MESSAGE FROM BISHOP NOËL SIMARD FOR EASTER 2022

 **EASTER, LIFE TRIUMPHS**

For the past two years, the pandemic has caused grief, pain and death. With medical advances and the effects of vaccination, the spread of the virus has been greatly reduced. Achieving this goal has also required the acceptance and enforcement of health measures and government restrictions, as well as the participation and cooperation of the general population. We can now see the light at the end of the tunnel. But then came Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the outbreak of a despicable, inhumane and horrible war with its attendant suffering, destruction and heartbreaking deaths. And already there is talk of an unprecedented humanitarian crisis caused by the millions of refugees who are fleeing this violence and who have received a very generous welcome from Poland and some neighboring countries.

How can we sing Alleluia and celebrate the joy of Christ's resurrection in the face of such a spectacle of violence and hatred which is certainly affecting Ukraine painfully, but also countries such as Syria and Yemen? We must first remember that the resurrection of Christ is intimately linked to his death. By dying on the cross, Jesus took upon himself the sufferings of humanity and the sins of injustice, violence, selfishness and indifference. He crossed the ravine of death and made life triumph by the supreme gift of his life. With this gesture of total love, he brought us salvation and liberation; he opened the way to fullness of life. Through his resurrection and his victory over death, we are promised resurrection, eternal life. This is the ever present, ever hopeful message of our Christian faith. Jesus is risen, Alleluia, life is reborn, life triumphs.

It is up to us to bear witness to this victory of life and to bring this hope of a better world, of a reconciled humanity and of the building of God's Kingdom of peace, love and justice. When the apostles Peter and John went to the tomb, they found it empty. Yet they saw and believed, remembering that Jesus had told them of his resurrection. It is up to us to

see and believe! And the signs of the triumph of life over death are numerous: conversions and baptisms of adults, rebirths, commitments to justice and sharing brought about by numerous humanitarian and ecclesial organizations, exceptional solidarity with peoples heavily affected by conflicts and inflation, reconciliations, the fight to preserve our environment, etc. The outpouring of generosity that the exodus of millions of Ukrainian refugees has aroused, as well as the determination of Ukrainians to save their country, are striking signs that life will triumph.

Yes, with Jesus, life is reborn and we are witnesses of it. If I live as a risen person, if I help my afflicted brothers and sisters to see the light in the midst of darkness and to come out of the tombs of hatred, violence and misery by my gestures of charity and solidarity, then I can sing Alleluia and express the joy of Easter. For God wants to need us to make his love and his life triumph.

 Happy, holy and serene Easter!