



My Dear Friends,

A very *Happy and Blessed Easter* to you and your families.

It gives me immense pleasure to greet you once again at this joyful time and to thank you for welcoming me into your homes, gardens or wherever you are.

Easter is one of my favourite seasons because it is that special time of the year when I join Christians around the world in singing, *“He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!”* (*Christ Arose, Robert Lowry 1826-1899, CPWI Hymnal*) and I do so in highest praise for the Hope that Jesus Christ has given us through His glorious Resurrection.

This Lenten season has been so different from all that we are accustomed to, as restrictions are still in place to reduce the spread of the Coronavirus. We have not been able to gather in large groups physically for prayer and fellowship in Church, and we do miss the togetherness and the laughter. Through it all, we give thanks for the promise of hope which we have been given in Christ Jesus.

Mother Patsy, bless her, was 97 years old recently. I telephoned her to wish her a Happy Birthday and she said, *“My dear, at my age I wake up thankful each morning. I am more aware of God’s tender voice and his sacrificial love – this is what matters most to me in life now.”* She went on to say how much she enjoyed her 42 years as an active member, and now, as an Indoor member she is grateful for the energy to pray for Mothers’ Union which she loves so much. She recalled Easter being a special time for her Branch as the members wore their best hats for the Easter Hat Show and Tea Party. *“Those are all memories now,”* she said, *“it is my relationship with Jesus and the hope He gives me that makes Easter so significant, and my life worth living.”*

As we completed our conversation, she wanted to sing for me and started humming, *“I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses ...”* Maybe, she was reflecting on the early morning over two thousand years ago, when Mary Magdalene, weeping by Jesus’ tomb, thought she was speaking to the gardener. Instead, she was speaking to the Risen Lord. Such hope and confidence she gave the disciples as she said, *“I have seen the*

Lord!" John 20:18. The disciples had lost all hope after the crucifixion, but the good news encouraged them and rebuilt their hope and confidence to go forth and spread the Gospel.

Like the disciples, we too have the blessed assurance that Jesus is alive and his Spirit lives in us, giving us all we need in this fragile world. It is knowing that the joy of His presence inspires us at each stage of our MU journey; whether we are discovering our gifts and talents in Branch life or overflowing with faith in action at Diocesan level, each part of the journey is unique and radiates the Light of Christ. Mother Patsy reminded me that our MU busyness continues until we reach this stage in life, when the spirituality that underpins our work, becomes even more central to our lives, drawing us closer in our relationship with God.

My dear friends, your prayer circle continues to be a tower of support for all MU leaders, staff and members, helping them to be resilient to the challenges of this present time. It is by God's Grace and your help that MU survived the challenges of 2020 and continues to move forward to rebuild in 2021. Whatever we are faced with, we are committed to lifting up all members in prayer, especially those who grieve the loss of loved ones, and face conflict and hunger in their communities each day. We thank God that in all situations his Grace is sufficient.

As we continue to find new ways to stay connected with each other, I would like to encourage you to join me this Easter in creating a quiet space, where you and a friend or two, can lose yourselves in God's presence with this prayer from the Diocese of Newcastle, and at the same time embrace the unconditional love God has for you.

An Easter Prayer

Christ is risen, Alleluia!

Lord Jesus Christ, in dying you conquered death and rose again in glory.

Through your great love and abiding grace, we will one day be with you in your heavenly kingdom.

Lord, we pray that we may make each day of our earthly life worthy of your great sacrifice on the cross. Thank you that we can find sanctuary in your love because you have chosen to love us just as we are, with all our faults and failings and that, if we truly repent, you will forgive our sins. Amen.

(Margaret Devlin, Diocese of Newcastle, UK)

As we eagerly await the jubilant ringing of Church bells on Easter Day, may I wish you the peace, love and hope that only Christ Jesus can give us today and always.

With my love and prayers,

Sheran

Sheran Harper
Worldwide President.

