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## OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

April 17, 2022

My Dear People of God,

It has been a grace for me to journey with you all through the penitential days of Lent that have given way to the holiest of weeks and the joy of Easter. It is gratifying to raise our voices in praise of God the Father who has raised his only begotten Son in glory through the power of the Holy Spirit. Truly, "Alleluia" is our song, and for this, we are most grateful.

What can we say about this joy that pervades the Easter Season? And what about the suffering that continues in our lives and in our world, especially in Ukraine? In attempting to answer these questions, I think it is important to see that Easter joy does not erase all suffering but rather puts suffering in its proper place. The Paschal Mystery refers to the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is one mystery whose components are always in tension with each other. We do not come to new life except through suffering and death. And as Christians, we do not encounter suffering and death without the sure and certain hope that the Risen Christ will never abandon us and that he will turn our mourning into joy. Thus, we Catholics do not shrink from suffering, knowing that Good Friday always leads to Easter Sunday.

This is our prayer for the people of Ukraine. We are witnessing their horrific and incomprehensible suffering as they face deprivation, famine, pain and death every day. Those who have fled their country worry endlessly about their loved ones left behind while those who remain face uncertainty and fear day in and day out. In the midst of it all, and despite the terrible predicament facing our brothers and sisters in that war-torn land, we see countless examples of altruism, love and sacrifice, all of which give testimony to the Resurrection. These brave souls clearly take the Risen Christ seriously as they give their lives for others and thus find eternal life. As Jesus taught, "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 16:25) Surely, Yuri Prylypko, the mayor of Hostomel and the recipient of an honor from President Zelensky who designated his town as a Hero City for holding out against the Russian occupation, gave witness to this teaching of Christ. He was shot and killed by Russian soldiers as he brought bread to some of his trapped townspeople. May he rest in peace.

John Macmurray, a Scottish philosopher and theologian, once said that phony religion tells us not to worry, that which we fear the most will never happen. However, authentic religion tells us that that which we fear the most may very well happen, but it is nothing to worry about! Only the Resurrection of Jesus Christ can give us this kind of certitude, this kind of hope, this kind of optimism. Ours is an authentic religion, one based on the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord, raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father. I pray that this truth may bring you peace and joy this Easter season and that all of our sufferings will lead us to new life. I also join you in praying that the suffering of the Ukrainian people will come to an end immediately and that their suffering will lead to new life here on earth and for those who have been killed, new life in eternity.

Happy Easter to you all, my dear brothers and sisters in the Risen Christ.

Sincerely yours in the Risen Lord,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "John C. Wester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend John C. Wester  
Archbishop of Santa Fe