



EARLY IN THE MORNING, WHILE IT WAS STILL DARK (Jn 20:1-2)

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Introduction

We begin the *Council of the Institute online*, which was already postponed because of the Covid-19 pandemic that has not yet been conquered. In the illuminative phase, I was asked to propose some thoughts for a lectio on the text of Jn 20:1-2: “*Early in the morning, while it was still dark*” chosen as the theme of the Council of the Institute.

The Word of God is living and efficacious and it is truly the light for our path. In the complexity of the present time for the world, for the Church and for our Congregation, the ability to contemplate the Paschal Mystery and allow ourselves to be transformed by the dynamic of the Resurrection of Jesus in the flow of history is truly a gift.

Also the time in which we are living, celebrating the Council of the Institute online, during this month of October entirely dedicated to Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life is a piece of history that flows and moves ahead toward its fulfillment century after century.

Early in the morning, while it was still dark, the disciples of Jesus were shaken by the discovery of the empty tomb, and this began a journey of faith that led them to the encounter with the Risen Lord. Among all these women excels Mary of Magdala, whom the Fourth Gospel presents as the figure synthesizing the first community and the feminine discipleship. Sent by the risen Rabbunì as “apostle to the apostles” she continues to proclaim to the Church and to the world today: “I have seen the Lord”.

1. The First Day of the Week

We will accompany the women who, on “the first day of the week”, went to the tomb of Jesus¹. These women are among the “disciples” who followed Jesus from Galilee² to Jerusalem, sharing in his life.

Now, after the upsetting facts of the *Passion*, the *Crucifixion*, and the *Burial*, the women become the first witnesses of the Resurrection, that is, of that radical experience of faith in Christ Jesus from which the Church is born.

Speaking of the discovery of the empty tomb on the part of the women, the evangelists recall the continuity of their presence at the cross and the burial of Jesus. Among the first witnesses of the resurrection, the first to be named is always Mary of Magdala who went to the tomb without oils³. According to popular tradition, the discovery of the empty tomb took place on *the first day after the*

¹ It is not possible to put into a synopsis the Gospel narratives of the resurrection of Jesus because they differ greatly. For the faith of the Church, in fact, it is not the memory of an event of the past, but the present experience of the life of the Lord in our midst, today, in the diversified history of the Christian communities spread throughout the world.

² Mt 27:55-56; Mk 15:40-41; Lk 23:55. In that time, it was unusual for women to be associated with the itinerant ministry of a rabbi (Lk 8:1-3); it is precisely these women who followed Jesus to Jerusalem and carefully observed the place of his burial who become the first witnesses of the Crucified and Risen Messiah. In the experience of faith, they precede the Twelve. The experience of faith, in fact, is entirely gratuitous; coming from God, it is not bound to roles or abilities. Cf F. Rossi de Gasperis, *È risorto non è qui*, Pardes Edizioni, 2008, p 22-35.

³ Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1.

*sabbath*⁴; this fact infers that the resurrection of Christ marks the beginning of a new world and inaugurates the “day” that has no end⁵.

A literal translation of the Greek text (Jn 20:1) should say: “*The day one of the Sabbaths*”. The day *one* recalls the *eighth* day (7+1), the number-symbol of the perfect fulfillment of the Sabbath⁶ and, therefore: the first and last day of the Paschal triumph of Christ, as we sing in the liturgy.

Day one initiates the totality of days (escathology), that is all of history and all of life. Day one is the beginning of everything; the last day is the conclusion of everything: it is the Pasch and the fulness of time, according to the plan of God⁷.

For Christians, the *day after the sabbath* corresponds to *Sunday*⁸, the Lord's day (in Greek: *kyriakè hemèra*) in which the Christian community gathers to celebrate the Eucharist.

«Sine dominico non possumus» said the priest and martyr, Saturnin, at the beginning of the fourth century, during the persecution of Diocletian in 304 a.c. Accused of celebrating the Eucharist for his community, Saturnin admitted without hesitation: «Without the Eucharist we cannot live». And one of the martyrs added: «Yes, I went to the assembly and I celebrated the Lord's supper with my brothers, because I am a Christian»⁹. For their fidelity to the weekly Easter¹⁰ the 49 North African martyrs of Abitinae were condemned to death.

The day of the Lord (*dominicum diem*) that is, the *Sunday Easter* is the “primordial feast”, because no other Christian reality would make sense without it: «if Christ has not been raised, then empty too is our faith»¹¹. The Paschal Mystery of death and resurrection is lived especially in the celebration of the Body and Blood of the Lord, together with the brothers, on the day made by the Lord¹².

