



Prot. N. 0131/2020

Madrid, April 5, 2020

Des-pa-ci-to (Slow-ly)

Easter letter in a time of pandemic

Dear confreres,

Beginning Holy Week on the way toward Easter we send you cordial greetings. We do this amid the context of the pandemic that afflicts our world and reminds us that we are all in the same boat: one that has surprised us and affects us all. In a special way we send greetings to our confreres, friends, family and collaborators who are suffering the most, with all our love and prayer.

We feel vulnerable like never before. Usual evils such as unending famines, the drama of refugees, daily injustices of all kinds, open conflicts in so many places, the continued aggression against our planet and so many other inhumane situations have not brought forth such a worldwide reaction. Perhaps it is because this time we have been threatened closely, and personally: *“my life” is in danger*. The global reaction has been unheard of, with confinement, cessation of activities, previously "essential" occupations being put aside, and agendas and schedules blown up.

Time, however, has not stopped. We knew that the days of Holy Week and Easter were about to arrive. We expected them, but we did not expect to experience them this way. We have contacted communities in different places and keep in communication with numerous confreres. Many of them are rediscovering the gift of community with times for dialogue, prayer and leisure that have not been so common. Some are not finding it easy to be together and confined for so long. The days seem lost and unproductive, *“With all that needs to be done! With all that is lacking!”* Others, despite the quarantines, prefer “to be out” through the media and social networks rather than “staying at home”.

In any case, most of us have been unable to live this time as we had planned. It seems that this year these holy days have taken the reins and want to be in control. They want us to take our time, without haste. Rather than us “making” Holy Week and Easter, it wants us to slow down to “create” something new in us. It does not want to be subjected to our organizational stress

so typical of these dates. What do these days have planned for us? What are these plans? Possibly they want us to focus our attention on the way in which Jesus took care of and managed to save his life, which was threatened so many times, including from his very beginning (cf. Mt 1,19; 2,13).

Jesus, in fact, took life very seriously; He teaches us that yes, life is indeed important, the most important thing we have! It's time to take care of it with all our heart. That is why he valued and loved his, but without selfish narcissism. He loved life's treasure which he had found: the life of the Father and the way to be life for all (cf. Jn 17:21). He did everything humanly possible to preserve and defend life! How? Offering it to the Father, giving it to those who opposed him, giving it to everyone.

From what we are dealing with at this time, in some way we can say that Jesus, born of a woman, made his life a long and rigorous quarantine. He did not leave the confines of this world prematurely or allow himself to be seduced by another therapy that was not the will of the Father, Lord and giver of life. He accepted many limits and, as much as they insisted, he did not try to exceed them (cf. Mk 3.31; 8.32; Lk 4.1-13; 9.33.54; 22.49.63-65; 23.8.39; Jn 6, 15; etc.). If he had done that, he would have lost his life.

This time is still of God. Let us take advantage of it, slowly, with creativity: to continue contemplating how to save life in the manner of Jesus; to delve into the Paschal mystery; to recreate fraternal life in community; to help people live these holy days at their own pace, celebrating the passage of God through their homes and humbly accepting that people do not depend on us and our messages to find meaning in these days. Let us take the opportunity to make a fruitful silence that allows us to later share what we are discovering. Let us take advantage and empathize closely with those whose lives are habitually in danger and commit ourselves more to them. Let us take the opportunity to rethink our way of life and consumption, devising solidarity and concrete responses to social and economic situations that will hit our environment even harder once the pandemic has been overcome.

Let us not stop welcoming these days in faith and hope, living in charity with all those closest to us, while continuing praying confidently for the world, our common home. These are times that do not escape the hand or the Heart of God. Everything that is happening calls us to be more human, sensitive and supportive. Let us thank the testimony of so many daily gestures multiplied by people everywhere, including our confreres, who bring affection and comfort to those who are having the worst time. Let us worry and occupy ourselves more with life, all life! When we do so, we are witnesses to Easter, the empty tomb and the morning of Resurrection.

In Corde Iesu,

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Superior General
and Council