



Easter Message

My dear Sisters,

Our Lenten journey is a spiritual pilgrimage that leads to repentance, conversion and renewal. In union with the crucified and risen Lord, this journey ushers us to new life. During this year of consecrated life, this season of grace takes on a deeper meaning for us, consecrated persons.

Vita Consecrata puts it succinctly, “Consecrated persons discover that the more they stand at the foot of the cross of Christ, the more immediately and profoundly they experience the truth of God who is love.”¹

It is my fervent prayer that each one of us spent time during this period of forty days in this year of consecrated life to be with Jesus in his journey from the desert, to the mountain of Transfiguration, to Jerusalem and to Galilee. Walking with Jesus in his paschal journey leads us to an experience of the immensity of God’s love and to a joyful witness of his love to others.

In the **DESERT**, Jesus was tempted by the devil. “He was with wild animals, but the angels ministered to him.”² In the desert of our daily lives, we too experience a spiritual combat where we hear the opposing voices of God and the evil one. There is a need to discern carefully especially those temptations that present themselves under the appearance of “good.” Thus, for example, the need for professional training and updating can lead to frantic pursuit of efficiency as if the apostolic work depends on human efforts alone. The solitude of the desert, prayer, asceticism and love for the Word of God, enable us to make courageous choices for God and to reject the deceitful enticements of the devil. How often do we make the Gospel as the basis of our daily living in community and the decisions we make? Do we manifest in our being and acting the fruits of our encounters with God?

¹ Vita Consecrata, No.24

² Mark 1:12

Today, we experience the “wild animals” in the form of negative thoughts, uncharitable acts or words, criticisms, jealousy, worldly ambitions, indifference, and selfishness. Almost everyday we hear of wars, terrorism, and injustice all over the world. These acts of violence that seek to undermine human dignity spring from a heart that has not known love. We can make our own contribution to be bearers of peace and love by our prayers, but also by our concrete acts of kindness and charity to everyone, “focusing on what is positive in people and events, and having an unconditional acceptance of all people.”³ Let us go to the desert of our hearts, heed the call for conversion and turn our criticisms to praises, bad temper to peace, jealousy to love, pride to humility, and selfishness to service. We can begin to sow seeds of love and peace in our own religious communities, our “school of love,”⁴ where we learn to love one another as God loves us. This is not easy, but we take our Lord Jesus Christ as model and implore his grace, for he too has been “tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”⁵

On the **mountain of TRANSFIGURATION**, Jesus was affirmed as the beloved Son of the Father, and at the same time, he had a glimpse of his impending journey to Jerusalem. During this year of consecrated life, the Church invites us to go up to our “mountain of transfiguration” and rediscover the joy and the beauty of our initial call...that time when the Lord looked at us, loved us, seized us with a grip so strong and mysterious that we dared not turn away from him. Reliving this experience of intimacy with the Lord strengthens our faith and enables us to face the tragedy of the cross in our lives. After years of living the consecrated life, let us ask ourselves again: Is Jesus my one and only love, as I promised when I first made my vows?

During the Lenten season, the Lord summons us: “Return to me with all your heart.”⁶ For us, consecrated persons, it is a call to rekindle the love that beckons us to leave everything behind and surrender our whole life to God. By our religious consecration we commit ourselves “to make the paschal experience of Christ the center and ‘root’ of our life.”⁷ Concretely, this means to nourish in our hearts the ardent love for Christ by our constant communion with him and by our willingness to die his death in our daily struggles against sin and evil.

³ Capitular Acts 2013, p.15.

⁴ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Fraternal life in Community*, No. 35.

⁵ Hebrews 4:15

⁶ Joel 2:12

⁷ Capitular Acts 2001, p.14.

Jesus' journey to **JERUSALEM** is the supreme manifestation of God's passionate love for humanity. Jesus did not only empty himself by becoming like us, but also "humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross."⁸ God does not come to condemn us, neither does he come to eradicate suffering and death from the world; but rather, "he comes to take upon Himself the burden of our human condition and carries it to the end, to free us in a radical and definitive way."⁹ As consecrated persons, we reflect the splendor of God's love by our fidelity to the mystery of the **CROSS**—the great sign of Christ's saving presence especially



in the midst of difficulties and trials.¹⁰ The courageous witness of our Sisters who live in difficult situations such as war-torn and poverty-stricken mission places are manifestations of God's saving presence. The witness of a simple and austere way of life both as individuals and as a community is a sign of God's providential love. The silent sacrifice and abandonment to God's will, the fidelity to prayer even in the midst of dryness, the humility of a hidden life, the serene acceptance of our weaknesses and dwindling strength brought about by age or sickness, reveal our fidelity to God's love. We also manifest Christ's saving presence when we give ourselves generously to serve those in the margins of society: the poor, the sick, the abandoned, the oppressed, the elderly and the young, when we share in their hardships and stand by them in their time of need.

As Jesus makes his way to Golgotha and the Resurrection, he brings us with himself in hope. This Easter let us rise and go with him to **GALILEE**, and there beg him to fill our hearts with the gift of Easter joy!

Easter joy happens when God breaks open our hearts of stone and gives us hearts of flesh again by breathing into us—making us forgive those who have hurt us and giving us the capacity to feel joy and peace even in the midst of our faithless and troubled world.

Easter joy means no longer being possessed by negative feelings and painful experiences, nor by our self-centered beliefs and ways, nor being paralyzed by our fears, because nothing in all creation, "not the past, nor the present, nor the future, can hinder us from knowing the love of God we find in Christ Jesus."¹¹

⁸ Philippians 2:9

⁹ Pope Francis, *Angelus Address*, Feb 15, 2015.

¹⁰ *Vita Consecrata*, no. 24.

¹¹ Rom 8: 38

Easter joy is the grace we receive when we go out of our selves and sacrifice our personal time to be with others and offer them the support of our presence and listening ears.

As we celebrate the triumph of our Lord over sin and death, I pray that you receive Christ's gifts of love, peace and joy. Let us never grow weary in doing God's will nor be discouraged by our failures, for he is a God of mercy and compassion.

May we continue to make our communities places where the Risen Christ is encountered by the gift of living together in shared meaning, in shared lives of caring and praying for one another; by the gift of forgiveness and mutual understanding; by the gift of living our life of consecration in fidelity; by the gift of being engaged in the task of revealing the presence of His kingdom in our world and in proclaiming the joy of the Gospel to everyone.

Our Sisters Assistants General, Secretary and Treasurer, as well as all the Sisters of the community join me in greeting you a blessed feast of Easter!

May our Mother Mary, who first experienced the joy of her Risen Son, accompany us in this joyful season, so that we may sing together the exultant victory on Easter day! *Alleluia! Alleluia!*

S. Maria Goretti Lee

SUPERIOR GENERAL

