

Mission Joy...

**the first day of the week, very early in
the morning, at sunrise . . .**



retirement May 2025

Formation and Spirituality

PROVINCE OF OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR

Christ is risen, hallelujah!

Brothers and sisters, Happy Easter!

Today the Alleluia finally resounds in the Church, it is passed on from mouth to mouth, from heart to heart, and its song makes the people of God throughout the world weep with joy.

From the empty tomb in Jerusalem comes to us the surprising announcement: Jesus, the Crucified One, "*is not here, he is risen*" (Lk 24,6). He is not in the tomb, he is the living one!

Love overcame hate. Light overcame darkness. Truth overcame lies. Forgiveness overcame revenge. Evil has not disappeared from our history, it will remain until the end, but it no longer has dominion, it no longer has power over those who welcome the grace of this day.

Sisters and brothers, especially those of you who are suffering pain and anguish, your silent cries have been heard, your tears have been collected, not a single one has been lost!

In the passion and death of Jesus, God has taken upon himself all the evil in the world and in his infinite mercy has conquered it; he has eliminated the pride that poisons the human heart and sows violence and corruption everywhere. The Lamb of God has conquered! That is why today we cry out: "Christ, my hope, is risen!"

Yes, the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of hope; from this event onwards, hope is no longer an illusion.

No; thanks to the crucified and risen Christ, hope does not disappoint: *spes non confundit* (cf. Rom 5:5)! And it is not an evasive hope, but a committed one; it is not alienating, but makes us responsible.

MESSAGE "URBI ET ORBI" OF POPE FRANCISCO¹

2025, St. Peter's Square - one day before his final Passover

¹ Full text

How could we not begin this retreat with the last words of Francis, which have unwittingly become a posthumous memorial, his testament, his particular "it has been accomplished", the conclusion, what can no longer be changed... the end point.

Let's read his message again, knowing that this man is already living forever, already enjoying every affirmation to the full, already understanding every intuition to the full, already contemplating the splendour of that hope that does not disappoint. No more waiting... It's time to laugh, to rejoice!

As some people have said, we are in a very Paschal time, and the death of Francis has made it possible for the whole world to talk about Life beyond death. And if we have managed to see a little beyond the aesthetics (or at least through the aesthetics), we have had within our reach and at our disposal the perfect setting to contemplate, from our communities, how thousands of people celebrated the feast of the Resurrection.

SPARKS OF RESURRECTION

The Resurrection changes everything and as much as we see the same, nothing is the same... all of humanity is liberated and all those condemned to death are rescued. Jesus frees us from what drives us to fall, grabs us by the wrists, without us having to do anything but let ourselves be held.

The Resurrection changes everything and life emerges where there was failure, it is the dawn that sows hope where there were only ashes.

The Resurrection comes to complete and give meaning to our daily life, because we would be naïve if we did not recognise that around us and within us, there is fragility, difficulty, injustice, and pain... that rightfully awakens the question: How can we speak of Resurrection?

Let us pray with a few intuitions and our eyes fixed on the Gospel, let us pray allowing God to take the initiative, let us pray coming out of our unsatisfied, narrow and tiny ego, which squeezes our capacity to transcend and contemplate creation and humanity in its rightful measure.

Behold the image on the cover:

Imagine that this is how the Father must have lived the scene that Mark narrates in the first 7 verses of chapter 16... how different, isn't it?

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary of James and Salome bought perfume to go and anoint him. Early on the first day of the week, just as dawn was breaking, they arrived at the tomb.

They said to themselves, "Who will move the stone at the entrance to the tomb? They looked up and saw that the stone had been moved. It was very large. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were amazed.

He said to them, "Do not be terrified. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified one. He is not here, he is risen. Look at the place where they had laid him. Now go and tell his disciples and Peter that he will go before them into Galilee. There they will see him, as he had told them.

REVERENT ATTENTION

Reverent attention is an art and a gift, it is learning to like the smallest details: to stop before the life that grows unnoticed but suddenly explodes in our face; to listen to that sound that transports us to another place; to let the memory fly to a place we thought we had forgotten or to smile naively at an endearingly familiar smell.

