

“A Plan for Resurrection”

“Un plan para resucitar”

A Reflection in the time of the Corona Virus Pandemic

His Holiness, Pope Francis



“Suddenly Jesus met them and greeted them, saying: ‘Rejoice’” (Mt 28:9). It is the first word of the Risen One after Mary Magdalene and the other Mary discovered the empty tomb and ran into the angel. The Lord meets them to transform their mourning into joy and to comfort them in the midst of affliction (cf. Jer 31:13). He is the Risen One who wants to resurrect the women to a new life and, with them, all of humanity. He wants us to begin to participate from now in the resurrected condition that awaits us.

An invitation to joy could seem like a provocation, and even like a bad joke in the face of the serious consequences we are suffering from COVID-19. Like the disciples at Emmaus, not a few could think of it as a gesture of ignorance or irresponsibility (cf. Lk 24:17-19).

Like the first disciples who went to the tomb, we lived surrounded by an atmosphere of pain and uncertainty that makes us wonder: “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” (Mk 16:3). How can we deal with this situation that has completely overwhelmed us?

The impact of everything that’s happening, the serious consequences that are already being reported and glimpsed, the pain and mourning for our loved ones disorient, distress and paralyze us.

It is the heaviness of the tombstone that imposes itself on the future and that threatens, with its realism, to bury all hope. It is the heaviness of the anguish of the vulnerable people and elderly people who are going through quarantine in total solitude; it is the heaviness of families who can’t now put a plate of food on their tables; it is the heaviness of health personnel and public servants feeling exhausted and overwhelmed... that heaviness that seems to have the last word.

However, it is moving to highlight the attitude of the women of the Gospel.

Faced with doubts, suffering, perplexity in the face of the situation and even with fear of persecution and of everything that could happen to them, they were able to keep going and not be paralyzed by what was happening. Out of love for the Master, and with that typical, irreplaceable and blessed feminine genius, they were able to confront life as it came, cunningly circumventing obstacles to be close to their Lord.

Unlike many of the apostles who fled as prisoners of fear and insecurity – who denied the Lord and escaped (cf. Jn 18:25-27) – they [the women], without evading reality or ignoring what was happening, without fleeing or escaping..., they knew how to just be and to accompany.

Like the first women disciples, who, in the midst of darkness and grief, loaded their bags with perfumes and set out to anoint the buried Master (cf. Mk 16:1), we ourselves were able, at this time, to see many who sought to bring the anointing of co-responsibility to offer care and not put the lives of others at risk.

Unlike those who fled with the hope of saving themselves, we witnessed how neighbours and family members set out with effort and sacrifice to stay in their homes and thus curb the pandemic.

We were able to discover how many people who were already living and suffering the pandemic of exclusion and indifference continued to strive, to accompany each other and to sustain themselves so that this situation is (or was) less painful.

We saw the anointing spilled by doctors, nurses, supermarket shelf stackers, cleaners, carers, people who transport goods, agents of law and order, volunteers, priests, women religious, grandparents and educators and many others who were encouraged to give up everything they owned to contribute a little of healing, calm and soul to the situation.

And although the question remained the same: “Who will roll away the stone from the tomb?” (Mk 16:3), all of them did not stop giving what they felt they could give and had to give. And it was precisely there, in the midst of their cares and concerns, that the women disciples were surprised by an overwhelming announcement: “He is not here, he is risen”.

His anointing was not an anointing for death, but for life. Their watching and accompanying the Lord, even in death and in the greatest despair, was not in vain, but allowed them to be anointed by the Resurrection: they were not alone, He was alive and preceded them on their way.

Only this overwhelming piece of news was able to break the cycle that prevented them from seeing that the stone had already been rolled away, and that the spilled perfume could overflow further than that which threatened them.

This is the source of our joy and hope, which transforms our actions: our anointings, dedication... our watching and accompanying in all possible ways at this time are not and will not be in vain; they are not a dedication to death.

Every time we take part in the Passion of the Lord, we accompany the passion of our brothers; living even our own passion, our ears will hear the novelty of the Resurrection: we are not alone, the Lord precedes us on our way, removing the stones that paralyze us.

This good news made those women retrace their steps to look for the apostles and the disciples who remained hidden so as to tell them: “Life torn off, destroyed, annihilated on the cross has awakened and pulses again”.

This is our hope, the hope that cannot be stolen, silenced or contaminated. All the life of service and love that you have given in this time will pulse again. It is enough to open a crack so that the anointing that the Lord wants to give us expands with unstoppable force and allows us to contemplate suffering reality with a renewing outlook.

And, like the women of the Gospel, we too are invited again and again to retrace our steps and allow ourselves to be transformed by this announcement: the Lord, with his newness, can always renew our life and that of our community (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*),

Franciscus