Sunday is therefore a question of identity; it is the very *essence* of the Christian and of his constitution¹³.

2. Early in the morning, while it was still dark...

On the “first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark...” The Gospel of John (20:1), modifies the note of the Synoptics regarding the *hour* of the discovery of the empty tomb; not “*very early when the sun had risen*” (Mk 16:2), or “*at daybreak*” (Lk 24:1), but before the night ended; the Greek text uses the term: *skotía* – *the darkness*,

⁴ Jn 20:1.

⁵ The kerygmatic formula: “*third day*” which we find, for example, in 1Cor 15:4, does not seek to specify a date, but suggests the escathological dimension of the event of the resurrection (Cf 2Cor 5:17).

⁶ Sunday is not simply a transposition of the sabbath, but the fulfillment of the messianic rest into which we are called to enter, participating in the vitality of the Risen Lord. (Cf Heb 4:1-11; 1Pt 3:20; 2Pt 2:5).

⁷ In Revelation, especially the first part, there is an abundance of titles: *Lord*, *Lord of lords*, *king of kings* (17:14; 19:16); *the Son of God* (2:18), in the exclusive sense (Christians are never explicitly called sons of God in Rev.), *the Living One* (1:18), *the First and the Last*, *the Alpha and the Omega* (1:17; 2:8; 22:13); sayings of God (1:18; 2:6), these attributes are functionally transferred to Christ. He is the *faithful witness* (1:5; 3:14), in that he constitutes a continuous and credible attestation and that the plan of God is becoming a reality. In this sense, he is also called “*the Amen*”(3:14).

⁸ Sunday, the Lord's Day, as already mentioned in the book of Revelation (1:10) was, and is, the memorial day of the resurrection of the Lord, celebrated in the Eucharist (Acts 20:7) by the gathered assembly as attested also by the Didachè and Justin.

⁹ PL 8, 707-710.

¹⁰ *Dominicum* is the neutral substantive of the adjective *dominicus*, “of the Lord (*Dominus*)” and of itself signifies “something that is of the Lord”, that belongs to him, to the *Dominus*. We know that *Dominus*, the equivalent of the Greek *Kyrios*, indicates the glorious Lord, the Risen One. The neutral adjective *dominicum* may imply a substantive, which was later dropped, but of which it assumed the value (as in *dominica dies*, “the day of the Lord”, dropping *dies*, it became Domenica (Sunday)).

¹¹ Cf 1Cor 15:14.

¹² Ps 117:24.

¹³ Cf Atti del XXIV Congresso Eucaristico nazionale (Bari 21-29 maggio 2005), Levante Ed, Bari, 2005, pp. 261-274.

typical of the Johannine language¹⁴ retaining the understanding of the symbolic importance of the darkness and of the night¹⁵.

Darkness always generates a *passage*: the creation, the day, the reawakening of life and carries hope in its bosom¹⁶.

Every passage requires a slow and patient process, like that expressed in the wonderful text of the prophet Isaiah «*They call to me from Seir: "Watchman, how much longer the night? Watchman, how much longer the night?"*. *The watchman replies, "Morning has come, and again the night. If you will ask, ask; come back again"*»¹⁷. The man of God knows that the dawn will come even if he does not know when, and he also knows that the darkness will continue. He is the “watchman of the night”. The prophet dwells in the night, like everyone, not knowing, like everyone, the time of the dawn. He is “the one who stays”, who remains at his post as nocturnal lookout. Isaiah receives the command to speak to his people with his body naked and barefoot¹⁸.

He dialogues with the passers-by, speaks with the wayfarers of the night: «If you will ask, ask, come back again». He does not know how to respond, but he does not refuse to listen to the questions. The prophet is the man and woman of nocturnal dialogue, in the time of questions that have no answer. They can respond only by offering the only two things that are certain: *it is still night* and the *dawn will come*. He is not an expert of the times and does not attempt to predict the moment of dawn. The prophetic hope denies neither the night nor the dawn, and his fidelity to the vocation rests in being able to remain ignorant between the night and the dawn, and invite the passers-by to ask questions¹⁹.

In the Gospel of John, the experience of *darkness* also recalls the *sin* and *death* that Christ faced by incarnating himself in this world that we have polluted, taking upon himself the consequences in order to save us²⁰. The pandemic is the macroscopic evidence of the disorder of humanity in living the *three fundamental relationships* that constitute us as persons: relationship with God, with the *other* person or community *different* from myself, with created *things*²¹.

