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Dear friends in Christ,

For Christians, Holy Week is the most sacred time of year. It's a time to reflect on what the "good news" of the Gospel really means.

The joy of Christian life begins at Christmas, but it comes to fruition on the other side of Calvary. No matter how intelligent or talented or privileged we might be, none of us can avoid the sufferings that go with the fabric of daily life. What we do with those sufferings determines the course of our lives. We can allow them to break us, or to break us *open* to become something greater than our old selves.

St. John Paul II once described the Bible as "God's great book about suffering." He meant that Scripture is the story of God's willingness to suffer for humanity, and his call to each of us to join our own struggles to his in healing the evil and pain in the world. Real joy, enduring joy – as Pope Francis says so powerfully in *The Gospel of Joy* – comes from our solidarity with others.

The cross is the way Jesus accomplishes our redemption. Only by sharing that experience with him can we rise with him on Easter. In other words, there's no resurrection without the

crucifixion.

In offering God the personal sorrows and sufferings which each of us daily face, and in working to ease the sorrows and suffering of others, we join ourselves to Jesus. We share in his sacrifice for the world ... but we also share in the reward, for *he draws us with him out of death* into new life on Easter.

Therefore, when we speak about the Gospel message of joy and hope, this is what we mean: the joy of restored life; and our confidence that even in dying, we will live forever in the Lord.

As we begin the Sacred Triduum – the wonderful and moving sacramental celebrations of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil – may God grant us all the gift of encountering Jesus Christ as saviour ... in the Eucharist, at the cross and beyond the empty tomb.

Jesus Christ is our deliverer! Jesus Christ is Lord! May his peace fill each of you and those you love in the coming days, and throughout the Easter season.

Your brother in the Lord,

*+Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.*

*Archbishop of Philadelphia*