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SAN JOSE



Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

As of the writing of this message, I was visiting my mother in Houston as she enters the final phases of her life. I spent two days with her, and although she was not able to respond to me verbally, I recalled with her the various phases of our life together, from her birthing and raising of my siblings and me to seeing us move out of the house and make our own lives, to the joy of spoiling her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, to the decline of her health in her later years.

I then reflected with her on what heaven might be like. The exhilaration of seeing God's glory. The presence of the angels and saints, of our loved ones – my father, who went to his heavenly reward 15 years ago, my grandparents, and her dear friends. My mother lay in her nursing home bed as I sat next to her beside the window. She likes to look out the window at the birds who visit and serenade her from the tree branches outside.

My memory went to another son and mother who sat by a window centuries ago, imagining what the wonders and joys of heaven might be like. St. Monica had prayed tirelessly that her son would find his way in life and discover God's love and mercy; I wondered how many tears my mother shed for her children and grandchildren and how many prayers she offered for us!

As we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ in this Easter season, I wonder if we think about heaven. If we imagine what it might be like. If we make plans for it.

In our modern culture, we plan many things in life. We plan for our children's future, for the development of our careers, for vacations, and for efficient work on a busy day. Do we ever plan for heaven? Does it require planning?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states the following: "This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity - this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed - is called 'heaven.' **Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness**" (1024).

"Supreme, definitive happiness!" What a marvelous thought! The ancient philosopher, Aristotle, noted that happiness was the goal of every human life. We all ultimately desire and long for happiness. Jesus tells us that following him, and living in fellowship with God and neighbor, bring abiding joy and happiness. Yet, in this world, that joy and happiness will always be challenged by our own sins and the sins of the world. And so, as St. Paul says, "we walk by faith" in the journey of life, striving to love as God loves.

In heaven, faith and hope will no longer be necessary, as we will have achieved that which we believed and for which we hoped. Only love will endure in heaven. Love for God, neighbor, and

self. God's love for us! We remember what St. John tells us: "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). Let us start living that way now, in this Easter season: let us live in love. This is how we plan for heaven – by living the kingdom of heaven here on earth through faith, hope, and love.

As the Eucharist opens the window to us to eternal life, may we be fed by God's love for us, by "the Bread come down from heaven," by the Word made flesh, and gain strength for the journey through life, and ultimately to heaven.

Happy Easter!

Bishop Oscar Cantú