

#### "HOLY EASTER 2023"



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# Holy Easter!

Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in; he saw and he believed.

(Jn 20:8)

Let us celebrate together the immense joy of Easter!

Jesus' tomb is empty!

Christ is risen! Alleluia

The Gospel tells us how the disciple ran to the tomb, entered, saw and believed, and was able to interpret by faith that the empty tomb, the linen cloths and the rolled-up shroud, were signs of God's passing, signs of new life; his love enabled him to discover in the small details things that others could not see.

And so, in astonishment and joy, he realised that the Master was 'Alive'.



Let us ask the Lord that His Life may renew our lives, that His love may guide us day after day, that He may fill us with His light and peace.

Dear lay people, witnesses of His Resurrection in the world, let us fervently proclaim to everyone the happiness of believing in Him!

**HOLY EASTER!** 

Rosanna Imamura, International President-Coordinator, ALC

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Holy Easter 2023

# IT IS THE LORD'S PASSOVER!

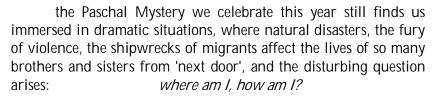
It is the power of Love that does not die

It is the energy of the new Life of the risen world

It is the mission that bears witness to the power of God's love

It is our prayer of peace and hope for those who are immersed in the "icy wind of war"

#### Dear All,



Once again, I choose to pray, to anchor myself to trust in God without losing the strength of hope, repeating to myself, as in a litany, the words of St. Paul: "Nothing therefore can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked... These are the trails through which we triumph, by the power of him who loved us". (Rm 8,35-37)

With Jesus, the **Risen** Lord, no night is endless and even in the thickest darkness the morning star always shines. May the Lord, on this night, give us different eyes to overcome, with courage, every fear and pain.

With determination, let us entrust ourselves to the **Mother of Christ**: She, who accompanied her Son on the path to Calvary, who remained beneath the Cross at the hour of his death, who encouraged the Church in its beginning so that it might bear living witness to him, may She guide the hearts of all to the light that bursts forth from Christ's Resurrection, the definitive victory of the Greatest Love.

#### Easter greetings in the Risen Lord!

Sr. Melissa

Sr. Sandra

Sr. Mariana

Sr. Josemary

Sr. Albertina





### The Lord is truly risen and has overcome darkness and death!

The celebration of Easter this year takes on a special significance for us in the Canossian Family as we approach the 250th anniversary of the birth of our Foundress.

As you know the chosen theme is:

#### Magdalene of Canossa 250 years: "A gift of love and freedom!"

Magdalene, despite the suffering she had in childhood due to the loss of her parents, she could enjoy her life, given the status of the noble family to which she belonged; instead, she did not shut herself off in small gratifications.

She was only 18 when she had her contemplative experience among the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Conegliano (TV) and "I thought I was entering Heaven itself. However... during the three days I spent there, I felt unceasingly repeated within myself, that in such a place I would no doubt sanctify myself, but I would never be in a position to prevent sin nor to work for the salvation of souls" (Memoirs 1,7). Jesus had not only drawn her to himself but had kindled in her a great love for others.

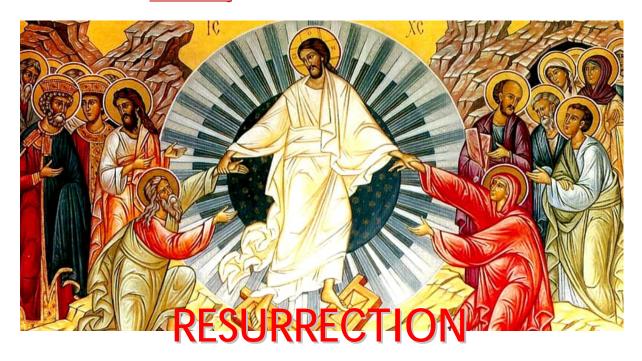
The contemplation of the Crucified One seen as the ultimate expression of self-giving out of love, a "most generous love", ignited life in her, provoked the passion of charity that became the gift of self in caring for the sick, educating the little ones, catechising and protecting the last and defenceless.

