

## EASTER 2020

*A message from Bishop Marc Stenger and Sr Teresia Wamuyu Wachira IBVM,  
co-presidents*

*“Behold, he is before you in Galilee; there you will see him” (Matthew 28, 5-7).*

The Gospel of the Easter Vigil, which many of us around the world will hear while confined, reminds us of the angel’s words to the women who approached Jesus’ tomb after Shabbat: “You are looking for Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he is risen, as he had said. Go and say to his disciples: ‘Behold, he is before you in Galilee; there you will see him’.”(Matthew 28, 5-7)

On this Easter celebration 2020, while many of us share tears and pain, this too is the message to us, members of Pax Christi: Do not stay here staring at the empty tomb. Easter for us is when men and women can meet the Risen One and can be born into a new hope.

This is the challenge of this time. Easter is a path opened by Christ: to life, to peace, to hope. Indeed, we are asking ourselves many questions: What are we going to do after the coronavirus? What do we want to change? But the question that we should be rather asking is: What do we have to do so that the path opened by the Christ of Easter is a path of hope for all?

What can members of Pax Christi do? The world - economy, politics, travel, entertainment - has stopped. Many men, women, families and young people around the world suffer more violence, injustice, inequality, poverty and less freedom. How to make sense of the vacuum humanity is experiencing now? It can lead us to rediscover the present, a moment to live the true reality of time and of ourselves. Not a ‘present’ that is the nostalgic return of the past, not a dream for the future, but a ‘present’ carrying the message of Christ which awaits us in Galilee.

We are invited to reflect on the essential, the presence of God in our midst: "Stop! Know that I am God, exalted among the peoples, exalted on earth." (Ps 45, 11). Again, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm, 46 :10). We do not stop only because we are forced by a pandemic, but freely, as we stop to ponder on the tender beauty of a sleeping newborn, to glance at a sunset or admire a work of art that fills us with wonder and silence. It is only if we stop in front of God in the same way -- if we recognize that God's living presence fills every moment -- that we can find God in every human situation, the God of justice and peace.

In this serious and terrible situation affecting our society, we are invited to reflect on the reality that recognizing the presence of God does not mean fleeing from reality and giving up the human means put in place to defend ourselves from evil. As we journeyed with Jesus during Holy Week, we have been comforted by the fact that God enters our trials, undergoes them with us until death on the Cross. He thus reveals to us that our life, in trial as in consolation, has an infinitely greater meaning than the resolution of the present danger. The real danger to life is not the threat of death, but the possibility of living without meaning.

The Easter message for us is to heed the invitation from the Lord to stand before him, to present ourselves at his meeting in Galilee, where he renews the gift of his presence which triumphs over our fragility. God, who dwells and walks with us, wants to lead us to the ultimate and full destiny of our existence.

The invitation of the risen Christ should cause us to renounce once and for all what is superfluous, to save what is deeper and more true in us and between and among us. We do this with the confidence that our life is not in our hands but in God's hands. We should also live with the conscience that we are all responsible for each other, for the choices we make and also our behaviour, better or worse. The experiences that we are undergoing, though painful and challenging, invite us to be sensitive to those such as medical personnel who are sacrificing so that others may live, and to those people who suffer and die due to the indifference and lack of care by others in varied ways. Let us remember, for example, that while the coronavirus is attacking us now, the people of the Horn of Africa have suffered for months from an invasion of locusts which threatens the livelihood of millions of people. Let us remember the waiting migrants in the island of Lesbos, who are living in inhuman conditions. Let us remember the wound that is still open in Syria and throughout the Middle East.

Let's remember so many situations in our world where people have and will continue to suffer if we remain indifferent to the message that Easter brings, "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full" (John, 10 :10).

A painful period such as we are experiencing now can make people harder or more sensitive. Everything depends on the love with which we live our lives and reach out to others, the fire that the risen Christ, in his presence, comes to awaken in us. For us, Pax Christi members, this is not a challenge for today, but an invitation for us to reflect on the times when we and others have fallen short of working for a just peace in our communities, regions, country and the global world. Painful and challenging experiences such as we are experiencing due to the Covid-19 pandemic will pass sooner or later. However, if we live it with love, the wounds that it has opened – like the ones the disciples and especially Thomas witnessed and touched on the Body of the Risen One -- become for us a source of commitment, providing love and hope to serve our sisters and brothers without counting the cost.

*Lord make me an instrument of your peace;*

*Where there is despair hope;*

*Where there is darkness, light;*

*Where there is sadness joy. (St Francis of Assisi)*

Let's go find the Risen One in Galilee!

We join you and your families during this time. That Christ, the Risen One, will always be a source of hope for you.