

The Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

Province of the Episcopal Church in  
Jerusalem and the Middle East



The Right Reverend Sean Semple

Sixth Bishop of the Diocese of  
Cyprus and the Gulf

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*After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning,  
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.  
And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord,  
descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.  
His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow.  
For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men.  
But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid,  
for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified.  
He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said."*

*Matthew 28.1-6*

In St Matthew's account of the resurrection of Jesus a "great earthquake" is described. This might have been an aftershock from the earthquake that occurred at the moment of Jesus's death (Matthew 27.51,54), or that of a separate quake, but it is clear that Matthew wished to convey the "earth-shattering" events of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. His death disrupted the hopes of those who thought that he would redeem Israel (Luke 24.21) and scattered his disciples in disorientation and despair. His resurrection defied all expectation, and drew his followers together in renewed hope and purpose.

The resurrection is the hinge upon which the Christian faith pivots and is the reason for our hope in life—the hope that we cling to when faced with the terror of death, the enslavement of sin, the oppression of injustice, and the malign presence of evil in the world.

Our belief in the resurrection is not just adherence to an article of faith—it has been confirmed through experiences of God's love, restoration, and justice ultimately prevailing in situations that at first appeared hopeless. These victories might take three days or three decades, but as surely as day follows night, God always has the last word.

Like the political and economic earthquakes shaking the world at present, such disruptions can lead to chaos and destruction. But we remember that God too disrupts, in ways that generate greater life, justice, love, and hope.

As our clergy and people ready themselves for services that recall and transport us on the journey with our Lord to the Cross and the Empty Tomb, we give thanks for this spiritually demanding—deeply rewarding time of year. I wish to thank each of you for your dedicated service to Christ in the extraordinary countries and places of this Diocese.

This Easter, in a time of global upheaval, proclaim the resurrection hope of Christ, and hold fast to the angel's first words to the women at the tomb, "Do not be afraid."

With my love and prayers for a Holy Easter,

+Sean