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### *Easter message 2019*

**Dear brother priests, dear deacons, dear faithful,**

Christ is risen! He truly is risen! These words of faith and joy spontaneously surge from within the hearts of Christians on Easter morning. Our conviction today is rooted in the faith lived out and proclaimed by Christians for more than two thousand years. However, for the first disciples who preceded us on our faith journey, it was more difficult to believe that Jesus triumphed over death. On the morning of the resurrection, their faith is shaken and challenged. Peter is filled with remorse for having denied knowing Jesus; Thomas doubts; Mary Magdalene is disheartened; the two disciples on the road to Emmaus are deeply disappointed. With loving kindness, Jesus responds to the specific needs of each person. He offers a word of restoration to those who have fallen, a word of encouragement to those who doubt, a word of comfort to those who are disheartened and a word of hope to those who are disappointed.

Among the apparitions of Christ recounted by the Gospels during the Easter season, the meeting of the risen Jesus with the disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24,13-35) appears particularly relevant for our times. As it was for them, it is sometimes difficult for us to believe that Jesus' passion and death result in LIFE. Do we not ask ourselves, as they did, where is our God in these times when we often feel disconcerted by the situation of the Church and of society? Do we feel our hope weaken when we see our world devastated by hatred, violence and multiple conflicts? And the lack of human and Christian values in many political leaders? And the instability of families where young people feel torn? And the scandals within the Church, etc.? Do we sometimes feel defeated and ask ourselves what is the purpose of our faith when God seems so far removed from us?

And yet, Jesus is truly risen! As it did for the disciples of Emmaus, a new hope can be rekindled in us. Let us remember that Jesus always walks with us, whatever our journey may be. Let us also remember that, through Jesus, life triumphs over death. Easter invites us to relive the experience of the disciples of Emmaus: by opening our heart and being attentive to Jesus who walks with us; by learning to recognize him in his Word and in the Eucharist, by allowing him to fill our hearts with the fire of his love, so that we may proclaim loudly and clearly, here and now, by our words and by our actions : "Christ is truly risen! "

To each and every one of you, I wish the joy and the hope of Easter.

+Marcel Damphousse  
Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie