



Congregazione dei Missionari di N.S. de La Salette
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Holy Easter 2021

“Christ died for our sins, he was buried and he was raised on the accordance with the scriptures” (1Cor 15, 3-4)

" If they are converted.... " (Our Lady of La Salette)

Dear brothers,

like last year, this year again **Easter greetings** from the General Council and from myself reach you in your communities and in your places of pastoral work, as the coronavirus pandemic shows no signs of calming down. On the contrary, it continues to rage with varying degrees of intensity all over the world, sowing fear and uncertainty about the future, and putting a strain on the health, social and economic systems of our various countries.

In different ways, we all feel involved in this phenomenon which is changing our way of conceiving and seeing the world, society, interpersonal relationships and our own life. We are in fact experiencing a true **“Copernican” revolution** regarding the values around which we are called to build the near future, ours and that of the world, in the hope that it will be better than the present one. From the centrality of doing and efficiency, we are rightly passing to the centrality of the person with his or her rights to be respected and the duties to be implemented.

Consequently, even religious life is not entirely exempt from this ongoing **great change**. Far from the frenetic pace of life that characterized our condition as religious and priests, suddenly limited in our movements and our ministries, we discovered, throughout this year, the importance of interpersonal relationships, made above all of small gestures of welcome and listening to others, of attention and mutual services, of generous gratuity and shared time. We have also experienced, together with the challenge of living the faith in community..., the beauty of the rediscovered taste for personal and community prayer life, accompanied by the effort to "keep up to date" the way of being present to the people of God entrusted to our pastoral care.

I hope that this experience, unwanted but imposed by force and without warning by the adverse circumstances that we know, will be transformed into a **“Kairós”**, in a favorable time of grace for all of us and will help us to pick ourselves up and get back on track with responsibility, determination, enthusiasm and without fear by profoundly renewing our way of living our fidelity to follow the Lord in the light of the message of the weeping Mother of La Salette.

It will be a missed opportunity if, once this "pandemic storm" has passed, things go back to the way they were before in our personal and community religious life and even in our pastoral ministry without leaving any trace of its passage and the stimuli that it fostered. Pope Francis has stated that from this pandemic, one either comes out better or comes out worse..., and in any case never the same as before. **There is no other way**. If this is true for everyone, much more it must be true for us, missionaries of La Salette.

Together with the whole Church, we too will be called to renew our "**religious**" language, which often appears worn out and obsolete, made up of abstract and empty words and therefore unable of communicating with freshness and incisiveness the richness of the Gospel and the joyful witness of our religious life to today's world. It is a challenge that confronts us all personally and from which none of us can easily escape.

We should come out of this unusual and in many ways painful experience renewed and heartened at all levels. This is my wish for each and every one of us.

There is no Easter of Resurrection without the narrow passage of suffering, the cry of abandonment and death experienced on Good Friday. Only in this way does Easter become the celebration par excellence of hope that does not deceive and of the explosion of new life offered to all and inaugurated by the risen Christ.

We all know that the message of **La Salette** is essentially an **Easter message** made up of strong calls to conversion, to personal commitment, to review and renew one's relationship with God and with the Church, but also of promises of a fullness of life enlightened and purified by that dazzling light which emanates from Christ, crucified and glorious at the same time, hanging on the chest of the Beautiful Lady. For this reason, together with St. Paul, we too can strongly and loudly affirm: "The risen Christ is our hope" (1 Cor 15).

The Paschal Mystery, of death and resurrection, of suffering and rebirth, also accompanies this year the two La Salette missions in Africa and the Region of Myanmar.

In **Mozambique** the situation does not seem to have improved from what was reported in the Christmas letter. In fact, it continues to be critical and seems to have gotten out of control of local and national police forces. Recently some news agencies have reported horrific crimes against children in the Cabo Delgado region, which is in the hands of unscrupulous jihadist groups. At the moment, Father Edegard is working in the city of Pemba assisting and as companion to the many refugees who are from the parish of Nangololo and other regions. In close collaboration with the Provinces of Brazil and Angola, the GC plans to restructure the community as soon as possible and to reorganize its pastoral presence in the diocese. The diocese, after the recent transfer of Bishop Luiz to another charge (in Brazil), is headed by an apostolic administrator in the person of Bishop Juliasse, auxiliary bishop of Maputo. While waiting for the new bishop, with whom we will discuss the future of the La Salette presence in the region, we keep this community and its future development, as well as the persecuted people it serves, constantly in our prayers.

In **Tanzania**, we are in the process of purchasing a house and an adjacent piece of land in view of the opening of a first vocation promotion program and a formation house for young people who wish to become part of our religious family. The plan of the GC, supported by the community of Rutete, is to begin the formation program in the current Marian Year or at the latest at the beginning of 2022. I place this project with great confidence under the protection of the Beautiful Lady of La Salette, our Mother and Patroness. At the same time I entrust it to the attention and prayers of the entire Congregation.

On behalf of the Congregation, I would like to express our spiritual closeness and solidarity with our confreres in the young Region of **Myanmar** who are experiencing a moment of great bewilderment and concern for the fate of the democratic process in the country, abruptly interrupted by the recent military coup (February 1). We hope that the state of war established by the military, which caused the understandable popular uprising and unfortunately the death of so many innocent people, will end soon and that justice and respect for democratic rules properly restored will prevail over the hatred and divisions now present in the country. In this context of uncertainty and fear for the near future, the four

new priestly ordinations that took place on March 19, feast of St. Joseph, are a great sign of hope for the country, the Region and the Congregation. We thank the Lord for the gift of their vocation. Enlightened and guided by our charism, they will certainly work to foster paths of reconciliation in the country, which is thirsting for peace and justice, with their words and above all with the witness of their lives.

May this Holy Easter, with its overwhelming load of light and new life, lead us ever more to integrate our existence as human being and as religious into that of the Risen Christ and to allow us to communicate life in fullness through his Spirit!

May the Resurrection of Christ encourage us to give reason always and without fear to this faith and this hope which must animate our life as Christians and religious everywhere and in every situation!

To our elderly or suffering brothers, to those who are immersed in pastoral work, to the young religious, to the novices and to those who are in formation, as well as to the sisters of La Salette and to the many La Salette Laity who, animated by the charism of reconciliation, work with us in the field of evangelization and charity, I address also in the name of the General Council, my best and most Christian wishes for a

Happy and Holy Easter of Resurrection!

Fraternally yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Fr. Silvano Marisa'.

Fr. Silvano Marisa MS
Superior General