A life, Magdalene's, given, 'consumed' like Jesus. Again in her Memoirs at the age of 50 (October 1824) she writes. "As I opened a book which spoke of the life of total consummation which the soul must lead taking the example of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I experienced a strong interior compulsion to practice it ... I had a mental vision of Jesus Crucified ... and I was stirred to consume myself for Him." (Memoirs XV, 1)

Christ was not only risen alive in Magdalene, but by her life, her self-giving and her work she made Him alive and present for so many people. It is Easter for us today if we also ignite life in others. Pope Francis in his homily at the Easter Vigil 2022 said: "Let us make Jesus, the Living One, rise again from all those tombs in which we have sealed him. Let us set him free from the narrow cells in which we have so often imprisoned him. Let us awaken from our peaceful slumber and let him disturb and inconvenience us. Let us bring him into our everyday lives: through gestures of peace in these days marked by the horrors of war, through acts of reconciliation amid broken relationships, acts of compassion towards those in need, acts of justice amid situations of inequality and of truth in the midst of lies. And above all, through works of love and fraternity. "

## Happy Easter Wishes to You All.

Fr. Carlo Bittante, Superior General, fdc.



Journeying towards Easter shining a spotlight. This is what happens every year in our Church during Lent, in those forty days leading up to Easter: on the altar a long white and purple cloth seems to embrace, to unite heaven and earth.

On the cloth only a large cross and Jesus crucified, illuminated by the light of a spotlight. Everything leads there, everything points to this. The rest remains almost in the shadows, obscured by the power and weakness of a crucified one, a scandal and mystery.

You only need to remain in silence and look, contemplate, let yourself be 'invaded' by that light, let yourself be looked at by the Crucified One, and the first gleams of Easter morning would already appear.

That beautiful morning when a unbelievable proclamation resounded: "Why do you seek among the dead the one who lives? He is not here; he is risen and goes before you into Galilee."

If Jesus had not risen, our faith would be in vain. If Jesus had remained in the darkness of the tomb,

Christianity would no longer have any meaning. The resurrection is the central, nodal point of our entire Christian life, of our entire redeemed life. It is difficult to accept the resurrection. There are many honest men who have accepted everything about Jesus: the law, moral commitment... But not the resurrection. Gaetano Salvemini writes: "I stopped, as far as Christianity is concerned, at Good Friday. I did not go beyond that. I stopped at Calvary. I accepted the great human message of Jesus, but I did not go beyond that. The resurrection, no. I could not get as far as the tomb."

"Yet it is barely twenty metres distant. A very short distance. But it is the longest for those who have to make a journey of faith. Let us ask the Lord that we may truly abandon ourselves to Him and, above all, that we may be inebriated with the rays of the light of the resurrection ".(Tonino Bello)

But how can the Resurrection exist? Don't ask me, it is unthinkable and it is very difficult to say these things and at the same time retain our common sense: but the whole Gospel dissolves without the Resurrection.

It seems that many Christians have stopped at Good Friday, they seem insensitive to the resurrection.

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But it's... a death that is actually life... a defeat that is victory... a failure that is salvation.

But to see, to glimpse all this, one must know how to look with God's eyes, with the eyes of love, with the eyes of faith. Only love can see further, only love can believe in the resurrection. Only love can make one say: this is not the end.

Love succeeds in welcoming the gift of Easter, the gift of the Risen One. It is love that is the undisputed protagonist of Easter morning. That love that knows how to rediscover the steps of life, the light of life, the strength of life. And everything is transfigured.

Even the thick blanket of the impossible can be 'pierced' by those who live of the resurrection. Every day and in every situation of pain, of loneliness, of poverty, of injustice, of bewilderment, we can, we must give life to gestures of resurrection, which can restore hope, repair injustice, certain that "There are no situations in which love still does not have something to say.

It is the Easter gift of the Risen Crucified One.

