



March 23, 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As the sequence in the Easter Sunday Mass, *Victimae paschali laudes*, so beautifully tells us, “Yes, Christ my hope is arisen; To Galilee he goes before you.”

Christ is the sole source of true and enduring hope! We have relived Christ’s Dying and Rising through the solemn Easter Triduum, preceded by a 40-day Lenten retreat of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The hope of Christ’s Resurrection has carried us through our Lenten experience. The sacrifice of Lent reminds us that every “alleluia” holds within it a memory of the cross.

As the second part of the sequence states, Christ has gone before us, offering us direction and guidance. When we find ourselves in the midst of trials – a sick relative, a child who rejects the Church, a struggling spouse – we see in Christ an example of how to act rightly. So we find realistic hope in knowing that Christ is always our perfect standard and model! And while He has gone before us, Christ also remains among us. He gives us the hope that sustains and strengthens us, through His Living Word; the Holy Eucharist, both in Mass and in the tabernacle; and His Church, the Community of His disciples.

This Easter Season, the Vicar of Christ comes on his first pastoral visit to proclaim the message of “Christ Our Hope.” As we eagerly anticipate Pope Benedict’s arrival to the United States next month, let us ask Mary to form us in hope. Pope Benedict XVI prayed to her in his recent encyclical *Spe Salvi*, “Thus you remain in the midst of the disciples as their Mother, as the Mother of hope. Holy Mary, Mother of God, our Mother, teach us to believe, to hope, to love with you. Show us the way to his Kingdom! Star of the Sea, shine upon us and guide us on our way!” (*Spe Salvi*, 50). In joyful hope we turn to the Mother of God, who is also our Mother, given to us by Christ as He hung upon the cross.

“For in hope were we saved” (Rom 8:24) and in hope we will persevere with Mary, the Mother of hope, accompanying us until we reach our true home. Then, with her and all the saints, we will see Christ our Hope face-to-face forever! We rejoice with a glad “alleluia” this Easter, throughout the Easter Season and beyond because Christ our Hope is arisen and He goes before us always!

Walking with you in joyful hope and praying for you daily, I remain

Faithfully in Christ,

+ Paul S. Loverde

Most Reverend Paul S. Loverde
Bishop of Arlington