

## THEY MUST LEAVE FOR GALILEE, THEY WILL SEE ME THERE

Dear Confreres,

If the resurrection of Jesus were to happen today, as it did almost two thousand years ago, it would be immediately broadcast on the Internet and in the papers: **“Dead man returns to life in Jerusalem”**. Journalists would get to work to explain how a certain Jew, Jesus by name, well known for his good deeds, was condemned to death and crucified. Later, without really explaining how, they would say he was risen, after some hours in a tomb, in a garden outside the city walls. Perhaps they would speak of his disciples who abandoned him after spending three years with him travelling the highways and byways of Palestine. An extraordinary, unheard of event which, after a few days on the front pages, would disappear from the headlines, making way for the latest news.

However, that event of the Resurrection that took place two thousand years ago is repeated every year before our very eyes. **Jesus the Risen Lord is the Good News**, not so much in the newspapers but in the lives of people, the Church, our Institute and in the life of each one of us. Jesus rises notwithstanding “evidence to the contrary” and the news of violence and war, hunger and poverty that daily pass before our eyes. It is not just the news on our TV screens but the concrete situations we must live out every day that make the God of life and each one of us weep. Jesus Son of God and Son of Man, rises again not only in Jerusalem but in all the world, even in the most hidden places, amongst the humble and the simple, unseen by the news bulletins of our times. Jesus rises in our houses and in our communities, among people with whom we are on our pilgrimage, at times long and arduous, along the roads of the world. Jesus rises again in all in unexpected places and circumstances, in the shanty towns of the great cities and in the “existential peripheries” of our world. Jesus again rolls away the stone from the tomb in every place where gestures of reaching out to others, of care for the suffering, of concern for strangers such as immigrants, refugees or asylum-seekers, are repeated. It is there that life overcomes death and a smile of hope again forms on the faces of the people, a reflection of the face of our God.

**And we are witnesses** to these varied and unique presences of the living Jesus because he goes before us on the roads of mission like a brightly burning bush. He continues to repeat today the words he spoke to the women who sought him in the tomb: **“do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must go to Galilee: they will see me there”** (Mt 28:10). Going to Galilee means going without fear to start again from the place where the first encounter with Christ took place, where the fire of the vocation was lit; to re-read our history in the light of the Resurrection; to see the world and our missionary service from the margins, the “Galilee of the peoples”; to rediscover, to “see” the Risen One among the poor and the non-evangelised, those seen as the refuse and burdens of our society. Like the disciples, once we have experienced the encounter with the Risen One, having seen we are called to announce: “Something that has existed from the beginning, that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes; that we have watched and touched with our hands: the Word, who is life – this is our subject. That life was made visible: we saw it and we are giving our testimony, telling you of the eternal life which was with the Father and has been made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we are telling you so that you too may be in union with us as we are in union with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing this to you to make our own joy complete.

**Speaking as the General Council**, in the first place we deeply wish that each one should try to learn how to recognise the presence of the Risen One in their lives, devoting time to reflection and prayer. May each one of you again feel the presence of the Risen One in your personal life and in your encounter with the history of the peoples among whom you live. All events, large or small, of our day or our work, even those that bring unease and suffering, may be transformed into events

of grace and new life. Secondly, that each one of us, by means of the encounter with the Risen One, may renew and reclaim the joy of being a Comboni Missionary and rediscover, in the light of the Resurrection, the beauty of our missionary vocation: “*a life given to Jesus and His people is a beautiful life, it is a life that gives joy*” (CA 2015, 4).

**We wish that for each one of you** this Easter may be a real Passover to new life founded on the transforming encounter with Christ: “*The living encounter with Christ, who died and rose again to give life to the world, is the source of our being Comboni Missionaries (cf. RL 21.1). It is from this founding experience that our vocation springs forth: being at the margins of society as witnesses and prophets of fraternal relationships based on forgiveness, mercy and on the joy of the Gospel. The footsteps of Daniel Comboni take us to the peripheries of suffering among the poorest and not yet evangelized. This is the horizon of our Mission*” (CA 2015, 1).

*“Never for an instant from its formation did this adorable Heart, made divine by the hypostatic union of the Word with the human nature in Jesus Christ our Saviour, always free from sin and rich in every grace, not beat with the purest and most merciful love for men. From the sacred manger in Bethlehem he hastens to proclaim peace to the world for the first time; as a little boy in Egypt, alone in Nazareth, a preacher of the Good News in Palestine, he shares his lot with the poor, invites little ones to come to him, comforts the mournful, heals the sick and raises the dead to life; he calls the burdened and forgives the repentant; dying on the Cross, he prays with great docility for his own torturers; risen in glory, he sends out his apostles to preach salvation to the whole world.”* (Writings 3323)

***A Happy Easter from the General Council  
15 March 2016***