This is my wish: that my life, our life, may not give the impression of having remained motionless and petrified on Good Friday, but sets out towards the garden of the Risen Lord. And in this garden may each of us feel called by name, our own name, by the Risen Lord.

May the risen Jesus be our daily travelling companion. Even if at times, like Mary Magdalene and the disciples of Emmaus, it may happen that we do not recognise Him. He walks nevertheless and always with us, rejoices and suffers with us, for us....

Remembering the resurrection rekindles hope and sets us on our way. It is precisely this that is demanded of Christians: to make hope visible and concrete for all.

"To celebrate Easter means being born anew each day.

To celebrate Easter means fearing less and hoping more.

To celebrate Easter means throwing into the waste paper basket

our hazy glasses, the thoughts drowned in mourning.

To celebrate Easter means shaking off the dust of tiredness, of boredom.

To celebrate Easter does not mean embalming Christ.

To celebrate Easter means spreading life, joy, peace.

To celebrate Easter means contributing to the resurrection of the world.

Help us, Lord, to carry your resurrection

into the world and within us.

Give us the strength to shatter all the tombs in which arrogance, injustice, wealth, selfishness, sin, loneliness, sickness, betrayal, misery, and indifference

have walled up living men.

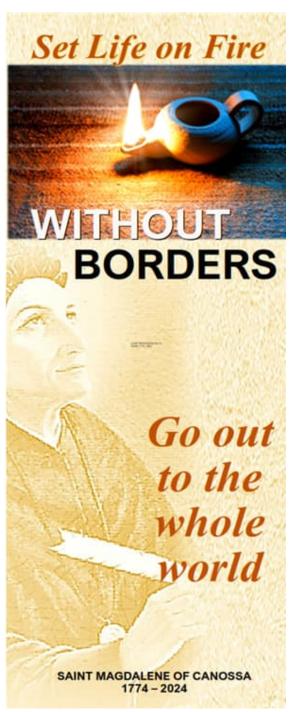
And put great hope into our hearts".

(Mgr. Tonino Bello)



PREFACE by Roberto Italo Zanini to the book

# "Magdalene of Canossa: charity is a fire everything seeks to embrace"



She loved the Crucified One, because Christ on the cross is "the one great model of reference". She loved Our Lady of Sorrows, because through direct experience she was able to "understand the sufferings, the needs, the frailties of everyone." She loved charity, starting with that directed towards those most in need or closest to you, the only way to realistically share the love God pours out on us.

When one looks at the lives of saints, one wonders where the novelty lies. Magdalene of Canossa lived at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. For us who, two centuries later, live at the turn of the millennium, what can she still say to us?

It is even easy to summarise an entire life by points, trivialising it. Magdalene was noble and rich. Magdalene wanted to pursue religious life at all costs. Magdalene wished to devote herself exclusively to the poor, but until a mature age she remained with her family, looking after, like many women, the elderly and grandchildren. Magdalene struggled with the many adversities of her time... Magdalene founded a religious congregation.

Certainly, Magdalene was all of this. But it did not seem enough to make her a woman to be remembered two centuries later, with all the civilisation and barbarism, faith and agnosticism, poverty and progress that had passed through the streets of our cities and countryside, in the hearts of our people. It was certainly not enough to drive an enlightened Pope, so steeped in modernity as John

Paul II, to canonise her on the threshold of the Third Millennium. Only a few years before Bakhita, the Sudanese slave, who died as an Italian in the middle of the 20th century, whose good fortune, for her, for

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Africa and for the whole of Christianity, was to have met, in the last years of the 19th century, the Sisters of the Congregation founded by Magdalene and that same Crucifix, capable of speaking as much to reason as to the conscience of each person.

And here we come to an important point, one might say to the first sign of modernity, paradoxically the most important. If the life of Magdalene takes place at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Bakhita's life takes place between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and just as the life of us readers born in the twentieth century, is destined to be fulfilled in the first century of the new millennium.

