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The Joy of Easter



“This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad” (Ps 118.24). The Easter experience leads us to experience true joy, a joy that invites us to praise and thank the Lord *“because his mercy is eternal”*, because life has conquered death, because light has shone through the darkness.

This joy fills us with hope, because God is on our side. The texts that the liturgy gives us during this season are beautiful, they reveal a God walking with us and who says: do not be afraid, get rid of sadness and clothe yourself with my joy, overcome disappointment and fill yourself with hope. The joy of knowing that we are risen with Christ helps us, to overcome the fears we can feel when faced with the unknown and what is uncertain, to place ourselves in the newness that God offers us.

In the process we are experiencing as a Congregation, each and every one of us are invited to experience this journey as a paschal experience. It is a new path in which some things have to change: presences, apostolates, ways of organizing ourselves to which we have not been accustomed, and this will not be without pain, without sacrifice... It is a process that needs to be experienced with the conviction that it will give new life and cause us to look for it and to choose it every day. It invites us to look at life and events from the intensity of God; it invites us to look with the eyes and heart of the Risen Lord.

Carlos Osoro, archbishop of Madrid, in his book *“The Church that I love”*, invites us to be in *“God's country”*, knowing that we do not own any *“territory”*. During the Council of the Congregation in Hawaii 2016, we heard it said at some point, *“we are now losing the independence that we worked hard to attain”*.

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How different would our experience be if we were really in *“God's country”*, we would be able to let go and to look more comprehensively. Carlos Osorio says: *“Only the man who sits in the land of another, is capable of constantly seeing what the owner wants. That man behaves as the owner would like. He is able to plant seeds and plants on the land that the owner*

desires. The paschal newness also urges us to plant the things that God desires... It is then we have the opportunity to experience the joy of Christ, the joy of Easter. It is then we discover that life is worth living to the degree that we understand it from God's point of view, and as we understand that everything that exists is of God, and we have to respond to the plans that God has since the beginning of time. From this depth comes the need and urgency to invite men and women to live according to God's plan, and to realize that the place where they walk, that the land they inhabit, is of God".

If we are aware of this reality, it will not cost us so much to break boundaries and belong to the "land of God", knowing that only He is the owner, who sows what he wants and where he wants, and we are called to care for and to cultivate this vineyard without taking possession of it. We are invited to understand life in a different and new way. The life of the risen Christ was not the same as before, sometimes it was difficult to even recognize him. Let us invite each other, to experience this "new configuration of the Congregation", from the Paschal experience of the Lord, from his resurrection, where everything has a different meaning, one that is renewed and the bearer of new life.

The certainty of the Resurrection of Life that does not end, encourages us on the way, gives security in insecurity, illuminates the darkness, gives courage in fear, is strength in weakness and causes profound joy; not a superficial and fleeting joy, but a deep joy that comes from the cross, the fruit of love of God which was given to us by his Spirit: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace ..." (Gal 5:22).

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As Pope Francis says "Let this experience recorded in the Gospel be printed in our hearts and shine through our lives. Let the joyous wonder of Easter Sunday radiate in thoughts, ways of looking, attitudes, gestures and in words ... But this is not make-up! It comes from within, from a heart immersed in the source of this joy, like Mary Magdalene, weeping over the loss of her Lord and could not believe what she saw on seeing the risen Lord".

Let the "Easter Alleluia" be engraved deeply in us, so that it is not just a word that we repeat in prayer every day, but the expression of our very life. Let us find the risen Jesus, let us recreate the joy of Easter. To discover this joy we need to be more contemplative, to discover in life and in ourselves, the presence of a God who chooses the small and the fragile, embodied in our reality. To experience the joy of Easter, is to love like Jesus, giving life, even at a cost; It is to serve with the same feelings. "Have among yourselves the same attitudes that Christ had..." (Phil 2,5). Feelings of love, service, forgiveness that make us feel that we are "women of God".

At this point of my life, do I experience the joy of resurrection?

It would be good to ask, at this point in my life, do I experience the joy of the resurrection? Have I some concerns, doubts, sadness, fear, hurts...? What kind of teaching is Jesus using me to help me to experience the joy of Easter? For the first Christian community, the Paschal experience was one of boundless joy, "joy that no one can take away"; it is not the result of an illusion or subjectivism, but it is the reflection and experience of truly having the Lord Jesus among them being true to his promise: "I will be with you always until the end of the world" (Mt 28:20). Joy is not only for us, it is to be transmitted and shared with others, especially those who suffer most. Joy is to be given. Jesus sends us as he did His disciples to proclaim the Good News, the joy of the Gospel.

These words of Benedict XVI can help us understand and deepen the beauty, grandeur and wealth of this beautiful Easter season: *“Today, too, the Risen One comes into our homes and into our hearts, but sometimes the doors are closed. He comes in, giving joy and peace, life and hope, gifts we need for our human and spiritual rebirth. Only he can move back those tombstones that people often put on their own feelings, their own relationships, their own behaviours; stones that guarantee death: divisions, feuds, grudges, jealousies, distrust, and indifference. Only he, the living One, can give meaning to life and help those who are tired and sad, mistrusting and without hope to begin their journey again. This is what the two disciples experienced on Easter morning on their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35). They were speaking about Jesus, but their “faces were sad,” they expressed their disillusioned hopes, their uncertainty and melancholy. They had left their village to follow Jesus with their friends, and they had discovered a new reality, in which forgiveness and love were not just words, but concretely touched life. Jesus of Nazareth had made all things new, he had transformed his life. But now he was dead and it seemed that everything was over”.*

This experience of the disciples invites us to reflect on the meaning of Easter for us. Let us meet the risen Jesus. He, living and true, is always present in our midst; he walks with us to guide our lives, to open our eyes. We trust in the Risen One, who has the power to give life, to renew us as children of God, capable of believing and loving. Faith in Him transforms our lives: it frees us from fear, gives a firm hope, and gives full meaning to it all.

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Mary is called “cause of our joy” because she has given us Jesus, she leads us into the joy of the risen Christ that no one can take from us, and she accompanies us in this Easter season with her maternal love.