

# Easter Sunday 2024

March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024

Brothers and sisters

May the Lord give you peace!

Christ is risen! He is truly risen, Hallelujah!

Let the joy of the resurrection fill our hearts. In Christ who died and rose again, life has won, love has triumphed, and heaven is open. Alleluia!

I am really happy to be here and celebrate the Eucharist with you. Immediately after the Ordination I wanted to come and celebrate here in Northern Cyprus. And today I am here, to tell you that I care about our communities in Northern Cyprus (Kerynea, Famagusta, Northern Lefkosa and Lefke), that I love you all.... And desire for us to walk together... I am bishop for you...

Brothers and sisters, the mission, the responsibility of the Bishop is not easy. Why? Because the Bishop is responsible for your salvation... yes, the salvation of his flock. And the symbols that the bishop carries, speak precisely of this. The Cross... because I must love the Church, my flock, and lay down my life for you, my people, even unto death. The Crosier (the shepherd's staff) has a curved hook, because the shepherd has to take the sheep by the neck to rescue it when it is in danger, so as not to lose any sheep. Then the color reminds us of the blood... loving to the point of giving our own blood... so it won't be easy, that's why I ask: Pray for me!

Brothers and sisters, the Gospel of Saint John that we have just heard unites us with the "physical" journey of the disciples (who went to the Sepulcher early in the morning). And today, as we celebrate Easter, we are called to go to the empty tomb on our spiritual journey. Every word, every gesture in the Gospels has a meaning, a meaning. The beauty for us Christians is to combine the physical with the spiritual.

Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb early in the morning... This is not only a chronological but a theological indication. It was physically dark and there was darkness in her heart too. She still felt pain, misunderstanding, and failure. How many times we too are "in the dark", in moments of

suffering, difficulty, illness. And that darkness grows so much that we begin to live without meaning and without hope. What's beautiful is that Mary doesn't stand still. But she goes to the tomb, she goes to look for Jesus there, to look for His body. But Jesus

is not there. He is not among the dead. Mary sees a sign of life (the open tomb) but she reads it negatively; she is still "in the dark" and she thinks someone stole Jesus' body. It was the "most plausible" human explanation. It was difficult to understand a mystery like the "resurrection"; yes, brothers and sisters we need Him... we need the Lord Jesus" and His Word. And only in this way will we be able to read signs of life, even where there seems to be only death.

It is faith in Jesus that helps us read reality with more profound eyes, with the eyes of faith. And it is love for Jesus that makes us "run faster" and live in even the hardest situations united with Him.

Yes, it is Easter, and He is alive... and we want Him to be alive in the center of everything... Yes, brothers and sisters we are the minority in Cyprus. Our pastoral actions are small steps... especially here in Northern Cyprus. But the secret is that Jesus is at the center. He is the strength of the Word, because He is the Word... He is the protagonist... In our Church of Cyprus, we want to put the Word at the center. It is the reason that I chose for my Episcopate: "*Sicumdum Verbum Tuum*", "According to Your Word...."

As Blessed Carlos Acutis said: Not me but God.... Yes brothers and sisters, this is the secret to the solutions to many of our pastoral difficulties. Putting God and His Word at the center. Not our groups, our personal projects, not even our resentments and the things that happened in the past... situations that lead us to pessimism, to isolating ourselves and not wanting to do anything new.

Finally, I would like to conclude with the same words of my thanks on the day of my Episcopal ordination: Thank you... "Beloved brothers and sisters, let us begin to serve the Lord, seeking together the face of the Father, to be authentic witnesses of the joy of belonging to his Son, Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for us. Of belonging to His Church, and for me the joy of serving the Church of Cyprus.... Amen!

**Mgr. Bruno Varriano**

**Patriarchal Vicar of Cyprus**