



Paschal Epistle, 2021

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

...when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you (John 20 19).

On the day of His Resurrection, closed doors could not keep the Risen Lord from those who loved Him. Nor could they do so a week later when He came again in the presence of Thomas. Nor can they today when many of the faithful again find ourselves behind closed doors through restrictions associated with the pandemic, which, by God's permission, rages worldwide already for a second year.

Neither then, nor now, was it the closed doors that could keep us from the Risen Christ, but rather the turmoil within our hearts. This is why in the Gospel, on both occasions, our Risen Lord announces His presence with the words *Peace be unto you*.

It was this peace that was necessary to dispel the fear and confusion that had taken over the disciples who had just witnessed the Crucifixion and death of their beloved Lord. It is this peace that was and is indispensable, not just to see Him, but to recognise Him as the truly Risen Lord, in the flesh, and not some apparition or phantom. It is this peace that is now indispensable to transcend our real and imagined difficulties, if we are to commune with the Risen Christ, even within the realities of this fallen world.

In St Luke's account we read that, after imparting His peace, our Risen Lord continues: *Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? (Luke 24 38)*. It is unfortunate that some consider being troubled, upset, or even taking offence, as indicative of, and even a measure of virtue and piety, rather than a barrier which, unlike closed doors, can prevent us from seeing the Risen Christ. At the very beginning of His Gospel, did not Christ tell us: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Mat. 5 8)?*

Brothers and sisters, dear people of God, I wish you all the peace of the Risen Christ, the peace *which passeth all understanding (Phil. 4 7)*, that, present tribulations notwithstanding, we all may truly partake in Christ's glorious Resurrection, both here, and *in the unwaning day of [His] Kingdom*. For, as the Apostle says, *neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8 38-39)*.

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*John, Bishop of Caracas and South America,
The Passover of the LORD, 2021*