



Congregazione dei Missionari di N.S. de La Salette
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“He has risen from the dead, and is now going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him” (Mt 28,7)

Dear Confreres,

A heartfelt and fraternal wish for a Happy and Holy Easter to each of you, wherever you are in the world, immersed in the ministry of proclaiming the Good News and full of the light that appeared on 19 September 1846 on the mountain of La Salette. This identity character of our presence in the Church is defined in a simple and clear way by our Constitutions which read:

“By our Baptism we are incorporated into the Church and share in its mission. By our profession of the public vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, we are consecrated in a new way to this mission and we bind ourselves to live in a religious community which is a sign of the Kingdom” (RdV, 3).

Easter: Word and Life

The Easter Proclamation of the Resurrection, which is the triumph of life over death, of mercy over sin, of good over evil, of love over hatred, is carried out by us in two concrete ways, with preaching and with the witness of religious life lived in community. How much we proclaim aloud to others will naturally have to find a sounding board in our daily way of life. Only in this way can our word be credible and therefore easily accepted. Truly, we the Missionaries of La Salette, guided by the charism of reconciliation that is proper to us and encouraged by the message of Mary on the Holy Mountain, are happy and also proud to offer our little contribution to the cause of the Gospel and to the mission that the Church is called by the Master to perform over time.

War time

Easter this year is marked by the unexpected shedding of so much innocent blood and the sacrifice of a large number of victims originating from a "fratricidal" war at the gates of Europe. A war defined by Pope Francis, with courage and in no uncertain terms "repugnant, inhuman and sacrilegious"; truly incomprehensible and difficult to accept especially after the tragic experience of the two world war events of the last century which influenced and even changed the history of the world in a decisive way. With deep conviction, I invite everyone to make their own the great concerns and motivated fears that inhabit the heart of our Pope who is asking insistently and with the simple force of prayer for an end to the fighting by silencing the roar of cannons and blocking the launch of missiles for foster and promote a reasonable and constructive dialogue between the parties.

As I wrote in my letter dated on 5th of March 2022 , the war being fought in Ukraine is also putting a strain on the personal life and mission of our 11 confreres who work in the country. The Congregation is close to them with all the affection and spiritual and moral support due in these moments of trial, uncertainty and fear. Since the beginning of the conflict they have decided not to leave the country, to remain close to the suffering people entrusted to their pastoral care. Their courageous testimony moves us and at the same time makes us proud to have similar brothers in our religious family of La Salette. I sincerely thank the Provinces and communities who have responded with generosity and fraternal spirit to the requests for help from these confreres of ours who work tirelessly, and under the continuous and nerve-wracking threat of bombs, in favor of the weakest and most fragile people, in particular of the women, children, the elderly and the sick present in the parishes they serve and in other places of ministry.

We all hope that this war, which is sowing death everywhere and destroying both civilian and strategic objectives in the country, will end as soon as possible. The trail of horrors and hatred that it will have produced will leave behind it deep and lacerating divisions in families and painful wounds in the social fabric that are not easily healed. Ukraine will be a country to be rebuilt from all points of view: human, political, identity and spiritual.

Tanzania: A new beginning

This Easter of Resurrection also carries within it a sign of hope for our Congregation. In fact, on March 22, 2022, the blessing and official opening of the first formation house in Bukoba (Tanzania) took place by Mgr. Methodius Kilaini, auxiliary bishop of the diocese and in the presence of me and Fr. André Zontek MS, General Treasurer, as well as of the community of Rutete with the first three aspiring missionaries. Also present were some religious, some priests of the diocese and some public administrators of the neighborhood. This celebration takes on a symbolic and relevant value for the history of the La Salette presence in the land of Tanzania. It took place six years after the first missionaries from the Philippines and India arrived in the country. I hope and pray that Mary's missionary invitation addressed to Maximin and Melanie in his Apparition to La Salette: "Come forward, my children, do not be afraid... make it known to all my people". The official formative journey of the young aspirants (six candidates) will begin in August, 2022.

Together with the Church

The synodal journey of the Church has taken off.... and our Congregation together with it. I am sure that each Province is working hard, doing its best, at the local and diocesan level, to be convinced with the spirit of listening and communion, which emanates from this path, with a view to building an "outgoing" Church and Congregation and service as never before of the people of God in today's world. The General Council, for its part, has already sent the fruit of its work to the Union of Major Superiors in Rome which, together with that of the other Congregations, will soon be presented as a contribution to the General Secretariat of the Synod. This commitment must not be lived only according to the moment we live but must gradually become a habitual and stable way of being and acting of the Church as well as of every single religious family in the near future. It is the great dream that animates the mission today of our Pope Francis and which must also become ours.

"To encounter ... to become artisans of dialogue and communion" is the slogan that the General Council proposes to the Congregation this year so as not to easily forget the synodal commitment to which we are all called by Pope Francis. It was also conceived and wanted as a precious help in the first stage of preparation for the next General Chapter which will take place in April 2024.

The verbs and words that make up this slogan express dynamism, commitment and research, sharing and dialogue, passage from “I” to “we” and a positive outlook on the world around us as a reality to be evangelized and served. Furthermore, properly elaborated, they can make the synodal journey more expeditious and fruitful.

Conclusion

On behalf of the General Council, I wish to extend these Easter greetings also to those confreres whose ministry at this moment consists in the daily offering to the Lord of the burden of age and illness as well as to those who are in vocational difficulties, without forgetting the numerous young people present in our formation houses and in particular those who are preparing for Perpetual Profession. With the same intensity my greetings also goes to the dear La Salette Lay people throughout the world and their families as well as to the SNDS who this year celebrate the 150th anniversary of their presence at the sanctuary of La Salette / France and who share with us charismatic roots and apostolic and missionary zeal.

Joyful and Holy Easter of Resurrection to all!

Fraternally yours,

Fr. Silvano Marisa MS
Superior General