



MESSAGE FROM BROTHER GENERAL ANIMATOR

*“Mary Magdalene went to the tomb at dawn,
and saw the stone removed from the tomb.
Then the other disciple also entered; He saw and believed” (Jn 20, 1.8).*

Dear Brothers, members of the Nazarene Fraternities, Aspirants, Educational Communities, Christian Communities, Catechists and friends of the Sa-Fa Family:

I experienced the celebration of the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday last year in a country in Africa. That night we went to the parish and, when we arrived, the church was full and there were many people outside, so we decided to go to a shelter for children and adolescents run by a friendly Congregation. There were few of us who accompanied that group of residents, and lived a simple ceremony, with songs sung by the group of children with great enthusiasm. In that situation I asked myself, what will the resurrection of Jesus mean for these children and adolescents? It is a question that we can also ask ourselves before this year's Easter Festival: What does the resurrection of Christ mean for our lives and for this moment that the world is experiencing?

Sunday morning arrived with a new fresh air for the protagonists of the first Easter in history, despite not having overcome the pain of the days of passion. Mary Magdalene is one of the key characters in the resurrection narrative. This woman dared to leave the house and went to the tomb with other women in a courageous gesture.

When they arrive at the place they see the stone moved and the tomb empty; with this information they return to the group that remained in the house. The news they give is that the tomb has been desecrated and stolen, Jesus is not there.

It is superficial, hasty and incomplete information from the first hour of the morning. Faced with the alarm caused by the news, Peter and John run out and reach the tomb. This time they do not stay outside, but enter, look at what is there, examine the details and the text written by John himself says that *“he saw and believed”* and *“understood that He was going to rise from the dead.”*

Time for an inside look

The Synoptic Gospels complete these scenes by saying that Mary Magdalene stayed outside crying, which means that although there was evident affection, she contemplated the mystery from the outside. We too are left out so many times in the way we understand faith in Jesus. We approach religion in various ways, but we keep our lives separate from the person of Jesus. And so we ask without waiting for the answer, we knock at the door without conviction, we search without allowing ourselves to be searched, we live by keeping our distance or we move in superficiality without giving meaning to life. It is a faith without encounter.

To understand the resurrection it is necessary to reach the interiority. Peter and John looked at the reality before them and took the step to remembering, to interpreting the Scriptures, to the words of Jesus, to the mystery; They entered inside and let themselves be touched. Thus, we will see the new presence of the Risen Lord if we know how to visit the silence that becomes a relationship with God, that allows itself to be found, that feels attracted by the beauty of God's love and allows itself to be regenerated by a greater love.

The characters on Easter morning found the light in silence, like the prophet Elijah who waited for God's voice in thunder or lightning and yet it came in the whisper of a gentle wind (1Ki 19, 3-15). The place where faith and the longing for a new world are born is in the silence of our hearts, in simple gestures, in abasement.

Time for whispers and joy

God's relationship with his people is not a story of power or imposition but of seduction and relationship. Easter morning unfolds in short dialogues that emit some whispers that become key words. They are words that Jesus himself pronounces and that reveal a new reality. The bridge word between what has been experienced and what is to come is "do not fear", it is a word of comfort in the face of suffering that opens to hope. From there, other messages illuminate the new life that the resurrection of Christ brings: "rejoice," "go tell my brothers to go to Galilee and they will see me there," "peace be with you."

The first thing Jesus says to the women is "rejoice." This is not naivety. "*The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and entire lives of those who encounter Jesus. With Jesus Christ joy is always born and reborn*" the Pope reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium*. Joy _ It is the messianic gift par excellence, as Jesus himself promises : "*so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be filled*" (Jn 15:11 and 16:24) . A joy that comes from the relationship with the living Christ and that leads us to feel liberated from our impoverishing tendencies and inner emptiness.

Joy is consolidated in the experience of fraternity, as a human and theological space, when the family, community or group gathers around Christ, is nourished by his Word and his Body and shares life and mission. The Christian is fundamentally happy because joy comes from within. "*Always be joyful in the Lord, I repeat, be joyful*" Phil 4:4.

Time of love and hope

I like to tell that story about a man who brought water from a distant well to his garden to water it every day. On his trips from the well to the garden he complained because the bucket was leaking water and when he arrived it only had half of it. As time went by, he saw that many flowers had grown along the path in all their splendor. That day he realized that the lost water had also been useful. This little story reminds us that, if our heart is full of love and hope, even if we encounter many obstacles along the way, we will be able to give birth to life. There will be water of love and hope for the fertile soil and for the hard path.

Jesus is the hope that goes beyond optimism and that involves a conviction in the power of good, of the triumph of the Kingdom. Hope is both a force that sustains us and makes us move towards the future; Thus hope is the future dreamed of, desired, toward which we advance. Saint Thomas said: "*Hope is the present of our future .*"

In a careful look at our world we see the evil that exists and that causes death, destruction and suffering. The armed conflicts that we experience and the injustices that so many people suffer are always the result of human selfishness and the ambition for power and wealth. It is the contempt for others to achieve unjust ends, whether personal or collective. Faced with this desolation, we wait for the Lord to speak to us, so we can understand this nonsense, but He has already spoken, proclaiming a new Kingdom of love and peace and has placed it in our hands.

That is why there is hope, because Jesus presents us with the alternative way, a world of brothers where brotherhood makes us equal and gives preference to those most in need. The resurrection of Jesus should give us strength to embrace the evangelical ideals of love and brotherhood: "*Go and tell my brothers: 'peace be unto you .*"

The cry of Easter for the world and for each of us is "hope." And it is hope because God himself has sealed his alliance of love with men through the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is not a human-style pact signed by interests that can be broken if other advantages appear. God himself has insisted on walking with man, and the resurrection is the guarantee of this new creation. It's the big bang or starting point of a new man and a new world redeemed. The morning of Easter Sunday brings us fresh air.

Happy Easter.

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