



*Dear Sisters,*

*The Lord is risen! Alleluia!* Let us rejoice on this great day for our Lord has conquered death and brought us all the new hope in the new life He had promised to all His faithful ones!

*"Peace be with you!"* With this Easter blessing, is my prayer that our Risen Lord, may open our minds and inflame our hearts so that like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we may come to recognize him in the breaking of bread, in the Scriptures, and in one another, and follow him, risen and alive, each day of our life.

When we began the forty days journey of the season of Lent, the prophet Joel challenged us to "return to the Lord with our whole heart..."<sup>1</sup> It was an invitation to resolutely take the "road leading from slavery to freedom, from suffering to joy, from death to life."<sup>2</sup> It was a call to walk the path of conversion.

Each year the Church gives us six weeks to take a long, loving look at our lives to see if our values and priorities are according to God's desires for us. Most often we find that we have wandered from God's ways, hence, Lent offers us a yearly "second chance." As Pope Francis emphasized in his homily during the celebration of Ash Wednesday, "Lent is the time to reflect and ask ourselves what we would be if God had closed his doors to us. What would we be without his mercy that never tires of forgiving us and always gives us the chance to begin anew?"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joel 2, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, Ash Wednesday Homily, March 1, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Yes, my dear Sisters, God is always ready to embrace and to welcome us back. He does not keep a record of our wrongdoings, but always gives us a “second chance,” to begin anew. But the big question is: Do we welcome this opportunity as a gift from the Lord and do we take advantage of it to grow in our relationship with Him? If God is ever ready to give us a second chance are we equally desirous to give our brothers and sisters a second chance?

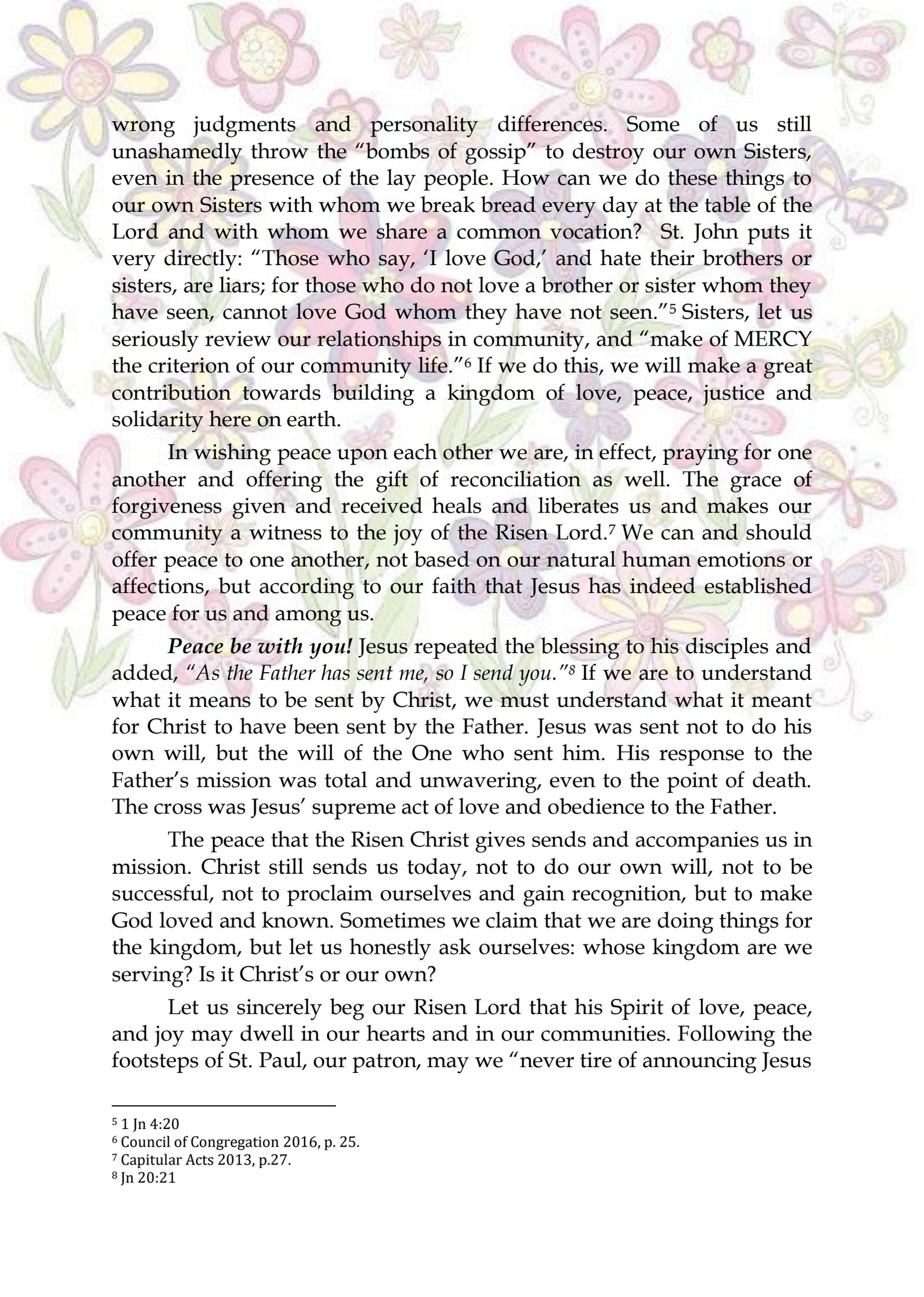
*“Peace be with you!”* These were the very first words of Jesus to his disciples after he rose from the dead. They are words of blessing and comfort that move us to overcome our fears and stop hiding behind the locked doors of indifference and selfishness. For even in those areas of our life where we might be most embarrassed and feel most naked, God is loving us and offering us wholeness and joy. The blessing of peace also convey the gifts of healing, reconciliation, hope, joy and mission. These are the very qualities that bring the kingdom of God right here and now. Whenever we experience these things in this life, it is Jesus himself who is at work, casting away the powers of darkness and ushering us in the light, allowing us a foretaste of the resurrected life.

