



Easter MESSAGE

Easter 2024

Dear Sisters,

“Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” (John 21:16)

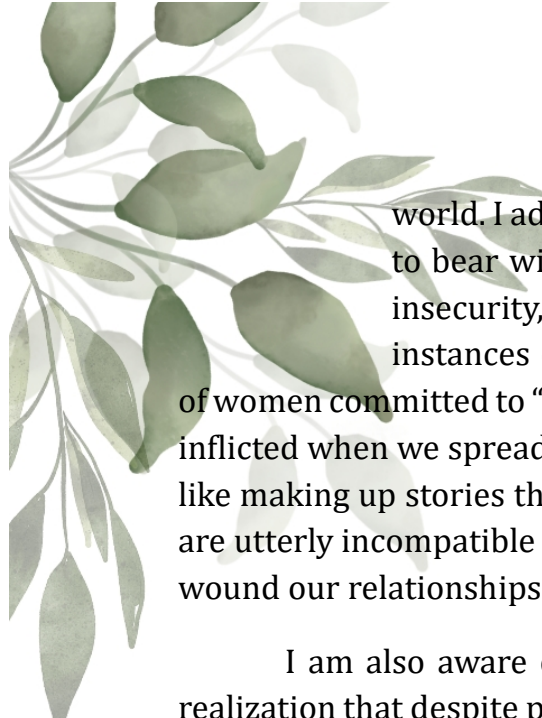
As we celebrate the season of Easter, let us rejoice in the profound significance of Christ’s resurrection and the hope it brings to our individual and communal lives and to the whole world. Easter is a time of spiritual renewal, where we celebrate the triumph of light over darkness, life over death, and love prevailing over all obstacles.

In our moments of contemplation during this Paschal season, let us reflect upon the journey of transformation that brought us to this moment. This journey mirrors that of Simon Peter – a path marked by discouragement, merciful encounter, and eventual renewal.

The Scriptures recount that following Jesus’ crucifixion, the disciples returned to their ordinary lives, engaging once again in their usual work of fishing. However, despite their efforts, they found their nets empty, returning home disheartened. (cf. Jn 21) Beyond the physical emptiness of their catch, they grappled with a deeper sense of dismay and confusion. The death of Jesus had plunged them into a whirlwind of emotional conflict, leaving them feeling as though they too had been crucified with Him. In the span of a few days, their world had seemingly crumbled before them.

There are moments in our own lives where we too are confronted with harsh realities – both personal and communal. These times often bring forth a tempest of conflicts, doubts, sufferings, feelings of loneliness and emptiness. The temptation to avoid confronting these challenges, to assign blame elsewhere, or to succumb to self-pity can be overwhelming. Yet, perhaps the greatest temptation is to dwell in our **discouragement**, as the disciples themselves experienced.

It is crucial to acknowledge the pain and suffering endured by individuals in areas of conflict and war, such as Ukraine, Palestine, Haiti, and other parts of the




world. I admire the unwavering courage of our Sisters who continue to bear witness to God's love amidst their own feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and fear. However, it is disheartening to recognize instances of suspicion, mistrust, and jealousy within a community of women committed to “loving one another as God loves them.” Consider the harm inflicted when we spread unfounded rumors or engage in jealousy-driven actions, like making up stories that undermine the bonds of communion. These behaviors are utterly incompatible with true fraternal spirit in community and only serve to wound our relationships.

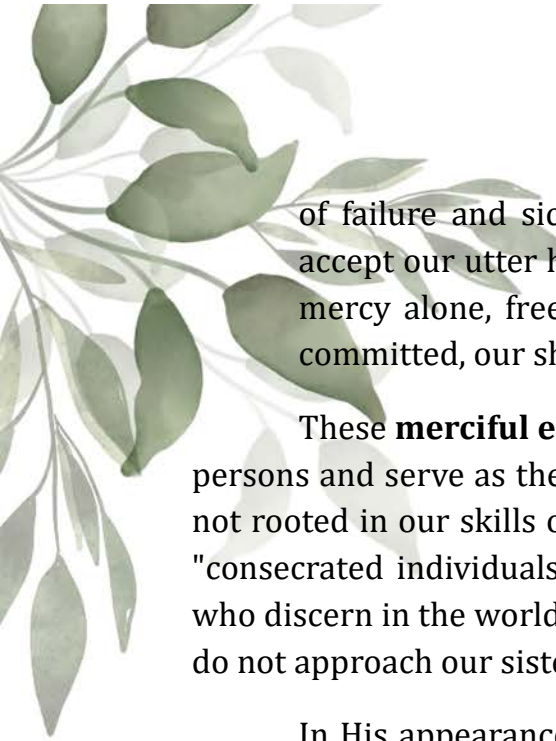
I am also aware of the pain and the disappointment that come with the realization that despite pouring our hearts, souls, and energies on a project for the benefit of the parish or the school or the community, our efforts are met with suspicion or questioning. Such experiences can become a source of doubt or lack of self-confidence, occasionally subjecting us to undeserved criticism or misconceptions. It is during these trying times that we ask God for clear-sightedness to face reality as it is, the courage to seek for forgiveness, and the openness to listen to what He is telling us, and not dwell on our discouragement. Let us cultivate the resilience to confront these challenges squarely and emerge stronger in our faith and commitment.

