



Dear friends in Christ,

Alleluia! The Lord is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

Our fasting is ended, our feasting begins. After 40 days of fasting and penance, the Church now commands us to cast aside our mourning veil and penitential attire and assume the festal garment of rebirth. But Easter does not erase the memory of Good Friday.

For many of us, the past two years have felt like an extended Good Friday. But after the long “dark night” of this painful and confusing experience, we now begin to see the bright rays of hope of Easter. The message of Easter is clear: there is victory after defeat, reunion after separation, rejoicing after mourning and life after death.

The Church had already opened her doors since last November after months of shutdown and suspension of the sacraments. But yet, we noticed that many continue to observe a stay-at-home policy for a variety of reasons; some due to medical reasons, others have grown used to online Masses and others have experienced a cooling of fervour and waning of their faith.

As our country has transitioned into the endemic phase, we the priests would also like to make this appeal to all of you, “it’s time to COME HOME!”

For the past two years, certain words and phrases have been bandied around by the authorities and experts and these have become part of our daily vocabulary. But it is important that we do not allow the use of these new terms and concepts to reshape the fundamental tenets of our Catholic faith to the point of being made into new dogmas of faith.

We hope that this clarification will help you to have a better understanding in order to come to a decision to return to Church.

### **1.0 Normal vs abnormal**

We have been told that we would need to adapt to a “new normal”. However, this must never be interpreted as normalising what is inherently abnormal. It is never normal to permanently stay away from the church and to deny ourselves of the sacraments. It is not normal for us to experience the sacraments off-site through live streaming. It is not normal for us to turn our backs on community life purely in the name of social distancing. As much as we should be prudent to take necessary measures for the sake of public health, Catholics should resist the tendency to normalise the abnormal. It’s time to COME HOME and coming home to church is NORMAL!



## 2.0 Essential vs Non-essential

One of the unintended consequences of the initial public health measures was to lump public worship together with non-essential services. It's good to ask the question, "when did religion ever become non-essential?" On the contrary, religion is the most essential service. As our Lord reminds us in his answer to the tempter, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). It's time to COME HOME to what is essential.

## 3.0 Safety vs Salvation

For the past two years, we have adopted many extraordinary measures to ensure the safety of our members. But again, we must never confuse the priority of eternal life over merely preserving a healthy life. Our ultimate goal in life is our salvation, to participate in the eternal life won for us by our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross and made manifest at Easter. As much as it is prudent and also a moral obligation to care for the health of every individual and to avoid endangering the lives of others, we must never forget the purpose of our lives is not just to avoid sickness and death, but rather to gain eternal life. So, it's time to COME HOME for the sake of your soul's salvation!

During this season of Easter, the daily first readings at Mass are taken from the Acts of the Apostles. Acts describe a nascent church, an early Christian community, living in a strange, hostile and dangerous environment. And yet, the story of Acts is not a story of a cowardly and frightened community concerned solely for their own safety but rather one of victory and vibrancy in the face of incredible obstacles, opposition and persecution. Their experience can be a model for us too.

My dear friends, we understand that many of you have grown fearful, many have become despondent about the uncertainties of the future, and some of you who are tempted to give up praying and hoping. But the God who has proven His love for us by dying and rising for us, calls us out of our spiritual tombs today—the tombs of our doubts, the tombs of fear, the tombs of despair, the tombs of the complacency that has settled for mediocrity, the tombs of low expectations for ourselves and for God's loving power in our lives.

If you have been away from church, it's time to COME HOME. The Church is your HOME. It is here, and no where else, where you will hear the voice of the Heavenly Father echoed in the voice of the Prodigal Son's father, when he embraced his long lost son and welcomed him home with these words: "we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:23-24).

Wishing you a blessed Easter! Alleluia! The Lord is Risen! He is risen indeed!

Yours faithfully in Christ,  
Fr Michael Chua, Fr Philip Chua, Fr Bonaventure Rayappan and Bro Jonathan Rao  
Easter Sunday  
17th April 2022  
#HFKCOMEHOM