



MESSAGE FROM THE BROTHER GENERAL ANIMATOR

***"Then the other disciple also came in,
he who had come first to the tomb; he saw and believed". (Jn 20: 8)***

Dear Brothers, members of the Nazarene Fraternities, Candidates to Brothers, Educational Communities, Christian Communities, Catechists and Friends of the Sa-Fa Family:

One need only listen to the television news or open the pages of the newspapers to realise that the world continues to nourish and suffer from the same old evils. We could say that the tree that falls makes more noise than the hundred that remain standing, and although this is true, we cannot hide so many situations that shame humanity: war, terrorism, hunger, emigration, illiteracy... However, we Christians say at this time of year, Happy Easter! We speak of joy and happiness, of light and life and we say that there is hope because our reason is the resurrection of Jesus, which we celebrate with great joy for 50 days. So, however bold or naïve, we sing Alleluia! because Christ is risen and life has triumphed.

Death and life have contended in that combat stupendous: The Prince of life, who died, reigns immortal

Jesus, who, being of divine nature, wanted to become an ordinary man, became despised, humiliated and martyred, taking on the human condition with all its consequences. He shared the human even in the extreme situations of pain and death, thus touching the reality of the inevitable destiny of all living people. His disciples and followers thought it was all over when they saw Jesus hanging on a tree. They thought it was the end and, fearing that they too might end in the same way, they locked themselves indoors.

Mary Magdalene's visit to the tomb of Jesus was meant to honour the dead, in keeping with Jewish tradition. When she approached and saw the stone of the tomb moved and the tomb empty, she thought that his body had been stolen. A sorrow added to all the suffering he had endured.

And it is in this situation that everything changes. Mary Magdalene is mobilised and warns of the absence of Jesus' body, prompting the reaction of the disciples who run to check what has happened. The apostle Peter, on seeing the empty tomb, *"the linen cloths spread out, and in a separate place the rolled-up shroud with which they had covered his head"*, remained silent, as if he did not understand. On the contrary, John *"went in, saw and believed"*, three verbs linked together that go from the exterior to the interior, and it is he who opens himself to the newness and gives way to faith in the resurrection.

John at that moment became aware: he *"saw and believed"*. He saw the signs of the resurrection and interpreted the moved tombstone, the empty tomb and the loose linen and shroud with the eyes of faith, and he believed what Jesus had said on several occasions: that he would rise again on the third day! (*Lk 9:22; Lk 24:46; Mk 8:31; Jn 2:19-22 and Mt 12:40*). In the Bible, the number three is associated with fullness and completeness. Therefore, Jesus' resurrection on the third day symbolises victory over sin and death. It gives validity to His message and His saving work, it is the final seal and the guarantee that those who believe in Him will have eternal life.

The empty tomb does not evoke the end or the absence of Jesus, but the new reality that is life. And so the meaning of death –suffering, anguish, helplessness and loss– becomes joy, hope and life.

Speak, Mary, declaring what you saw, wayfaring

It often happens to us, as it did to Mary Magdalene and the disciples in the first moments, that the darkness of the concrete problems leads us to think that there is no way out, that there is no hope. This happens to us when we only rely on our own strength and our own way of seeing things. Personal limits and the blindness of the ego put us in a closed circle where the only reference is myself, and we are unable to go further. It is like when we are in the sea and we put our head under the water where we can only see a few metres in a confused way. The result is paralysis in the absence of perspective. On the

contrary, if we take our head out of the water, we are able to see the sea with its infinite horizon and all its grandeur and beauty.

This is John's experience. He was able to see the signs of the new presence of Jesus alive and present. Looking deeply and trusting the words of Jesus led John to believe. We too can have this experience of the Risen One. It will make us see with the eyes of faith the signs of hope that are around us. The signs of the times are not only signs of death, they contain many glimmers of light that can make us see the best for the future and can guide our way to fulfilment. *"Life is a great adventure towards the light"*, said Paul Claudel.

We can ask ourselves: Are we able to see the signs of life and hope in our family, in the Sa-Fa Family, in the Church or in the world?

The hopeful gaze on suffering, sadness or death introduces us to the light of the risen Christ who opens us to the fullness of joy and life. The Sequence sung on Easter Day before the Gospel recognises this change in Mary Magdalene's gaze: *"Speak, Mary, declaring What you saw, wayfaring. The tomb of Christ, who is living, the glory of Jesus' resurrection; Bright angels attesting, The shroud and napkin resting. Yes, Christ my hope is arisen"*.

Christ indeed from death is risen, our new life obtaining. Have mercy, victor King, ever reigning!

The first announcement of the disciples is that Christ is risen and alive. The human being reaches his highest vocation if he participates in this life of Christ. With every fibre of our existence, we yearn for life in its fullness, and we do not seek this impulse unconsciously, but shape it with what we consider most valuable for our fulfilment and happiness. The vital energy in each of us generates desires, ideas and aspirations. There are always expectations of something better that opens us to transcendence and makes us aspire to the good and the good.

This is where we meet hope, which takes us by the hand, leads us and encourages us. Thus hope is not a passive acceptance of reality with what is there, but rather an inspiration to value and to bet on the greater good.

In this climate of positivity, there will also be disappointment, failure, disillusionment and even evil in its worst versions, but the resurrection of Christ has taken root in humanity, and even if the shoots are cut off, new ones will always spring up. God's plan is the fullness of existence and Christ's resurrection shows that life lived in love, solidarity and service is a meaningful life. Christ restored in his resurrection the original state of human life.

The Risen One showed us the way and accompanies us. The new life that Christ gives us calls us to resist and oppose unjust systems that deny life and deprive us of life, because the God of love is on the side of justice and peace in the world. Our contribution is to recreate at every moment that which does not conform to God's plan and to favour the values and ways that lead to human brotherhood in its fullest version.

We can ask ourselves: Do we commit ourselves to this dynamic of growth in God's project? Do we accept the effort and sacrifice involved in standing for peace, justice and love?

In this Jubilee Year 2025 we have the opportunity to renew ourselves in the light of the life of Christ who is triumph. In my letter sent to the Sa-Fa Family on the occasion of the presentation of the Jubilee *"pilgrims of hope"* I suggested some concrete gestures such as: going on pilgrimage to a Holy Door, supporting the gesture of solidarity of the construction of a school in Kupang and committing ourselves to the poor and to integral ecology. May living the Easter and Jubilee season lead us to give more hope to our lives.

Best wishes for joy and peace, the fruits of Easter, for the whole Sa-Fa Family, Happy Easter 2025!

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General Animator