



Easter Message

Rome, 17 April+ 2022

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now and there was no longer any sea ... Then I heard a loud voice that called from the throne saying: *“You see this city? Here God lives among men. He will make his home among them; they shall be his people and he will be their God. His name is God-with-them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes and there will be no more death and no more mourning or sadness because the world of the past has gone”*. (Ap 21, 1-4)

Dear Confreres,

It is with great joy that we address you, to share the Good News that we have heard: He is Risen! *“This is the house where God lives among men”*. Alleluia!

A time of suffering

To speak of Easter, Resurrection, a New Heaven and a New Earth in times of pandemic and war seems a contradiction. Instead of seeing signs of life, we see destruction and death, because wars and disease are signs of Jesus' passion and death that continue in the life of his people. For millions of people, this Easter continues to be an Easter of suffering, conflict, war, displacement, hunger, death and destruction. Looking at this scenario from a human point of view gives us a sense of fear, anguish and loss: a dead-end road. On the other hand, for us missionary disciples, this is not the time to complain, but to see, through the gaze of our faith, the Risen One who does not leave us alone: *“He will dwell with them and they will be his people and he will be the God-with-them, their God. And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes”*. The Risen One is the Crucified One. On his glorious body, there are indelible wounds that have turned into windows of hope. As Pope Francis said: *“... Indifference, self-centredness, division and forgetfulness are not words we want to hear at this time. We want to ban these words forever! They seem to prevail when fear and death overwhelm us, that is when we do not let the Lord Jesus triumph in our hearts and lives. May Christ, who has already defeated death and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, dispel the darkness of our suffering humanity and lead us into the light of his glorious day, a day that knows no end.”* (Easter Urbi et Orbi Message – 12 April 2020).

A time for listening and discernment

The light of the paschal candle that lights our candles is the light of the Risen One that illuminates our actions and our deeds, the fruit of our listening. Listening to the cry of millions of human beings who still live in situations of death; listening to the confreres who walk with us in the footsteps of the mission; listening to the Word and the voice of the Holy Spirit who helps us, through sharing and prayer, to discern the signs of the times that we are experiencing as a society, as an Institute and as a Church. It is in intimacy with the Risen One that we re-make our being Comboni missionary disciples called to live the joy of the Gospel in today's world. We are a mission and through our witness, our ministry, we announce the New Heaven and the New Earth, because *“The former heaven and earth had in fact disappeared and the sea was no longer ... the old things have passed away.”* The voice of hope resounds: Christ is risen! It is the victory of love over the root of evil, a victory that does not “bypass” suffering and death, but passes over them, opening a way in the midst of the abyss, transforming evil into good: the exclusive mark of God's power.

A time to celebrate

“... *and there will be no more death and no more mourning or sadness*”. The certainty that the Risen One is alive among us fills us with joy and reconfirms our mission in building the Kingdom which is life in fullness for all, especially the poorest and most abandoned. That is why we have to celebrate. And we celebrate the victories great and small that occur daily in gestures of solidarity, sharing, reconciliation, fraternity, justice and peace in our religious and parish communities. We celebrate the victory over death that is won by the tenderness of love through the service of people who are like their guardian angel next door, in the midst of wars, pandemics, conflict, violence, etc. We celebrate the XIX General Chapter in this Easter context as an Easter Kairos, a Kairos of the Spirit: *"And He who sat on the throne said: 'Behold, I make all things new'"* (Rev 21: 5).

Happy Easter Everyone!

The General Council.