



His Most Reverend Héctor Vila, Bishop of the Diocese of Whitehorse

### **Pastoral Letter for Easter 2024**

*"But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him." Mark 16, 6*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

They are over the days of the Passion: Christ is Risen!

Today, we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord, who suffered, died, and rose again for all of us. The Word of God proclaimed this Easter calls us to conversion in a very concrete way. It calls us to go look for the Risen Christ and experience the Resurrection. The Good News that Easter brings is that we are invited to hope and welcome this new beginning that the Lord offers.

Christ Risen comes to us today through the Holy Spirit and brings the power to transform death into life. Truly and concretely, as the Holy Father Pope Francis said in his homily at the Easter Vigil in April 2021: *"From the rubble of our hearts – and each one of us knows the rubble of our hearts – God can create a work of art; from the ruined remnants of our humanity, God can prepare a new history."*

The women and disciples in the Gospel went to the tomb expecting to find the Lord there. They had not understood. They were expecting to find hope in the tomb, a solution, a consolation. They followed their tradition, what they thought to be true. They were searching for the Lord, for their Saviour. But all during His life, Jesus announced a new way, a new trail, and a new tradition in Him, in His life, death and resurrection. He is not in the tomb, He is Risen.

The greatness of the Word of God reveals to us that hope, life and joy are not found in the tomb. Most often joy and consolation are not found in what the world suggests to be good. Most often we are deceived, like the women and the disciples. We look for life in our history, in what we hear about, or in what we think makes sense. Today, Brothers and Sisters, we are invited to take a good look at our ways, see that life is not there, believe in the Resurrection, and walk away from the tomb. Christ says "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (*Jn 14:6*) Christ Risen is where we find redemption, hope and salvation, where we are made anew.

Away from Christ, we often find ourselves repeatedly falling into the same old habits that ultimately lead us back to a state of emptiness and despair. The tomb is this: It is isolation, confusion, slavery, sadness, anxiety and regret, and we all have our own personal versions of it. But during Easter and every Sunday, we are reminded that the Risen Christ is present for us and in us through the Holy Spirit, the living bridge of salvation. Jesus is alive! He guides us towards new ways of living; ways that are based on humility, prayer, and a virtuous life. We are never alone, as the Risen Christ walks alongside us. His ways do not lead us back to death, but rather to a life that is redeemed and renewed. A life full of meaning, peace, truth, joy, communion, and self-giving love.

Animated by the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, we are called to turn towards Christ, towards Love, and away from our tomb. We, like the women and the disciples and so many others who believed in the Resurrection, are called to embrace God's love and let it fill us, heal us, and transform us. This way we can be witnesses of this new life to all those around us. Particularly in these times of confusion, deception, loneliness, and conflict. It is important that we "*go to the peripheries*" without fear and share our experiences of God's love and glory. Our children, neighbours, diocese, and communities need to see the spirit of the Risen Christ in us and know that they too can leave their tombs behind and experience a new life, one filled with love. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can put ourselves at our Father's disposition and become agents of His immense love for the world. Let us desire to be risen with Christ, to follow His ways, and to strive for holiness. May the Lord answer our longing and strengthen us in the battle.

This Easter, let us pray that God renews us in His image through the Spirit of His Risen Son, for His glory forever and ever. The world awaits our "yes"!

Happy and Blessed Easter!

Christ is Risen. Alleluia!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, starting with a cross symbol and the name 'Héctor Vila' in a cursive script.

Most Rev. Héctor Vila  
Bishop of Whitehorse