History, like life, is made up of things that repeat themselves. The social, economic, political and religious hardships that marked the last two centuries are, in many ways, similar to the present moment in history.

Today, as then, there is a great and exclusive hope in progress and reason. There is a crisis of faith, a crisis of the family, the disbandment of youth and consciences, the intellectual and social isolation of the Church, the inability of politics to give us concrete answers. There are multiple and threatening winds of war. There are new and old poverties growing exponentially. There is a context of social relations that is dissolving and degrading without another, solid, one on the horizon.

So when you start to look into the story of Magdalene of Canossa, fully intent on leaving a positive sign of her passage on this earth, you cannot fail to be struck by so much actuality. Magdalene is a modern woman. She lives the inner trials of the modern woman to the full. She searches for her path and succeeds in pursuing it against all odds. Beyond wealth and gender, Magdalene is the essence of modernity as the meaning of this word was born and developed in the West: Magdalene desires something and uses her abilities to obtain it.

A woman who in some ways also mirrors the youth of today. Her youth was full of uncertainties, exaltation and profound discouragement. She tried for years to make herself independent from her family, but sometimes her relatives did not give her space, sometimes she did not have the strength, and sometimes she made mistakes that repeatedly forced her to start from the beginning.

She was also modern in her intuitions regarding social commitment to the poor, single women, the sick, the abandoned. Commitment as a laywoman, even before being a religious, convinced that women are the true leaven in the human, social and moral growth of the community in which they live. Convinced that, and in this the entire novelty of the Christian commitment made by the West is contained, society can be changed from within even through the commitment of just one person. Progress is in human hands, just as degradation and barbarism are.

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Magdalene learns this at the foot of the cross, at Mary's side, and has a clear sense that it can be taught to others. Indeed, it must be taught if the human community is to persist on the path of progress.

The importance of school and education became a cornerstone of Magdalene's religious initiative. And school and education are perhaps the greatest challenge of this century. The most important and the most forgotten, the gravest of the sins of omission in our time. An authentic mission land.

On one hand, there is the damage produced in young people by a bad school, by the absence of family: incapable of educating and, above all, incapable of merging, as Magdalene wanted, morality and knowledge. On the other hand, there are new chasms of ignorance and new absences to fill, new cultural challenges to respond to, new ideas to launch and others to oppose, new progress to propose. Magdalene, at the foot of the cross, at Mary's side, is there praying and questioning us.



Magdalene of Canossa 250 years: a gift of love and freedom

# THE RED CIRCLE OF HOPE

Tf I had a one-room shop I would sell you know what? Hope.

(Gianni Rodari)

In these difficult times, where fears, anger, emergencies, extinguished dreams and broken paths surface, where it seems that, as Bernanos wrote, even God has made himself a shadow, I stubbornly and tirelessly try to sow hope in those I meet, because I am overwhelmingly convinced that everything that is done in the world is built from hope.

It is hope that changes the face of the world, the face and heart of men. And it is wonderful every time to see eyes that are alive again for having once again taken up and tasted hope, even if it is soaked in tears, whatever 'storm' one has had to go through and face.

Hope is both humble and extraordinarily powerful. And it always surprises because it is that inexhaustible resource that allows you not to give up when everyone else gives up, to invent and find new paths, to get back up again and again, like a child learning to walk... Hope is creative. Hope is bold, hope is disorienting, hope transfigures the landscape of life.....

THE RAVEN OF ELIJAH, THE ORIGIN OF HOPE: Christianity is not a generic and banal optimism in the face of problems, but it is the strength that always puts you back on the road where the impossible becomes possible. A strength that comes to you from silence, from prayer, from the Word, from the Eucharist, and that all men and women of hope know how to pass on to you.

There is a beautiful biblical episode narrated in the first book of Kings in chapter 19 in which it tells of Elijah, the great prophet who, hunted, pursued, persecuted by the queen Jezebel, flees into the wilderness and, tired, speaks thus to God: Lord, that's enough! Take my life. But... He lay down and fell asleep under the juniper tree. Then, behold, an angel touched him and said, "Arise and eat!". Still a little asleep, Elijah looks around and sees a bun and some water next to him: Elijah got up, ate and drank, and with the strength given to him by that food, he walked for

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forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.

