnel who are on the front lines, fighting this scourge, for God’s protection and guidance. Also, we pray for all who have been infected, for God’s healing and restoration. Finally, for all who have lost loved ones, we pray for consolation and eternal rest for all who have died.

6. May the Virgin Mary, the Mother of our redeemer, who suffers alongside her beloved son, intercede for us that we might be joyful in the hope we have in Christ Jesus who is risen from the dead. For though we are afflicted in every way, but not constrained; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:8-10). Amen.

Happy Easter!

Most Rev. Augustine Obiora Akubeze
Archbishop of Benin-City/
President, CBCN.