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Archbishop's Easter Message, 2021

Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ,

Alleluia! Our King and Savior, Jesus Christ has risen so that we may have eternal life! As the Church marks Easter and the glorious resurrection of our Redeemer, I pray that all are able to feel the love of Jesus today.

It's been more than one year since the virus known as COVID-19 struck us and many are still suffering the devastation that the pandemic has brought. In most cases, the agony of losing loved ones to the virus is compounded by the fact that they could not be physically present to console their sick relatives or friends because of strict safety protocols. For individuals or families in these instances, it must be especially difficult to think of being joyful today.

The Church assures you of our collective prayers as the Communion of Saints. Most of all, our Lord knows your suffering intimately. He loves you deeply and will never abandon you. Pope Francis reminded us of this during one of his weekly audiences last October. The pope said, "All human pains for God are sacred. Before God we are not strangers, or numbers. We are faces and hearts, known one by one, by name."

The Holy Father encouraged all who suffer to cry out to God through prayer. The person who prays, he said, knows that they are "are precious in the eyes of God, and so it makes sense to cry out."

Pope Francis said for example, as part of the books of wisdom, the Psalms communicate to the believer "knowing how to pray". He said the Psalms show us that crying out to God in prayer "is the way and beginning of salvation." Prayer turns pain into "a relationship: a cry for help waiting to intercept a listening ear," the pope added.

Therefore, as we celebrate Easter and the glorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, let us imitate the love God has for each of us by extending that love to others, especially our struggling brothers and sisters.

Presence is one of the best things one can give a friend, family member or even a stranger who is experiencing great sorrow or difficulties. Sometimes, no words are necessary. Just an acknowledging look, a caring nod or hands gently clasped in prayer convey love and empathy for a suffering individual.

Love goes a long way to heal brokenness and suffering. And because we know that the greatest love is that which poured forth from the heart of Jesus on the Cross, if we hold firmly to him, God promises us eternal happiness with him in Heaven.

We continue to pray for those who have died on Guam of COVID-19 and other illnesses such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease. We also lift up in prayer loved ones lost through natural causes, accidents, suicide, drug abuse or violence. We grieve with the relatives they left behind.

I take this opportunity to express special gratitude to the healers, caregivers and peacemakers of our community. You give so much of yourselves with tremendous love, sacrifice and courage. You often do so quietly, without flourish.

Finally, I extend blessings to the many men and women who work professionally in the medical and emergency fields as well as persons who serve faithfully as caregivers for our “manamko” and our ailing brothers and sisters. I think for instance, of the many individuals who are the lone caregivers in their families. They faithfully take care of their aging mother, father or grandparents, remembering well how they did the same for them when they were children. May God bless all of you with his abundant graces.

This Easter season, have joy in the love of God, and then share it unconditionally, with great vigor with every person that you meet! The Light of our Lord drives all darkness away. A joyful and blessed Easter to everyone!

Yours in Jesus Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Byrnes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small cross-like mark at the beginning.

Archbishop Michael Jude Byrnes
Metropolitan Archbishop of Agaña