



Dear Sisters,

We are still in the Easter season which marks our lives and gives meaning to everything we do. If Jesus Christ is not risen, our faith is in vain, says St. Paul (1 Cor 15:14). It is a time of joy and celebration that invites us, every year, to celebrate with joy our faith in the Risen One, ever present in our human history.

I am reminded of how we celebrated Easter two years ago, when the whole world was confined, the streets deserted, and health centres collapsed. We experienced Easter in the pandemic, with all that it meant, spending many months in fear, pain, and death. We had accompanied Pope Francis praying alone in St Peter's Square in a suggestive gesture of unity and communion, encouraging the whole world at a difficult and disconcerting moment in its history. And there was hope. Verses full of the future were circulated, words that spoke of new and better times, and we recognised, and saluted the heroism of the medical personnel, of the "essential" workers, and of so many who helped the weakest. Who does not have a story to tell? About the attentive nurse who did not let her patients lack a helping hand as they left this world, or the kind young man who did the shopping for his elderly neighbour... At a time of such turmoil, the solidarity of so many gave us hope, confidence for the future.

Two years later, we are experiencing Easter with the echoes of a war in Europe. A war which, unlike the other wars on the planet, carries with it the ongoing threat of a third world war. And which, without escalating that far, already has economic consequences for the whole world, and will continue to do so for perhaps how long. The confidence that humanity had learned the value of peace has been shattered, and the news of bombings, victims, refugees, and destruction, which the

media repeat to us more than we would like, make us uneasy, uncertain, insecure, sad... This is a hard time, no doubt!

But every time has its own unsung heroes... Even now, amid the pain, we are learning about the solidarity of those who take in refugees, or distribute food and help families, women and children to flee. People who allow themselves to be touched by human suffering and are capable of generous gestures, even at the risk of their lives.

As if we have been needing it, in this month's INFO we offer you reflections and experiences on what is nowadays called "Volunteering", a current expression of solidarity, which is multiplying strongly in recent years. It is the same social action, selfless service, help to the most neglected, which has always existed in very different contexts, but perhaps more institutionalised, with more structure, better organisation and more widespread.

It responds to the yearning for change that many people have and the conviction of being able to contribute with their actions to the transformation of the lives of specific people. Actions that have no remuneration, no creed, no political colour; that are carried out simply out of love for humanity.

We know the phrase that St. Paul puts on the lips of Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). The volunteers that we will meet in the following pages bear ample witness to this, and help us to verify, once again, these Seeds of the Word, which are scattered all over the world.

Affectionately.