

# Easter Letter 2015

**By Bishop John Michael Botean**

Christ is risen!

Dear brothers and sisters,

With this good news, I thought I would write a simple (and brief) greeting to you, rather than my usual lengthy meditation. You may be very glad and relieved about that—I certainly am.

The fact is, I had quite a bit in mind to say this Easter, but that is just going to have to wait. Life gets in the way of our plans, sometimes, and there is just not much that we can do about it.

Life got in the way of the plans of the chief priests and scribes, who planned to put Jesus away for good and get rid of the pest who was messing up their program, or rather God's program (since, at least in their own minds, their program was God's program. We see that an awful lot in our own day, too).

Life got in the way of Pilate's plans. He was, I'm sure, a very busy man, and had many administrative details to see to as procurator of this very religious, very unruly province entrusted to him by Rome.

Life got in the way of Peter and the apostles, too. They were used to thinking as human beings do, not as God does (Mark 8:33). This makes sense, because they were human beings, and not God. Jesus was trying to teach them about how God thinks, but they had their own career plans in mind. Life got in their way, and they found that they were serving a Messiah who was quite different from the one they imagined they were serving. Their plans suddenly took a very strange turn when Mary Magdalene showed up at the door and said, "I have seen the Lord!" (John 20:18).

Yes, life gets in the way. Reality is not always what we want it to be. What we receive is not always what we pray for. It seems to me that one of the greatest spiritual challenges we face as humans is to be able to say, with peace of mind and confidence in the future, "it is what it is" (to use an expression that has gained a lot of currency lately).

The life that gets in our way, as Christians, is the Life that shone forth from Christ's empty tomb. It is the very same Life that got in the way of the plans of those who were the "one per cent" of Jesus' day, the political, economic, and religious elites who made the plans that everyone else is supposed to follow. This same Life gets in the way of the elites of our own time, of course—but not only them. It

gets in the way of everyone, from the least to the greatest, who would have success rather than the Cross, status rather than service, survival rather than Resurrection. It gets in the way of everyone who will not take up his or her own cross, who wants to save his or her own life and winds up losing it (Mark 8:35).

We still do not think as God thinks, even we Christians, who ought to know better, since we have the words and the works of God-in-the-flesh to teach us.

But Easter (I prefer the term “Pascha,” which reminds us of the new Passover in Christ) can be the source of unlimited joy, great hope, and supreme confidence in our lives, because the Life that gets in the way has, in the first place, gotten in the way of Death, which had held us captive. Jesus’ life, which is now our life, is a life of total victory over the grave and all that serves the grave—money, power, violence, greed, and every form of selfishness and egotism.

With St. Paul, we can claim this victory for ourselves: “I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me,” (Galatians 2:19–20).

Christ’s life has become our life, and this life gets in the way of everything that leads to corruption, sorrow, and death. If we could only feel it with the same intensity with which we sometimes experience it at the Resurrection services in Church on Easter, or around the table at our Paschal meal, as we greet one another and sing tirelessly, again and again, “Christ is risen! Christ is risen! Christ is risen!”

Ah, but the life we live, as St. Paul says, “in the flesh” can, and often does, cause us to forget the life we very truly possess in our inmost being. We forget that it is by death that Christ conquered death. And that is why it is so important, so vitally important, that we keep reminding each other of the Life that is in us: “Indeed He is risen!” And I hope I have done that with this little note.

May He who is the Life of all, who is risen from the dead and has dominion over the living and the dead, Christ our true God, be alive in your hearts and in your homes this day and forever.

Yours in the Risen Lord,

+john michael

bishop,

a sinner