“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” (Jn 21:15) In this poignant encounter, Jesus takes Peter aside and His only words are a question, a question about love: Do you love me? Jesus neither reproach nor condemn Peter; instead, He repeatedly asked about love until Peter could sincerely respond: “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” (Jn 21:17) Pope Francis explains that through this interaction, Jesus wants to save Peter and confirm him in his mission. He wants to save him from being consumed by guilt over his mistakes or giving up on the goodness he experienced with Jesus due to his weaknesses. He desires to rescue Peter from self-absorption and loneliness, to liberate him from misery and negativity.¹ It was a moment of confrontation and Peter had to come face-to-face with himself, and acknowledge his weakness and sin.

As disciples, we too can have the same experience. There are moments when we have to confront our vulnerability, such as when we are given an assignment or responsibility that is beyond our capacity and expertise. Moments

¹ Pope Francis, *Address during his meeting with Priests, Consecrated Men and Women and Seminarians on the occasion of his Apostolic Journey to Chile and Peru, January 16, 2018.*





of failure and sickness can also be crucial periods that challenge us to accept our utter helplessness and surrender to the mercy of God. It is this mercy alone, freely given, that sustains us. Despite all the sins we have committed, our shortcomings, and our failures, Jesus has shown us mercy.

These **merciful encounters** with Jesus affirm our vocation as consecrated persons and serve as the wellspring of fruitfulness in our ministry. Our calling is not rooted in our skills or talents but rather in the infinite mercy of God. We are "consecrated individuals who perceive our wounds as symbols of resurrection; who discern in the world's wounds the power of the resurrection; who, like Jesus, do not approach our sisters and brothers with reproach and condemnation."²

In His appearances after the resurrection, Jesus manifests His wounds to the disciples. Similarly, we are asked to acknowledge our wounds and not ignore them. These wounds free us from the temptation to take credit for our successes and to consider ourselves as superior to others. They compel us to get out of our comfort zones and encounter the suffering Christ in others. The people of God do not expect us to be excellent administrators or competent teachers, nurses and social workers. They need consecrated persons who are compassionate, who take time to listen to the cries of the marginalized, who are willing to actively engage in helping the vulnerable and liberating the oppressed, even if it means getting our hands dirty.

Finally, the merciful encounter with Jesus fosters discernment, guiding us to go through the complexities of our day-to-day life with simplicity. Jesus asks Peter to discern and make sense of the events in his life. Despite struggling with the wounds inflicted by his own sins and limitations, Peter discovers through his communion with Jesus that these very wounds possess the potential to illuminate the path to resurrection. His encounter with Christ kindles a **renewal of faith and commitment**. Passing through the dark tunnel of discouragement and disillusionment, Peter emerged into the light of new life in Christ. This renewal goes beyond the pursuit of an idealized community or situation; rather, it entails a profound recognition of one's own wounds, as well as those borne by others, as reflections of the wounds borne by Jesus Himself. It signifies a return to the wellspring of faith, characterized by our unwavering commitment—an enthusiastic, creative, and hopeful "Yes"—to the One who "makes all things new." (Rev. 21:5)

² Ibid.



As we embrace the spirit of renewal this Easter, let us be inspired by Peter's journey of faith. Through his humility and steadfast commitment, Peter emerged from his trials as a bold and fearless witness for the Gospel. Likewise, may this Easter be a time of renewal for us -- a time to recommit ourselves to living lives of faith, love, and service to others.

The General administration and all the Sisters at the Generalate join me in wishing you a blessed Easter! May the hope of Easter fill our hearts with joy, the promise of redemption guide our steps, and the love of Christ inspire us to be agents of renewal in the world!

Affectionately in the Risen Christ,

S. Maria Goretti Lee
Superior General