*“Peace be with you!”* After Jesus had said this, he showed the disciples his hands and his side.<sup>4</sup> Jesus opened his hands and bared his side that they might see the marks of his wounds. These are the marks of his suffering love for us. Seeing the marks of his wounds was a healing moment for the disciples and they were filled with joy! The wounds were an assurance to them that his identity remains the same. He is the same Jesus Christ whom they encountered, who died and is now risen. Our own wounds too, no matter how deep, can have the same salvific meaning. How? When we are able to perceive how God had not abandoned us in our difficult moments, or when we are able to recognize God’s love in the midst of our suffering, or when we sense a painful experience as a means of purifying and deepening our relationship with God, then the event becomes a healing experience, a resurrection moment. Our wounds fortify our identity as God’s beloved, rather than diminish it.

When we wish each other *“Peace”* this Easter, let us make it a healing and liberating experience for one another. It pains me to hear of broken relationships in our communities, brought about by our uncharitable remarks and gestures, disproportionate anger, prejudices,

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<sup>4</sup> cf Jn 20:20.



wrong judgments and personality differences. Some of us still unashamedly throw the “bombs of gossip” to destroy our own Sisters, even in the presence of the lay people. How can we do these things to our own Sisters with whom we break bread every day at the table of the Lord and with whom we share a common vocation? St. John puts it very directly: “Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.”<sup>5</sup> Sisters, let us seriously review our relationships in community, and “make of MERCY the criterion of our community life.”<sup>6</sup> If we do this, we will make a great contribution towards building a kingdom of love, peace, justice and solidarity here on earth.

In wishing peace upon each other we are, in effect, praying for one another and offering the gift of reconciliation as well. The grace of forgiveness given and received heals and liberates us and makes our community a witness to the joy of the Risen Lord.<sup>7</sup> We can and should offer peace to one another, not based on our natural human emotions or affections, but according to our faith that Jesus has indeed established peace for us and among us.

*Peace be with you!* Jesus repeated the blessing to his disciples and added, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”<sup>8</sup> If we are to understand what it means to be sent by Christ, we must understand what it meant for Christ to have been sent by the Father. Jesus was sent not to do his own will, but the will of the One who sent him. His response to the Father’s mission was total and unwavering, even to the point of death. The cross was Jesus’ supreme act of love and obedience to the Father.

The peace that the Risen Christ gives sends and accompanies us in mission. Christ still sends us today, not to do our own will, not to be successful, not to proclaim ourselves and gain recognition, but to make God loved and known. Sometimes we claim that we are doing things for the kingdom, but let us honestly ask ourselves: whose kingdom are we serving? Is it Christ’s or our own?

Let us sincerely beg our Risen Lord that his Spirit of love, peace, and joy may dwell in our hearts and in our communities. Following the footsteps of St. Paul, our patron, may we “never tire of announcing Jesus

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Jn 4:20

<sup>6</sup> Council of Congregation 2016, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Capitular Acts 2013, p.27.

<sup>8</sup> Jn 20:21

Christ and be ready to suffer all for him who overcame death through the humiliation of the cross.”<sup>9</sup>

I commend to your prayers the forthcoming session for the Major Superiors in Chartres on July 15-28, 2017. May this gathering be truly an enriching encounter and sharing for the good of the Church and our Congregation.