Reverent attention is the opposite of haste, it is the time of hope, the essential space to perceive the signs of resurrected life. If we do not stop, there will be nothing to wait for, we will not give time for anything to grow, anything to happen, anything to be found... anything to be resurrected.

Three days of reverent attention separate death from life. Three days of holding one's breath, of passing through one's heart every promise, every word, every gesture, three days of holding one's contentment to let the slower ones catch up with the faster ones, three days of talking, of preparing what is necessary for the meeting, for the feast.

To make the most of time is to stop filling it with empty stimuli, with hollow experiences... to make the most of time is to allow oneself the luxury of enjoying fortuitous, unexpected encounters, to opt for the ineffective... to make the most of time is to give value to what seems to have no value and to make what is free our greatest treasure.

Let's leave time for comings and goings, time even to run away or change your mind or to gradually recognise the one you can't stop talking about and who walks beside you without you knowing it.

Are you the only one in Jerusalem who does not know what has happened there these days? He asked them: What has happened (cf. Lk 24 13-35)?

- *"How foolish and dull to believe what the prophets said!"*
Change your gaze: give yourself time to see possibility where there has been more than one disappointment.
- *"Stay with us."*
Create for yourself the experience of convocation, of fraternity.
- *"Were not our hearts burning within us as he spoke to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?"*
Rediscover the joy of your vocation:
 - *Obedience disposes us to accept in faith, with "readiness", "joy" and "simplicity", the mission that God entrusts to us through the Congregation (CC 24).*
 - *Evangelical poverty enables us to give ourselves totally and prepares us to share joyfully (CC 30).*
 - *Renew every day the joy of following Jesus celibately for the sake of the Kingdom (CC 36).*
 - *Share with your Sisters the joys, difficulties and achievements, and be interested in their experiences (RL 46).*
 - *May the witness of your understanding, joy and detachment help them to discover the existence of a love that transcends the human (RL 53).*

EMBRACING WHO WE ARE

Looking at the Risen One gives us back a powerful and disconcerting image, Jesus whom we left nailed to a cross, whom we said goodbye to in fear and incomprehension... he returns to us, dispelling all fear, generously distributing peace and joy, inviting us to look inside ourselves and fill with life all that binds us, constricts us, squeezes us.

Maybe we are too aware of what is not going well, of what we lack, maybe in our life there is too much suspicion, mistrust, we discover ourselves more often than we would like, looking for the mistake, the problem, the difficulty. It seems that everything has to be judged, for everything we have to ask permission, perhaps our happiness depends excessively on that strange sensation of well-being that we seek in the approval of the other.

Where did we give up the freedom of the Resurrection, where did we give up novelty, courage, initiative, the unexpected, spontaneity, joy?

The Risen One places before us the blessing of what we already are, we no longer have to wait to change anything because He has changed everything.

To accept ourselves is not to surrender or conform or justify ourselves: it is to reconcile ourselves with the clay we are, and with the history we carry, laying it bare without complexes, without fear, with the desire to share it generously as it is, with simplicity, humility, gratitude.

To recognise the Risen One also means to trust Him, to lower our guard, to present ourselves before Him, opening our hand and not clinging so tightly to life. The Risen Jesus did not appear to the perfect, but to those who bore wounds, fears, mistakes.... And he greeted them with peace.

To embrace what we are is not resignation, but a reconciled gaze. It is to live in the certainty that we are sustained, not by our achievements, but by a greater fidelity: *"God does not tire of us, even if at times we tire of Him"* (Pope Francis). Serene acceptance is to regain joy, initiative, the grace of the unexpected. It is to trust again in the goodness that dwells even in what we do not control.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the disciples were shut up tight for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood in the midst of them and said to them, "Peace be with you. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced to see the Lord.

[...]

Thomas, which means Twin, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord.

He replied, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger through the hole, unless I put my hand through his side, I will not believe.

[...]

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands; bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.

Thomas replied, "My Lord and my God.

Jesus said to him: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who believe without having seen. (cf. Jn 20:24-29).

