



**World Council
of Churches**

Easter Message 2024

Jesus is not here, He is Risen!

The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” (Luke 24:5)

As we look around the world today, we see so much of pain, suffering, and death. It seems that we are surrounded by death as we think about the thousands of people dying in the wars, millions dying of starvation and hunger, hundreds of refugees drowning in seas, and many more dying on a daily basis in the experience of ethnic, racial, and gender-based violence. We are becoming accustomed to violence and death as if these are normal experiences in life.

In this time of Lent we are reminded of the brutal and sacrificial suffering death of Jesus Christ. Some of the disciples and many of his followers, including family and friends, thought it would all end there – with a dead Jesus. When they went to the tomb on that resurrection day that’s precisely what they were expecting. They forgot about the promise of Jesus that, on the third day, he will rise again. So you can imagine the profoundly deep question of the angels, “Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” The question is not intended to say that Jesus is not among the dead; it is an affirmation that Christ is risen and death is conquered.

The empty tomb is a sign of LIFE in the midst of suffering and death. The message is clear that with the resurrection of Jesus death is conquered. While we face the anguish of senseless and unnecessary deaths in the world today, we are reminded that the suffering servant who died on our behalf not only suffers with us but also brings life to all who believe. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25).

The empty tomb is a sign of HOPE. The gift of eternal life is not a spiritualisation and romanticisation of death but a promise and hope that the Risen Lord will bring justice and righteousness. Hope is an eschatological gift that tells us that, in spite of our present struggles and sufferings, we are not alone; the Risen Christ is with us restoring hope and joy. Yet, hope is not a passive acceptance of death but the inspiration to honour, respect, and appreciate life, God’s gift to us. Hope calls us to resist and oppose unjust systems and authorities that are life-denying and life-depriving because the God of life stands for justice and peace in the world.

The empty tomb is a sign of LOVE. It tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. The Apostle Paul makes this clear when he says this in Romans 8:38-39: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers. Nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Indeed, we are surrounded by death in this world today. In this situation let us be reminded of the Easter message: "Jesus is not here, but has risen." In every situation of suffering and death today let us be reminded that the Risen Lord brings us life, hope, and love. May the peace of Christ be with you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pillay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'P' and a long, sweeping underline.

Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay
General Secretary
World Council of Churches