

The Father

Holy Saturday

Dear brothers and sisters,

It is with great spiritual joy that this night we welcome the greeting of the Risen Jesus, alive, to the women of Jerusalem: "Hail to you!" We could not have hoped for a greater wish in this troubled time we are living: "Hail to you! And with this greeting we all need to hear, on this holy night, the exhortation of the angels not to be afraid.

We know that the word health, both in Greek and Latin, evokes not so much physical health but the gift of salvation, and with it the fullness of all divine good and gift. This health can only be given by God, precisely because it does not only touch the physical sphere, which sooner or later will give way to the fragility of the human condition, but concerns eternal life. Here, then, is the precious gift of life, a time in which we can know and love God, love our brothers and sisters and freely accept the gift of salvation.

The liturgy of this holy night is of great consolation, beginning with the skylight with the lighting of the Easter candle, the memory of a God who overcomes darkness: the Easter preonium expresses it well by singing the struggle between life and death, good and evil, grace and sin. It sings it, with exultation, the alleluia announcing God's victory.

Dear brothers and sisters, after the celebration of this night, many of us will continue to toil, some will conclude their earthly day, others will mourn the loved ones who have left them; for many it will still be Good Friday. Humanity will still need men and women who, like Mary, stand at the feet of the crucified of our time, companions who share bread and toil. **But what is given to us, in this holy Vigil, is hope, the hope that does not disappoint. The alleluia we have sung in faith is a proclamation of a God who has already overcome the consequences of sin of evil and above all has overcome death. And it is precisely for this reason that we play everything in friendship with the Lord who, if we so wish, grants us the gift of already living risen in faith.**

We realize little of these truths and feel little need of them when times are carefree; indeed, sometimes we may be overcome by some delirium of omnipotence thinking we are strong and invincible; sometimes we live as if we were immortal and never have to draw conclusions about our life. Then comes the time of trial and then the choice becomes necessary: either despair or throw our hearts where we can find a Hope, embracing Him who truly always wins in love!

Someone recently wrote in this regard: "Christians have invented a history with a happy ending. But the reality is quite different". This is a thought and a temptation that can also pass through our minds, putting our faith to the test. But then I reread the Gospels, I hear the story of salvation told as we did

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this evening in the readings we have heard, I put myself in the school of biblical wisdom that educates the heart to the good, to the truth, to the beautiful, I reread the Gospels and hear the story of a Lord who had only the concern to make the life of his friends happy, who takes care of the last and the sick to tell them that they are precious in the eyes of God, I enter the Upper Room and hear the Master speaking of love as the meaning of existence, I see his gesture of breaking bread and washing feet like a servant, I look at the crucifix listening to the story of his passion that opens my eyes to his faithful love to the end for my salvation, I see the witness of many of his friends who in his name make this world more human, who are capable of forgiveness to the point of martyrdom, of oblation to the point of consuming themselves for their brothers, and my heart is convinced: Christ is the meaning of history, and another meaning I can't find, another hope doesn't sustain me. Dear friends, never as this year does it make sense to wish us **“Happy Easter”**: yes, may the Risen Lord truly give our hearts the grace to live in this world enlightened by His presence that says to a suffering humanity: do not be afraid, I am with you and with me, that I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, as we marked on the candle, the last word is Health! And with salvation the Easter gift of peace of heart and among hearts.

Happy Easter **Little House** scattered throughout the world; Happy Easter **brothers and sisters who have consecrated your whole life to Him**, becoming sentinels announcing the dawn without sunset; Happy Easter **sisters of contemplative life** who raise your praise every day to Him who is the source of all good and who intercede for all humanity grace and blessing from Heaven; Happy Easter **to you lay workers** who help every day the mission of the Cottolenghina family by giving glory to God and his provident love in service to the poor and the sick, thus giving full meaning to your precious work; **Happy Easter to you men and women aggregated, oblates and volunteers, sympathizers and benefactors of our Work that you are precious branches of that tree of charity dreamed of by our Founder; Happy Easter to you residents of the Little House that you are the precious part of the Little House, because only with you is our Work of Gospel; Happy Easter to you dear sick brothers and sisters** who are living your passion more intensely, sharing with Christ in the salvation of the world: may you hear the Lord who, like the women of Jerusalem, goes to them saying: health to you, do not be afraid, I am with you; Happy Easter **Little House**: rejoice because in you dwells the Risen One, rejoice because the seed of life sown by Him knows no corruption. Even in these days may you be like a permanent Easter candle, a shining sign of life overcoming death! And when this candle should also be placed next to those who have concluded their earthly day, rejoice because life is not taken away but transformed!

For all this, on this holy night, let us bless the Lord and sing **Deo gratias!**

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Father Carmine Arice