False prophecy is the denial of evil and of the night, but also the denial of the dawn. Although it is “still night” with the persistence of social distancing, the temptation may be to allow ourselves to be robbed of the expectation and the hope, typically Christian, by no longer proclaiming to the world that, from the heart of the night, «the day will come». This is the Paschal Mystery. In fact, it is not a matter of resolving problems, but of initiating *processes*.

The attitude for living this process of transformation was already suggested to us by Pope Francis in his discourse to the Participants of the 9th General Chapter²² in 2017: “Strengthen your vocation as “morning sentinels” (Cf Is 21:11-12) to be able to announce to others the coming of the dawn. Awaken the world, illuminate the future! Always with a smile, with joy, with hope”.

3. From the first night of creation to the day without night

The liturgical experience of the *Easter Vigil* teaches us to sing in the night that is clearer than the day, in the blessed night that knows no darkness because, for God, the darkness is as the light.

¹⁴ Cf Jn 1:5; 6:17; 8:12; 12:35.46; 1Jn 1:5; 2:8-11.

¹⁵ Cf X., Léon-Dufour, *Lettura dell'Evangelo secondo Giovanni*, Cinisello, Ed San Paolo, 1998, vol. IV, p. 259.

¹⁶ Cf C.M. Martini, *Le tenebre e la luce. Il dramma della fede di fronte a Gesù*, Piemme spa, 2011.

¹⁷ Is 21:11-12.

¹⁸ Is 20:2-6; 21:8.

¹⁹ Cf L., Bruni, *Nella notte e fino all'aurora*, 11 settembre 2016, in *Avvenire.it*

²⁰ Cf 1Cor 15:16-28.54-57; Rm 8:1-39.

²¹ Cf F., Rossi de Gasperis, *Sentieri di vita. La dinamica degli Esercizi ignaziani nell'itinerario delle Scritture*, Paoline ed., Volume 1, p. 183-306.

²² Discourse of Pope Francis, Monday, May 22, 2017 in the Consistory Hall of the Vatican. Sr M Micaela Monetti, Superior General, on August 20, 2021, in her introduction to the second meeting in preparation for the Council of the Institute, recalled this as an important reference for our journey as a Congregation.

Faith in Christ who is risen and living forever makes our heart sing despite the tears and pain. From the religiosity of our elder brothers, the Hebrews, we learned to sing the night that carries in its bosom the dawn of a new day.

The *Poem of the Four Nights*²³ which finds its fulfillment in the Christian celebration of the Easter Vigil, prepares us to enter with a positive outlook the mystery of the night, which is the womb of life and the place of hope and trust in those who await the dawn.

The text speaks to us of how four times God watched throughout the night to bring salvation to his people. The history of salvation responds to the unique plan of God and is the continuity between the First and the New Covenant. The *first night* is that of the *creation*²⁴. In the darkness and in the global confusion, the Eternal Word was light.

The *second night* when God appeared to Abraham, our father in the faith, at one hundred years of age and to Sara, his wife at ninety years of age, promising Isaac²⁵.

The *third night*: when he killed the firstborn of Egypt and his right hand saved the firstborn of Israel. This is celebrated in the spring, when from the death of winter, nature blooms with new life²⁶.

The *fourth night*, when God manifests himself to free the people of Israel from the midst of the nations and the King Messiah will come from Above. And God calls everything *Nights of Vigil*²⁷.

Already in the Exultet, after raising the Candle, they proclaim Christ Risen and the shining morning star and the sun that never sets. The Church - Bride announces and desires his eschatological return, offering the full meaning to the time of waiting²⁸.

The plan of God unfolding over time tends to conclude in the eschatological situation which in popular Christian language is called "eternity". The author of the book of Revelation refers to eternity in the symbolic construct of the new Jerusalem that will endure "forever and ever"²⁹ which is a Hebrew superlative and indicates the dynamic development of the history of salvation, directed toward fulfillment, that is, to the maximum point of the vital and beatific presence of God to which we are called to participate.

This "eternity" in the heavenly Jerusalem will be like "the day without night", in fact: "during the day its gates will never be shut, and there will be no night there"³⁰. This unlimited day, *without night*, indicates the fullness of eternal life, already attained, at its highest level.