It is also a promise for each one of us. In times of crisis, when we are in difficulty, the pressing invitation is: do not give up prayer, pray more, be with Him, with the Lord, face to face. It does not matter how: it does not matter if you pray angrily or slowly; it does not matter if you pray with many words or if you cannot say a single word and remain silent; it does not matter if you cry- tears are a way to pray perhaps the highest-but stand there with your Lord, take a long look at the Eucharist, take a long look at the Cross and tell your story. You will receive His Spirit, His power will enter you.

God says to each one of us:



Come unto me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Come to me, come to me: I am a God who consoles, who liberates, who renews, who heals and caresses your wounds.

Come to me and you too comfort, liberate, care for others.

RUTH, THE PATH OF HOPE: During the readings in the Masses immediately preceding Christmas, we are led by the hand and disquieted by an extraordinary biblical book: the book of Ruth, a story of a journey in times of famine and violence that I invite you to read. I entrust you with this splendid commentary on it by Lidia Maggi:

In the book of Ruth, God does not enter the scene directly. The redemption of these women - Naomi, the mother-in-law, and Ruth, the daughter-in-law - does not occur miraculously at the hand of God. And yet, there is something profoundly divine, precisely because it is profoundly human, in the courage and friendship of two women, as in the



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solidarity of a community that allows them to find the resources to recover. There is something profoundly human, and therefore divine, in the empathic gaze that you, the reader, can turn on these travelling widows. God acts even in this way, through the attention of a gaze given to those who are destined to remain invisible. And evil can hide in a simple act of distraction.

It is not a just world we have built. Too many travel to escape hunger and wars. We are not all the same and our differences are inequalities. Some were born in the right part of the world and can live safely in their homes; others come from wastelands, battlefields, and know only escape so as not to succumb.

It is not a just world that we have inherited and built, but you, God, do not tire of prodding us to take care of it: to clear away disparities, to sow the flowers of differences, to reclaim battlefields to turn them into gardens, without customs, checkpoints, just open gardens.

#### Each of us can and must restore hope!

It is here where living / produces shadow ... it is here not elsewhere / that it must become light ... Come you / bearer of colours.

(Mario Luzi) I like to think that this bearer of colours is precisely hope, that hope that for us Christians finds its foundation in Jesus Crucified and Risen. That hope that not even death can steal from us because our destiny is life forever.



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# HIM ... JESUS CHRIST ... EUCHARIST

The Eucharist is not something. It is Someone: it is Jesus Christ Crucified and Risen, alive today in our midst. The Eucharist is a 'Person' who speaks to you and wants to meet you.

"It may sound like a fairy tale, but it is the truth. God became bread in Christ. God comes to me hidden in a piece of bread. God's creativity has found yet another way to realise his Presence among us. You can hold God in your hand, like a piece of bread: it is the closest and most per sonalized presence imaginable." (Carlo Carretto)

He is there, in that piece of bread, waiting for me, looking for me, enlightening me, searching for me with eyes of love, of wonder, of forgiveness, of tenderness, of joy. And He seeks my gaze.

It is from this 'encounter of gazes' that the Christian is born, is built up, grows every day.

When a Christian experiences the Eucharist, when he looks at Jesus in the Eucharist, he should feel a deep awe for the person of Jesus, for His life, for His story.

We are Christians, we remain Christians, because of this: because we have been fascinated, we have been seduced by Jesus, by His story, by His Passover, by His presence in the Eucharist.

"There is an annual Easter event, a weekly Easter event, a daily Easter event. The Church has nothing else to celebrate, after all, but this, because there is everything." (Pelagio Visentin)

That is why the Mass must be 'jealously guarded' because everything is there. In reality it is the Mass, it is He who guards and sustains us and our faith:

"How did the Jews manage to preserve the Sabbath throughout the centuries?" asked to a rabbi. His answer was: "It is not the Jews who have preserved the Sabbath. The Sabbath has preserved the Jews."

