



Church of South India

THE SYNOD SECRETARIAT

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Easter Sunday, 2020

Dear sisters and brothers,

We continue to weep and cry as thousands are falling sick, dying and being buried, both physically and emotionally, due to the escalating number of COVID 19 cases. According to the World Health Organisation, the total numbers of registered cases are almost 17, 00, 000, number of deaths crossing 1, 00, 000. In India alone, the total number of the reported case have passed 7, 500, the number of fatalities touching 250. We are united in pain and fear, and we are not sure if we would effectively withstand the devastating impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Unfortunately, the most affected are the vulnerable people, including the elderly, the sick, the poor, unemployed, and migrants and refugees. Further, all those serving in the medical field also are at high risk. Despite the measures taken by the respective government authorities, there seems to be very little hope that the pandemic settles soon. We are all living in fear and anxiety. Our hopes are, to a great extent "buried" under this fear. The question here is if our life with all its vigour is restored.



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Prophet Hosea asks, 'Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave is your destruction?' (Hosea 13: 14). Later St Paul quotes the same and repeats, 'Where, O death is thy victory? Where, O death is thy sting?' 1 Corinthians 15:55. In Hosea, it gives hope to the Jews who had been (i) dispersed over the world, and (ii) had not been able to recover their national independence, and (iii) had not been able to maintain their national worship. Paul assures that death is defeated and its evils shall be repaired. In both these contexts, these verses give great hope of life. Easter provides us with the hope that there is life possible beyond the fear of death, and beyond death itself.

On the Easter day dawn, the women reached the tomb, but they saw that the stone was rolled away and the body was missing. They stood, confused and frightened. Suddenly the risen Jesus appeared and reassured them that He was risen from the dead and was alive. The women instantly returned from the tomb as messengers of that joyful news and shared it. It is the same response we see from Cleopas and his friend, who after being encountered by Jesus, returned to Jesus' disciples and proclaimed the happy news, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon." The disciples of Jesus carried this same glad news to the ends of the earth.



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As millions live in total distress today, we as the Church is called to proclaim this same good news of hope and life. Easter is a repeated experience where God raises us, as individuals and communities, from the dead, rolls away the stones that keep us buried, opens the tomb for us to come out in order to celebrate and proclaim the victory of life over death.

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I want to end this short exhortation stating that on the very first Easter day, the disciples of Jesus were lockdown. It is into the midst of this locked down community that Jesus entered and assured peace showing His hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. To a locked down community, resurrected Jesus' presence could bring new vigour. Today the risen Jesus stands amidst us, a locked down community, locked within our own fear, distress and anxiety, to assure us peace. In fact all His five appearances on the first Easter day, to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18), to the other women (Matthew 28:9-10), to the two on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13, Luke 24:13-32), to Peter (Luke 24:33-35, 1 Corinthians 15:5), to ten of the disciples, Thomas being absent (John 20:19-23) restores the hope and life in each one of them. The same Christ continues to appear wherever we are locked down, to assure us peace and courage.

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Dear friends, we will overcome this situation. God will help us to come out of this darkness, because He is the Light of this world. Let me conclude by saying an ancient popular Persian Philosophical thought - this too shall pass.

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The Church of South India joins hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with the suffering community of the whole world and our nation. We are obliged to pray for the governments, especially the departments those who are working in the field of Covid 19, the health workers, police officers, drivers, shopkeepers and all the volunteers. I encourage all the members of the CSI to plan and work for the welfare of our nation with creative ideas and strategic programmes in supportive of the respective governments in different States. I, being the Moderator of the Church of South India, with all humility, along with all our Bishops, Clergies, and the church members would like to assure our wholehearted support and prayers for all the works being carried out to face this situation by the governmental and non governmental agencies. AMEN.

General Secretary CSI

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Easter wishes and prayers,

✠ **Most Revd. A. Dharmaraj Rasalam**

Moderator, CSI & Bishop SKD