- Contemplate the scene with all the affection you can, because we are all Tomás.
 - Take advantage of this intimate encounter with the Risen One, He is not here to reproach you for anything. He gives us another chance, he wants us to see him, that from this encounter we recognise him for ever, in anyone, in so many, in everyone...
 - It is not a question of "sticking your finger in the wound", nor of picking at past wounds, Jesus only wants us to see his love and his goodness, his presence, all around you, in your Community, in your work... even if it looks like death and injustice, you have to recognise the Risen One (remember, you have put your hand in his wounds).
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JOY THAT BINDS AND SENDS

Joy is contagious, it must be proclaimed, celebrated. A grateful person cannot be unhappy, it is impossible. Nobody said that reality cannot be complicated, but we can face it in many ways, and depending on how much gratitude we are able to name, our happiness will be more sincere, simple and heartfelt.

We can begin by giving thanks that we have a roof over our heads, a coffee every morning and a clean house (and hopefully even a clean room), someone has brought us fruit, we have light and the possibility of talking to our loved ones, the rubbish does not go out alone in the doorway or on the street, nor does it arrive alone at the dump, we have clothes to cover ourselves and we have all had the possibility of studying and learning, we share our work, leisure and faith with sisters whom we love and who love us.... And on top of that, the Risen One has left us His Joy.

We are invited to look for the origin of true joy (which has nothing to do with the supposed wellbeing that they want to sell us). And if we start looking and go to Matthew's gospel we find that the first mission given to women by the Risen One was none other than to JOY, to live joyful, happy, rejoicing, to breathe a sigh of relief:

*"Suddenly Jesus met them and said, **"Rejoice!"** They came and embraced his feet and worshipped him". (Mt 28:9)*

Mission that is given in the plural and that we welcome in Community: because happiness is not achieved alone, it is not a personal objective but a community objective, because my happiness is fraternity and depends on the happiness of the other, of the others. The fraternity "of appearance", of lie, breaks everything, just as the constant self-reference to oneself leaves no room for fraternity.

We cannot confuse (nor separate) our mission with what we do, the vocation with the task, the deep meaning with the work:

- Because our mission responds to the needs of those we serve, not to what we do, but to what others expect of us.
- For our mission is the same as that received by the first witnesses of the Risen One, a good news for all time, and for all humanity.
- Because mission is the image of the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit: communion, self-giving and unity, community.
- Because mission invites us to renew our vocation every day and not to look at ourselves all the time: at our reality, at our tiredness, at our excessive dedication, at our generous efforts, at our undoubted courage or at our long-suffering (and offered) silence.

Our gaze is directed towards the One who lives and sends us. And in that gaze, everything makes sense, it points us to others, to those who suffer, to the blessed, to those who are still crucified, to those who, on the one hand, take away our sleep, and on the other, sustain all that we dream of.

"I leave my joy with you, that it may be made complete in you" (Jn 15,11).

- It's not that life is easy, it's that it can be lived in many ways. And when you cultivate gratitude, it changes the way you look. Those who are grateful see differently. And when you see differently, you live differently.

What little things am I thankful for today? Who do I owe a thank you to?

- That the Risen One, who set us out on the roads, precedes us and waits for us in our own house, in our own history, is a reason to rejoice. This encounter transforms our life, transfigures it, but it does not leave us out, it counts on us and sets us on the way to our deepest truth to fill it with life.

How are we to complete the JOY that has been fulfilled in the RISEN ONE?

And we ended our retreat, heading for Galilee, because we cannot keep joy for ourselves and our Community, because joy is a task, almost an obligation, because we have to go there where the Risen One is waiting for us:

We must "return to Galilee" to follow in his footsteps: we must live healing those who suffer, welcoming the excluded, forgiving sinners, defending women and blessing children; we must have meals open to all and enter houses announcing peace; we must tell parables about the goodness of God and denounce every religion that goes against people's happiness; we must continue to announce that the kingdom of God is near.

With Jesus, a different, kinder, more dignified and just world is possible. There is hope for all: "Return to Galilee. He will go before you. There you will see him.

(J. Antonio Pagola, Jesús. Aproximación histórica)

🎵 Live Jesus - L. CASAERT [Click here].



PROVINCIA
NUESTRA
SEÑORA
DEL PILAR

Formación y
Espiritualidad

HNAS. de la CARIDAD de SANTA ANA