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Since for many it is really difficult to find time for a weekday Mass, given Mass times, work and study rhythms, here then is the proposal for a monthly "contemplative" Mass, a Mass celebrated calmly, with times for silence, within an intense and relaxed celebratory atmosphere. In this way, everyone can

discover even more and better the gift, the mystery, the beauty, the tremendous beauty, the joy, the anxiety, the strength, the consolation, the gratuitousness, the necessity of the Eucharist. A Eucharist that still remains unfinished when what is celebrated, proclaimed, sung, does not become life.

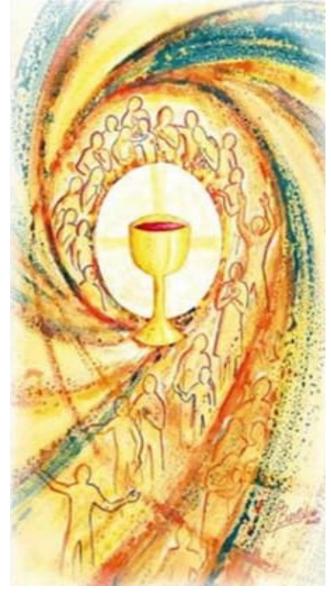
"Kneeling in the corner of the tavern of Emmaus, I look at the mystery being fulfilled in the hands of the pilgrim.

The host is small ... And yet it is enough for a God ... Even a crumb is enough for Him! Even a crumb is worth everything ... all is love: the All-powerfulness of love!

The host is small, the crumb that is the whole Lord, teaches this poor man, a beggar of happiness is someone: you, my Lord.

And the crumb becomes a world. There is something Eucharistic in every creature and whoever perceives, by faith, the presence of bread, ends up discovering that everything is mystery and that what I touch and understand is but the moment, the

appearance or the veil of a reality that infinitely surpasses me.



When I leave my Church, like the two coming out of the tavern, the mystery I have seen and worshipped in the host shines forth everywhere ... and every creature takes on the proportions of the crumb of bread before which I have knelt and worshipped." (don Primo Mazzolari)

To sit in Emmaus and start from Emmaus is what we will try to live in the experience of the monthly contemplative Mass, in this loving encounter with Him.

Don Mirko Bellora

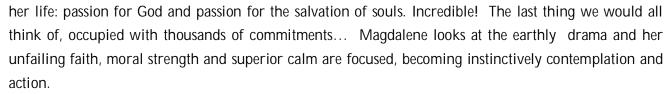
## Let us journey Together with Jesus Crucified

Inspice et Fac ... Look and do likewise.

Upon your chest the head is inclined; your arms are open as the arms of a mother... " This was a great and good man!" (Lk 23:48).

Inspice: know how to look ... The word takes shape, becomes expression, message, example to imitate: He is the Exemplar, Christ Crucified.

Magdalene looks, hears this word and discovers in it the point of unity of her vocation, of



Magdalene looks with the attitude of abandonment typical of the weak, which, without any desire to see, sees.

Weakness and visibility encounter each other... and recognize in the Son disfigured by suffering the Mystery: "My Father, my Father!".

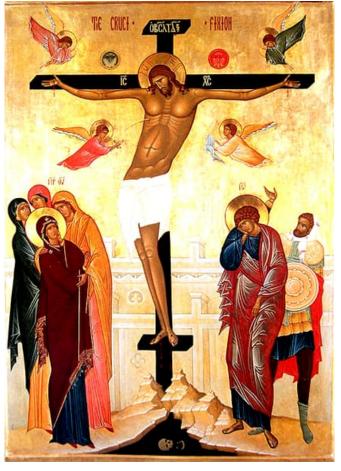
The logic of the Cross is the logic of non violence. The way of the cross accepts the weakness of love, the weakness of solidarity. But the way of the cross is also the way of trust in freedom. The position of Christ reminds Magdalene of the gestures enacted by Him: **Fac, do.** 

You too, look attentively, get involved and perform the same signs of Christ so that they may impact on your life, thus becoming concrete witnessing of gratuitous and disinterested giving.

