

The Bishop's Easter Message 2022

On the road again

Over the past couple of months, I have been on the road again, travelling around the diocese. This is in contrast to the last couple of years when travel has been limited because of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the virus is still having an impact, sometimes causing severe illness, we have been able to resume many of our usual activities. This includes moving around more freely. For this I am most grateful, because it has allowed me to resume visits to our parishes and schools.

It has been wonderful to celebrate Sunday Masses in churches in the Swan Hill parish and join the students and staff of St Joseph's College Mildura for Mass in their college gym. I have been able to join in a meeting in the parish office in Warrnambool and prayer times with primary school students in Wendouree. These visits have brought home to me how much people all around our diocese have done to bring their communities through the pandemic and how much they are doing to help one another as we resume more normal activities in our parishes and schools and our lives as a whole.

I offer my thanks to you all for your patience during the pandemic and the kindness you have shown in supporting one another during this time. May that patience and kindness stay with us even as the pandemic subsides.

As we come to celebrate Easter this year, we are conscious of various trials that people are suffering around Australia and around the world – the ongoing effects of bushfires that have charred the lives of communities in the past couple of years, the recent devastation of floods, the terrible destruction of war in Ukraine. In the face of such sorrows, the joy of Easter might seem far away. Yet, our Christian faith can be a source of joy even in the midst of distress. The gospel assures us that God is close to us in times of struggle as well as in times of peace, that Christ has shared our pain, and that, just as God's love raised Jesus from the grave, so God's love can raise us to new life.

The Ukrainian word for "Easter" is "Velykden", meaning "Great Day". Easter does indeed celebrate a great day, the day of Christ's resurrection. The traditional Ukrainian greeting at Easter is "Christ is risen!" The response is "Christ is risen indeed!" Even as they endure much suffering, may this Easter be a great day for the people of Ukraine as they rejoice in the resurrection of Christ. May this Easter be a great day for us as well as we too rejoice in Christ's resurrection. May you have a blessed Holy Week and a Happy Easter.



Bishop Paul Bird CSsR