We regret to inform you that we will not have the Easter issue of the Paulinian Echoes this year, because we do not have enough articles to publish. So, we enjoin you to send us news, reflections, articles about your projects, apostolate, mission and life that are worth sharing to other Provinces, Districts and Regions. Thank you in advance!

The Sisters Assistants, Sisters Secretary and Bursar, and all the Sisters at the Generalate join me in wishing you a Blessed and Peaceful Easter! May our Blessed Mother who first encountered the Risen Christ, teach us how to live a resurrected life!

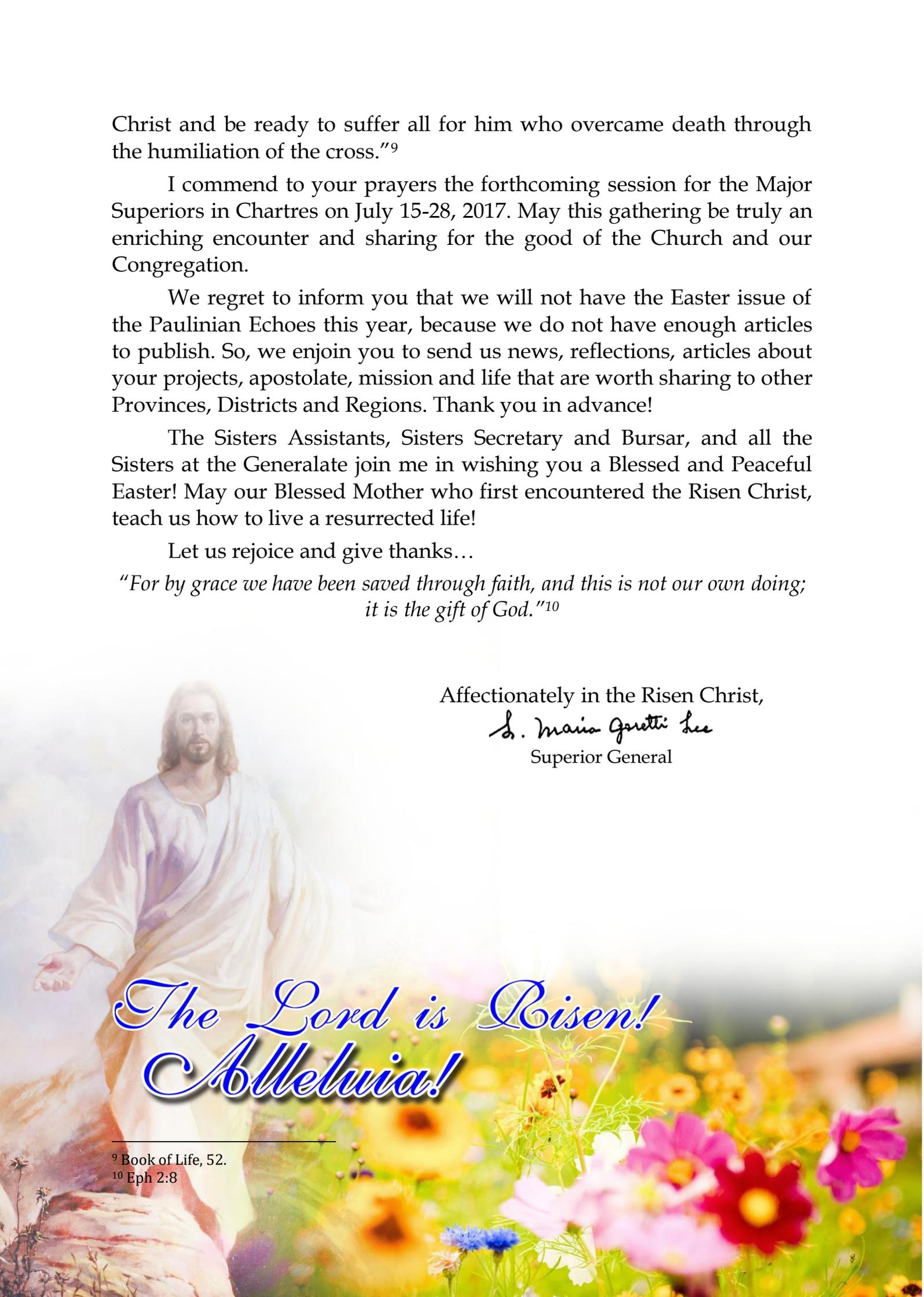
Let us rejoice and give thanks...

*“For by grace we have been saved through faith, and this is not our own doing; it is the gift of God.”<sup>10</sup>*

Affectionately in the Risen Christ,

*S. Maria Goretti Lee*

Superior General



*The Lord is Risen!  
Alleluia!*

<sup>9</sup> Book of Life, 52.

<sup>10</sup> Eph 2:8