

EASTER: CELEBRATION OF HOPE

The season of Easter is a season of hope. This year's celebration is so special because of the Jubilee year of hope (December 24, 2024 – January 6, 2026) declared by Pope Francis. The life, suffering or passion, death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ won for us the gifts of salvation and hope. The Lord is truly risen, that is the message of Easter. As Catholics, we are people of hope who share this gift with our brothers and sisters of all faiths, especially those who are in need. Which means being committed to Jesus' preferential option for the poor and needy. The Easter message should find expression in our life. It should raise us above our selfishness, pride, and prejudice. Easter offers to all believers the hope of new life here and now.

We would want to use this opportunity to thank all those who worked so hard to ensure that rites of the Triduum and Easter Sunday were celebrated with dignity and grace in our Immaculate Conception Church (ICC) parish. The celebration of the Easter vigil, the mother of all vigils is the most beautiful service in the season. It is the true manifestation of hope in action. In the Easter vigil Catechumens and candidates were baptized, received into full communion with the church, confirmed and received their first Holy communion. God makes new creations out of all of us through baptism and raises us from sin and death making us a sign of hope in a world full of discord and hatred.

The celebration of the Eucharist has been made special by many volunteers. These include and not limited to the extraordinary ministers of the Holy Communion, the sacristans dedicated hours of their time in preparation of the liturgies and management of the altar servers, the Lectors, the ushers, the cantors, several choirs and musicians in the parish. The knights of Columbus and Catholic Women's league members of our parish have continued to volunteer making our parish family a place for the celebration of hope especially in this jubilee year of hope. St. Vincent De Paul group in our parish have continued to bring hope to so many poor and needy in our area. All these volunteers are part of those who made this year's celebration of hope a special one.

To all the many visitors who do come to celebrate with us, we say thank you for the choice of our parish church. The visitors have always said that we have a beautiful church. They do acknowledge that our parishioners are equally wonderful and welcoming. Your coming to celebrate with us especially within this Easter season is equally additional sign of hope for some people who are increasingly becoming pessimistic about the future of Jesus and the church. Let us individually and as a group continue this celebration of hope. May our mother Mary continue to intercede for us so that we who are baptized in the name of Christ are to be other Christs, transformed like who was, who is and who is to come.

Happy Easter.

Fr. Maurice Okolie
(ICC Pastor)