

"<<Don't be alarmed>> he said. <<You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.>>" (Mark 16:6a)

On a very early Sunday morning, at first sunrise, after the Shabbat, the women who followed Jesus in his earthly ministry and even beneath the cross go to the grave to observe the customary funeral rites on the body of their Master.

But they find the stone of the tomb rolled, an empty grave and a young man who gives them a message of salvation which should be proclaimed to the disciples: "Jesus was raised from the dead".

But the frightened women decide not to say anything ...

And how could we blame them?

We are facing these months as one of the saddest and darkest moments of our nation and the whole world since the Second World War.

How can we bring a joyful announcement of salvation and rebirth to our fellow citizens, to our sisters and brothers when we are still immersed in the darkness of mourning, suffering, and crisis?

In such a tragic time, wouldn't we be tempted to keep silent for the fear of being fooled or that our words would be considered out of place?!

We too, like those women, find ourselves living a desperate moment in our and the others' lives without having anything in our hands to prove the validity of our affirmations. The empty tomb is not a proof of the resurrection but only a sign, because nobody has seen the resurrection but it is only a testimony of a message which in turn must be announced.

In 1937 Giovanni Miegge wrote: *"Blessed are we, if our faith in Christ is alive enough to assure us that we cannot pronounce the name of Christ (...) and desolately consider death as the last word, the conclusive word of life."*

Then we believers are called to face the challenge that God addressed to humanity.

Recognizing the Living one without continuing to look for Him among the dead is not easy, but this is precisely the challenge of faith as the apostle suggests: *"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."* (Hebrew 11:1)

But how to recognize the signs of the resurrection in a world affected by disease, violence and death?

At some point, we know that this situation of contagion and quarantine will end, and there are those who say that everything will return as it was before and we can go out again to populate the squares of our cities.

I'm not so sure because it won't be possible to wipe out with a clean slate the loss of many lives, the dearest broken human affections, the economic crisis with job difficulties or loss of a job.

The reconstruction and rebirth will be long and tiring as much as the path of faith ...

But then again, I hope that at least a part of what we have been experiencing in recent months is not simply forgotten.

The extreme sacrifices of many who aren't normally considered as heroes, the acts of solidarity between people of different cultures and countries, as well as those between nations who aren't always friends with each other, the small daily sign of affection and friendship, the preciousness of the food that should not be wasted, shouldn't all be forgotten because there is not guarantee that there will be a tomorrow, the beauty of nature with its colors, scents and sounds that must be preserved at all costs if we want to continue enjoying it, the depth of silence...that silence which at times seems hostile to us, but which is instead a friend when it is a silence full of life.

Somehow, the risen life of God in Christ is already at work to heal, reconcile and complete the announced liberation. In fact, with Christ the resurrection is not postponed in latter times, it is instead an ongoing dimension because in us we carry the awaiting signs of the final resurrection which is a total deliverance from all forms of oppression and discrimination, from fear and hatred.

Celebrating Easter, even in the dark times of the Coronavirus, is crossing the door of the future created by God for us, it is opening up to a mission that invests and empowers all believers. Believing in this announcement of life that is Easter is what brings us to witness and mission.
Amen

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