The journey of salvation, however, takes place in history, in time, here and now; the dynamic presence of the Risen Lord brings history to its conclusion, overcoming the dramatic struggle of the believers with the deceptive power of the darkness organized by Satan in this world which, however, has only a limited time to act, in history, and he will be overcome forever by Christ, the Lamb sacrificed and risen.

²³ It is an ancient rabbinic text found in the Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch: Targum – Codex Neofiti I which comments on the four nights in which God acts in history. Sr. M. Micaela Monetti, Superior General, has resumed this perspective in the introduction to the second meeting in preparation for the Council of the Institute on August 20, 2021.

²⁴ The world was confusion and chaos and the darkness spread over the surface of the abyss. And the Eternal Word was light that shone. He called it First Night. The full moon of spring became its symbol. Creation is considered the beginning of God's salvific plans.

²⁵ God made a covenant with Abram and, after promising him a son, Isaac, asked him to offer him in sacrifice; but he prevented the killing. Easter also evokes the liberation from death of Isaac, the firstborn of the promise.

²⁶ It is the night that most directly refers to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It is the passage from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of the journey in the desert, from weeping to exultant joy, from death to life.

²⁷ This fourth night looks to the future, when the liberation will be definitive, with the coming of the Messiah, and there will be the inauguration of a totally new order of things. We Christians celebrate this fourth night in the Easter Vigil and we also renew the first three nights, thanks to the Scripture readings that evoke them, precisely during the Vigil.

²⁸ Cf L., Dan, a cura di, *Il tempo nella Bibbia*, Ed AdP, 2009.

²⁹ The expression is found in the Greek version of the OT and is used in the plural form in the NT.

³⁰ Rev 21:25.

As revealed in the book of Revelation, especially in the last chapters, evil will be totally disarmed, and the devil with death and the underworld will be cast into "the pool of fire and sulfur"³¹ forever and ever.

At the end of the unfolding of time, there will be a new heaven and a new earth and God "will wipe every tear" from our eyes, "and there will be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, for the old order has passed away"³².

The new Jerusalem will be resplendent because of the final victory of life over death and everything will be pervaded by the "newness" of the risen Christ, which is anticipated from the present through the "works of the saints".

The good, in fact, is dynamic and silently increases in history, despite the appearances. In time the betrothed, who lives according to the evangelical beatitudes, prepares the bright, clean linen dress³³ that she will wear on her wedding day, when she becomes the Bride in the heavenly Jerusalem.

With a symbolism rich in details, typical of Revelation, we are invited to contemplate how in the history spread over time, the "betrothed" city becomes the "bride". She receives in gift from God the full nuptiality, in an equal and unspeakable love: as Christ, the immolated and risen Paschal Lamb, is entirely for his bride, so the bride is entirely for Him³⁴.

The "bride" city is the symbol of the people of God redeemed in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of the Father and she is totally pervaded by the transforming dynamic of the resurrection.

This revelation of the baptismal identity motivates and encourages believers in living the struggle and fidelity to the Gospel in the events of daily life³⁵, while awaiting the fulfillment of the history of salvation. The Church, a pilgrim in time, lives repeating the prayer to Christ Jesus "radiant star of morning". In fact, "the Spirit and the bride say: Come. Let the hearer say, "Come". Let the one who thirsts come forward, and the one who wants it receive the gift of life-giving water... Come Lord Jesus!"³⁶ And there will be no more cursing, nor pandemics.

"The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will worship him. They will look upon his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Night will be no more, nor will they need light from lamp or sun, for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign forever and ever"³⁷.

4. The community converts to the Risen Lord

In the *time* which flows without return (*Chronos*), the risen Christ is present in the fullness of his vitality as the Risen One: "He is the same yesterday, today, and forever!"³⁸ In the changing history, Jesus Christ does not change but renews all things through his presence. The community of believers is called to recognize the unceasing presence and the salvific action in the various circumstances of life, understood as the opportune time (*Kairos*) of conversion and to resume the journey in chronological time that has an end.

The first day after the sabbath, to the first community of Jerusalem is offered the unheard of opportunity (*kairos*) to pass from a pre-Paschal faith in Christ to a Paschal faith: "If you confess

³¹ Cf Rev 20:1-15.

³² Rev 21:4.

³³ Rev 19:8.

³⁴ Rev 21:9-22:5.

³⁵ Cf U., Vanni, *Il tempo nell'Apocalisse: dal tempo che scorre al secolo dei secoli*, in "Il tempo nella Bibbia" a cura di Lino Dan, op. cit., p.191-213.

³⁶ Rev 22:17.20.

