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*The Rt. Rev'd C. Leopold Friday, B.A., M.A.*

## **Bishop's Easter Message 2016**

Life is filled with experiences of which some are burdensome, trying and challenging; they may be similar or vary from person to person. What is common is that we all desire to be relieved or delivered from the effects of these experiences. Quite often we see this as being personal and private and therefore, narrow our understanding of God's act of deliverance.

We tend to forget that the deliverance which we seek applies to every sector of life including the economy which is also in need of deliverance. We have lost sight of the fact that the 'context' of our need of deliverance depends upon what our predicament is. "When Peter finds he cannot walk on water and yells, 'save me', he is not concerned about his sins or his ultimate destiny; he is crying "help!" and wants a lifeboat or a hand, just like a kid who has fallen into a dirty canal. To understand salvation means discerning what the human predicament is and what the rescue plan is. It can mean rescue from gaol, from illness, from death, from catastrophe – even from hanging on the cross! "Save yourself" cry the bystanders as they watch Jesus hanging there; "he saved others; himself he cannot save!" (Matthew 27:42). (Frances Young in *Salvation and the New Testament*)

Deliverance means very different things to different people. For some it means forgiveness of sins. They do not see much connection between salvation and their broken marriages, prejudices, or economic injustice.

In the Old Testament God delivered the Hebrew people from bondage, oppression and exploitation in Egypt. Exodus 3:7 Then the LORD said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings,<sup>8</sup> and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.<sup>9</sup> The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them.<sup>10</sup> So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.'<sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, 'Who am I

that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?' <sup>12</sup>He said, 'I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.'

As we read the Old Testament we observe the challenges the Hebrew people faced on their way to deliverance and freedom. At one time they said to Moses, why did you bring us here to kill us, it was better in Egypt. This is also reflected in the New Testament:

"From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.<sup>22</sup> And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.'<sup>23</sup> But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.' (Matthew 16:21-23)

My brothers and sisters in Christ the Easter Message is one of faith in God, who is Almighty. It is a message of hope in the face of despair and darkness. It challenges us to change our mind-set from one which is solely focused on self-interest and which seeks our own way, to one wherein we willingly submit ourselves to the ways of God.

Just as it was challenging to the Hebrew people on their way to deliverance; and to Peter and the other Apostles and followers of Jesus; as he journeyed to crucifixion, death and burial, for our deliverance and the salvation of the world. As we respond in faith and seek deliverance from the various circumstances in our lives which are burdensome, trying and challenging. Remember the journey to deliverance at first may seem impossible and unrealistic, but thanks be to God! Jesus rose from the dead. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

I take this opportunity on behalf of my wife Lois and three daughters, Marcella, Malaika and Mikayla to wish you'll a Blessed Easter.

Your Friend and Bishop



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