

Easter Message from Bishop Crispian Hollis

Catholic Bishop of Portsmouth and Chairman, Department of International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Three weeks ago, Archbishop Paulos Rahho, the Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul in Iraq, was kidnapped and his driver and bodyguards were killed. A week ago, we received news that the Archbishop himself has himself been killed.

I did not know him and he did not know me but such is the brotherhood in faith within the Catholic Church that the violent death of a fellow bishop affects me deeply. Those feelings are still with me as I write these words of greeting for the Easter celebrations.

Words of a well known Easter hymn come to my mind and I share them with you:

“When our hearts are wintry, grieving or in pain,

Thy touch can call us back to life again;

Fields of our heart that dead and bare have been:

Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.”

They are appropriate words because it's so easy to forget that Easter is about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Easter isn't just about holidays, chocolate eggs and daffodils. It's about something altogether more serious. It's about Jesus suffering, dying, being buried and being raised from the dead. Nothing like that has ever happened before and will never need to happen again because it has changed everything for us.

Our wintry hearts are brought back to life and the fields of our life which so often lie barren can once again bear fruit and all because love has come again like the wheat that springeth green.

The cycle of death and violence, of which Archbishop Rahho was a victim, cannot prevail because we have been created for so much more than death. This is what the death and resurrection of Jesus teaches us. But he doesn't just teach us, he invites us, with a brother's love, to die with him and live with him so that his love can come again into our hearts with a power and beauty that no human evil, no culture of death can extinguish.

The men of violence, wherever they are to be found, will never ultimately triumph. I believe this with all my heart; this is my Easter faith and hope. I share it with all of you as I wish you a very Happy Easter.

Bishop Crispian Hollis