³⁷ Rev 22:3-5.

³⁸ Heb 13:8. Cf Mt 28:20.

with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved"³⁹.

Mary of Magdala⁴⁰, named by John among the women present at the foot of the cross⁴¹, *early in the morning while it was still dark*, arrived alone⁴² at the tomb in which the body of Jesus was laid after being taken down from the cross⁴³.

Seeing that the stone had been "removed"⁴⁴, without entering the tomb, Mary hurried to tell the disciples, transmitting to them the disturbing discovery she had made. Mary did not say that the *stone* had been removed and that the *body* of Jesus had been carried away but that "They have taken *the Lord* from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him"⁴⁵. In Mary and in the rushing disciples, the interior darkness (*skotía*) is still very thick, despite the impetus in the heart. Through the Lord's initiative, even if they are not aware of it yet, the journey begins toward the blazing light of faith in the Risen One.

On that first day history changes direction and begins a great movement of men and women who seek Jesus, but, for now, the horizon for everyone is still that of the tomb that is inexplicably empty. Peter and the beloved disciple run toward the tomb; they enter and see inside the distended linens... and the cloth that covered his head in its place. The sheet that had been bulky because it contained the dead body of Jesus is now sagging. The head covering "was not spread out like the sheet" but "rolled up" in a separate place.

The intention of the evangelist is clear: this was not the theft of a dead body!⁴⁶

It was only the disciple whom Jesus loved, who entered after Peter, saw the position of the cloths⁴⁷ and changed the *direction of his gaze*: "he saw and believed"⁴⁸. The beloved disciple saw the same scene as Peter, but he believed. The one who loves, recognizes the signs that belong to the person loved.

The two men observe the facts but "they return home". Mary, the *woman*⁴⁹, instead remains near the tomb and weeps for the loss of the beloved person.

The term "*woman*" gives the feminine figure of Mary Magdalene a profound meaning. Besides placing her beside Mary, the Mother of Jesus, it places her in relation with the woman (in Hebrew

³⁹ Rm 10:9.

⁴⁰ Mary of Magdala: Mt 27:56.61; Lk 8:2; Mk 16:9.

⁴¹ Jn 19:25.

⁴² According to Mark there are three women at the tomb, according to Matthew two, and according to Luke there were many. Mary Magdalene is always named first in the group.

⁴³ Jn 19:38-42.

⁴⁴ The verb "remove" is the same as that used by Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus (Jn 11:39.41). But in this case the stone was not "removed" (Jn) or "rolled away" (Synoptics) by human hands, but by God himself who overcame death and the underworld forever.

⁴⁵ Jn 20:2.

⁴⁶ Cf *Approfondimento.pdf* (<http://www.parrocchiastellamaris.net>).

⁴⁷ The text should be translated as follows: ...*Meanwhile also Simon Peter, who followed him, arrived and entered the tomb and saw the sheet spread and the sudarium, which had been placed around his head, not smooth like the sheet, but rolled up in its place...everything* was exactly in the same place as it had been placed there on Friday evening. The *funeral sheet* fell under its own weight (*keimena*), in the same place in which the body of Jesus had been laid, and the *sudarium* that had surrounded his head continued to be *rolled up* (not folded) in its place and formed a small bundle in the same place in which the head of Jesus had rested earlier.

The Greek word used here (Jn 20:6): *othonia* means "piece of cloth" or "sheet" not "bands" (in Greek: *Keirai*) as for Lazarus in Jn 11:44. In this way, John is in agreement with the other evangelists who affirm that the body of Jesus was wrapped in a *shroud*: *piece of cloth* or *sheet*. The "sudarium", instead, was a piece of cloth or a handkerchief that the Hebrews used for drying sweat. According to some customs, when a person died, the sudarium used in life was used to hold the mouth closed. This cloth "surrounded" the head of Christ like a ring. The two disciples, therefore, saw in the tomb of Jesus: the *sheet* and the *sudarium*.

⁴⁸ Jn 20:8.

⁴⁹ Mary of Magdala is repeatedly called *woman* (in Greek: *ghynai*): an important term in John that is primarily addressed to the Mother of Jesus in Cana (Jn 2:4) and on Calvary (Jn 19:2).

'*ishsah*) of the first creation, especially considering that the tomb is located in a garden that recalls the Eden of creation⁵⁰.

The two names: *Mariam/Rabbuni* spoken with great tenderness by the protagonists in the meeting in the garden of life refer back to the original and ultimate couple of humanity and recall the Song of Songs in its dominant theme of the loved one seeking her Beloved⁵¹.

