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Message for BBNeighbourhoods
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The Angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled away the stone. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here. For he has risen. Do not be afraid...ⁱ

These verses from the Easter narrative are fresh in our hearts and minds as we commemorate the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Saviour over the fifty days of Easter.

The Easter liturgies that we celebrate recall the first appearance of Jesus after his resurrection. The evangelists all relate a similar story. To whom does he first appear? Is it to Peter? No! Is it to one of the other apostles? No! It was to the women.

It was to Mary Magdalene in particular that he initially appeared. And he appeared to her, not just to comfort her. At the very first meeting, he chose and sent her as an apostle. “Go and tell the others”.² She went and shared the good news with the others. She was commissioned as the apostle to the apostles.

Mary went to the apostles with the message of Good News; however, it was all too much for them. Luke is quite honest about their reaction. This story of theirs “seemed to them an idle tale”.³ Reason did not connect with faith. However, the hearts of Peter and John were touched, and they rushed off to the tomb. There they saw the stone rolled back and the linen cloths. This was the moment of reckoning. The Gospel tells us that at this point they believed. Peter and John found the fullness of faith through the good news brought to them by a woman. Down through the ages, women have been wonderful evangelizers. They have passed on the faith from generation to generation. I think of my own family where for seven generations we have had two bishops, two Carmelite friars, and four Diocesan priests. In each generation, there has been a band of faith-filled women nurturing and evangelizing members of the family and community.⁴

This Easter we celebrate with great joy, Christ our Risen Saviour! Jesus died and rose again to redeem all of creation. Let us be challenged and encouraged by this Easter message, as were Peter and John.⁵ Let us be caught up in the joyful privilege of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with all men and women so that they may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.

Men, women, boys and girls, the new life of Easter is for you! The life of faith is one to be lived and shared with others. As a believer, who would not want to go and tell others? The Good News of Jesus Christ is the only news that is good for everyone. Our mission is to make it known to everyone. As disciples of the Lord, our duty is to make the faith known more widely and deeply. Firstly, we must be instructed and formed in it more completely. Moreover, as evangelizers for Christ, we must search for ways to live and present the faith in ways that meet the needs of our time.⁶ To pass on the Easter message is our vocation. The Risen Christ asks you, just as he asked Mary Magdalene, “Go and tell the others”.



The Good News of Jesus Christ liberates us from the lie that says we must hide our imperfections, our sins and our weaknesses so that we can be strong, accepted, even loved by the world around us. It is in this context that we are able to make sense of the challenges facing the Church in Australia in our own time.

Echoing the words of Saint Paul VI, Francis encourages us not to forget our mission. “The Church must look with penetrating eyes within herself; ponder the mystery of her own being...”⁷

Saint Paul VI, and by extension Pope Francis, invites us to enter into Christ, and continuously delve the mystery of the Body of Christ. If we accept this invitation, we are given the opportunity to let the Spirit overcome and correct the problems that face us and that have watered down our ability to preach and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is a great temptation to think that we in the Church are the healthy and vibrant saviours to the bruised and hurting out there in the world.

The Holy Father reminds us, however, that for the Church to be healthy and to fulfil her mission, she must understand that we too are “bruised and hurting”, and we too are in need of the Saviour.⁸

Pope Francis urges us to commit ourselves to ongoing self-examination and to the purification of our desires, which springs from the acknowledgement of our need for God’s mercy. This is not a one-off event, but an everyday way of living the Gospel. It is something that we are called to do in our local Church of Broken Bay for the fifty days of Easter, and indeed, each and every day of our lives.

My sisters and brothers let us share our Easter joy with everyone we meet.

Χριστὸς ἀνέστη! Ἄληθῶς ἀνέστη!

Christus resurrexit! Resurrexit vere!

Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

¹ Matthew 28:2; 5-7

² Matthew 28:10

³ Luke 24:11

⁴ In this vast domain of service, the Church's two-thousand-year history, for all its historical conditioning, has truly experienced the "genius of woman"; from the heart of the Church there have emerged women of the highest calibre who have left an impressive and beneficial mark in history. I think of the great line of woman martyrs, saints and famous mystics. In a particular way I think of Saint Catherine of Siena and of Saint Teresa of Avila, whom Pope Paul VI of happy memory granted the title of Doctors of the Church. And how can we overlook the many women, inspired by faith, who were responsible for initiatives of extraordinary social importance, especially in serving the poorest of the poor? The life of the Church in the Third Millennium will certainly not be lacking in new and surprising manifestations of "the feminine genius". John Paul II, *Letter to Women* 11

⁵ cf. John 20:6-8

⁶ The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times. Therefore, every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelization of culture, or more correctly of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel. But this encounter will not take place if the Gospel is not proclaimed. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 20

⁷ Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam* 9

⁸ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 49