For Magdalene, the Crucified One takes on a central position, extending well beyond the boundaries of one's world: a universal invitation, as universal as her desire to meet and to relate with every man and woman.

Sorrow is presented to her as the unique initiation into a journey of faith, a luminous pathway that marks the way of true conversion.

As she looks, she measures the distance that separates her from the Mystery, absorbs all the power



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that the Mystery embraces and allows her whole being to be led to do what Jesus did:

from possession to sharing; from profit to gratuitousness; from consumerism to sobriety; from reason to the search for truth; from success to welcoming poor; from war to peace...

Brothers and sisters... do not get tired to look, do not get tired of doing... peace and charity are never too high a price to pay.

## Let us Journey Together Towards the Cross

Lord, to each of us, You reserve a special call. Our response is the most solemn act of obedience that we must guarantee to ourselves, to the world and to You. For this, nobody can be considered useless, aimless, without a mission to fulfil. No one can give up one's place to others. In



this non-negotiable style of obedience, You are the Exemplar, the indisputable reference: Christ Crucified.

#### "We must never be tired of the Cross if we wish to belong totally to Jesus". (Magdalene)

Jesus Crucified, Your position is uncomfortable, unattractive and lacking in appearances. There are no high-sounding titles that are posted along that way. In spite of that, if we are determined to reach the Cross and to remain patiently beneath it, we will be able to read the encouraging signs of the true "adventure", of the "challenge" of the One who, with me, with you, with us, continue to remain on the frontline, to make the world a better place.

"The only knowledge that I claimed to have was about Jesus, and only about Him as the Crucified Christ". (1 Cor 2: 2)

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Reflection on the Cross is inexhaustible. We are dealing with an evet that happened in a distant past, yet not consumed, because it continues to impact upon history, our history, in which we are all involved and with which, daily, we must confront ourselves and allow it to challenge us. Two questions that obedience to the Cross surface from the secret space of our hearts and our wills.

"How do I draw near to God, in the depths of His Love and the demands of His Action? How strong is my solidarity with my brothers and sisters of the world?" A love, a solidarity in which the "I" and "us" constitute a sacred and inalienable bond. It is the positive counter-response to Cain's experience: "Yes, I am truly my brother's keeper".

"Jesus Crucified on the Cross was despoiled of everything, except of His love" (Magdalene).

To put the Cross at the centre of our life is to be convinced of how important obedience to the call is, of how we must be clear in re-expressing, in a convincing way, in the most diverse forms and situations, the demands and responsibility of "discipleship" in Christ. To contemplate the "Cross" is the vital condition for an effective education to self-giving and for re-vitalizing our interior energy through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

In all, the co-participation in the "Mystery of the Cross" fosters a way of being and acting tender and firm, generous and sober, dynamic and contemplative, limpid and joyous...

"We must intuse in our brothers and sisters the memory of the Passion of Jesus" (Magdalene).

Magdalene's invitation can still be answered by us today, thanks to a practical witnessing that, in truth, speaks to the people of our time who Christ is for us.

It will not be impossible to re-create, for both near and far, the experience of the "pilgrims of Emmaus", with them to retrace that segment of the road that seemed unending, burdened as they were by doubts, uncertainties, discouragement and, just right there, to re-pronounce the words that burned in their hearts, to repeat the gestures of a frugal sharing that calms, reassures, transforms and



enables us to fly, to spread the joy of encountering the Crucified and Risen Christ.

"Let us remember that the Lord died upon a Cross to save us" (Magdalene).

Let us fly too, to bring joy and peace to every person of our small or big world, seeking to be untiring in repeating the courage of the Greatest Love. Let us re-kindle the need for the Infinite who embraces our lives.

M. Liliana Ugoletti