In the Fourth Gospel, Mary of Magdala is illuminated and shines as the icon of the rising Church, purified by the embrace⁵² with the Lord. She is always the first of the group of women on Easter morning, a fact which emphasizes her exceptional role in the primitive Church. Magdalene is the bride and missionary sent to evangelize her brothers and sisters⁵³.

The fact that, in Jn 20:1.11-18, only Mary of Magdala is named, therefore, has a special significance and indicates a process of personalization typical of the Fourth Gospel. Mary of Magdala, in fact, represents the entire community.

Like the first Church of Jerusalem, Mary Magdalene finds herself in the dark and the confusion created by the events of the passion and cross of Jesus. The search of this disciple is guided by love, but it is also filled with anguish, closed in the horizon of death and not yet enlightened by faith in the Risen One.

Before turning repeatedly and going out of herself, Mary seeks "her" dead, like a precious *thing* to own and guard⁵⁴. Jesus is considered as an "object" that can be carried away and put in another place. In order to meet the Living One she needed to entirely change her interior perspective.

Conclusion

Faith is a growth process that has different and gradual times for Mary of Magdala, for Peter, for the beloved disciple, for the other members of the community in Jerusalem. The Eleven and the other disciples react to the Easter announcement by not believing the *women*⁵⁵ despite the fact that some *men*⁵⁶ among the disciples of Jesus had stated that the tomb was truly empty just as the women had found it. Seeing the empty tomb is not enough to believe in the resurrection: it is necessary to encounter Him, in person, as the Living One who brings us with Himself to the Father in the Holy Spirit.

In the Church and in the Congregation there are different roles, services and ministries, but the faith is not dependent on these. Both the *institutional component* of the community and the *theological component* which animates our life of faith, hope and charity, have their origin in the same Lord and the Easter proclamation, that he is truly risen, affects all of us and makes us his witnesses.

Each one encounters the risen Lord *when* and *how* He decides to manifest himself. If the Risen One chooses the women first, this is part of the mysterious plan of God and of his gratuitous love, as already announced in Deuteronomy⁵⁷: "It is not because you are the largest of all nations that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you, for you are really the smallest of all nations. It was because the Lord loved you..."

On Easter morning, Mary of Magdala, the figure of the first community, began the process of going out of herself that prepared her to recognize the Presence of the risen Lord. In the Church seeking signs of the Risen One there are different temperaments, mentalities, reactions... but there must be the passionate love of the first disciples: "the sentinels of the morning".

⁵⁰ Gen 2:8.15;3:23-24.

⁵¹ Sg 3:1-4; 8:1-3.5 until Sg 2:6-7.16 the poignant expectation of the beloved is expressed.

⁵² Cf Mk 16:9; Ez 16:6-14.62-63; Hos 2:16-25.

⁵³ F., Rossi de Gasperis, *Sentieri di vita. La dinamica degli Esercizi ignaziani nell'itinerario delle Scritture*, Paoline ed., Volume 3, p. 455-496.

⁵⁴ F., Rossi de Gasperis, *È risorto non è qui*, Pardes Edizioni, 2008, p 40.

⁵⁵ Cf Lk 24:11.22-24.

⁵⁶ Jn 20:3-10; Acts 4:1-22.

⁵⁷ Dt 7:7-8.

In the time of pandemic and especially in situations of grave difficulty, our communities are called to witness the faith of the resurrection, seeking together the signs of the active presence of the Risen Lord, *here* and *now*. Jesus Master saved the world by taking on our *contaminated* reality, but with purity of heart and loving until the supreme sign of the offering of his life. Only this saves us.

I would like to conclude by referring to our Rule of Life (Art. 9), to the Founder: Blessed James Alberione, to Mother Scholastica and to the other brothers and sisters of the Pauline Family who enabled us to encounter the Risen Lord, whose Beauty transfigured their life and gave a powerful impetus for the apostolate: to communicate Him as Master and Lord, Way, Truth and Life.

Faith in the resurrection is the foundation of our life and renders beautiful our ecclesial identity as Sister Disciples of the Divine Master in the Pauline Family.

For the personal *meditatio-oratio-contemplatio* and in view of the sharing in the virtual rooms, I would suggest the following line of reflection:

The *night* carries within itself the *day* and always generates a *passage*: What *Easter passages* (at the personal - community or Congregation level) are necessary to begin immediately, without waiting for the end of the pandemic?