

Easter 2023

“The first day of the week...”
(Jn. 20.1).



Dear Confreres,

We send you our greetings in the Risen Christ!

Chapter 20 of John’s Gospel, in recounting the experience of Easter morning, invites us to contemplate the journey of faith of three protagonists: Mary of Magdala, Peter and the beloved disciple. Their itinerary of faith is also an itinerary of seeing: one passes from stopping in front of the evidence of an empty tomb (Mary) to a more attentive look at details (Peter), up to observation accompanied by the memory involving the mind and heart (the other disciple).

These are three gazes that open the heart of the community and make it the protagonist in writing “another ‘story’”, because they have become aware that the resurrection is understood to the extent that one believes the Word of the Gospel, and places love as the reason for one’s existence, so as to overcome moments of pain, distrust, discouragement and, above all, moments of “no hope”.

“Where there is love, there is a gaze”. Quoting this phrase from Riccardo di San Vittore, Bernardo Francesco Maria Gianni, abbot of San Miniato al Monte, during a course

of Spiritual Exercises which he preached to the Pope and the Roman Curia, recalled the need to recognise “the traces and clues that the Lord never tires of leaving us in his passage through this history of ours, in this life of ours”. It is in that love that we must read Jesus’ gaze on all those he met. This is a perspective that today introduces in us “a paschal dynamic” that makes us aware that “the historical moment is serious”, because “the universal breath of fraternity appears to be very much weakened”, while “the strength of fraternity is precisely the new frontier of Christianity”.

The itinerary of faith experienced by the primitive community on Easter morning is not only a beautiful testimony but also – and above all – an invitation to us to know how to pause in front of today’s events, people and confreres. Our Founder, St. Daniel Comboni, knew how to “pause” before the events of his time, trying to imitate Christ, who could “see the poor and share their lot, comfort the unhappy, heal the sick and restore life to the dead; call back the wayward and forgive the repentant; while dying on the Cross, pray for his own crucifiers; and, having risen in glory, send the apostles to preach salvation to the whole world” (cf. *Writings*, 3223).

People who have eyes that “*know how to look*” and are willing to “*waste time*” for others manage to create spaces for relationships and become themselves a gift for others with a view to mutual healing.

Relationships, gift and healing, lived from the perspective of *love-gift* – with different rhythms and sensitivities, as happened “*on that first day early in the morning*” – allow us to transform our faith into *courageous hope*, and to redeem history and the dignity of so many brothers and sisters on whom today’s societies have placed – and continue to place – “*a large stone*”, because they are hostages of selfish interests, contempt and indifference.

Courage and hope were the attitudes repeatedly recalled during our meeting with the circumscription superiors which ended on 19th March. We are fully aware of the situations – often tiring and demanding – in which we live and which could lead us to live the life of the Institute as a commemorative event and, therefore, only to be remembered. Instead, we must have the courage to reactivate *a human and fraternal circuit*, which allows us to give a new acceleration to the work of evangelization that we are carrying out in the different realities in which we live, ever more convinced that “*a renewed announcement offers believers – even to the lukewarm or non-practising – a new joy in the faith and an evangelizing fruitfulness. In reality, its center and essence is always the same: the God who manifested his immense love in Christ who died and rose again. He makes his faithful ever new and, although they are old, they regain strength, put on wings like eagles, run and do not grow weary, walk and never tire (Is 40:31)*” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 11).

We extend special good wishes to our elderly and sick confreres, to the populations recently affected by earthquakes in Turkey, Syria and tremendous environmental calamities in Malawi, parts of Mozambique and in Ecuador, and to all the people who suffer the horrors of war in different parts of the world.

May the Risen One support all of us with his grace and our missionary commitment, so that, moved by the strength of the Spirit, we may continue to be fruitful operators of justice, peace and fraternity for the humanity entrusted to us.

Happy Easter!

The General Council