



## HOPE IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING

We cannot ignore suffering. Famine, war, natural disaster and disease have always cast a shadow over human life. Cruelty in its various manifestations is especially destructive. Financial difficulties and relationship problems make daily life difficult for many. The dimensions of suffering's causes vary, but the feeling is always just as unpleasant. Suffering and the desire to overcome it are universal human experiences, the extent of which we are currently well aware of all over the world.

Suffering begs many questions. How long must it be endured? When will suffering end? Why isn't there enough help? Where is God? Regardless of its cause, suffering always tests our hope. Expectations for the future are shrouded in a fog and even completely disappear from view as a seemingly endless anxiety takes hold of us. That's when it seems important to focus on even the smallest sign of hope.

The period of fasting before Easter reveals the Christian faith's perspective on suffering. The things that cast their shadows on life aren't evaded, and we can't avoid discussing them. There's no attempt to explain them away rationally. We look them directly in the eye, for there is always hope. Hope endures right up to the point where suffering is no more.

Holy Week is the culmination of Lent. On Jesus's journey towards Calvary, resentment, anger, fear, despair, and many other oppressive emotions come to the fore. The gloom is at its deepest on Good Friday, as Jesus cries out from the cross: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

Yet the violent death of Jesus is not the end of everything. The message of Easter is that Jesus has risen from the dead, and that death has thus been vanquished. So if even death cannot have the last word, there is hope for those weighed down by suffering. That's why Christendom again celebrates Easter, the great festival of life.

I wish you a blessed and happy Easter!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tapio Luoma".

Tapio Luoma  
Archbishop  
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