



***“How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?”*** Hebrews 1:10-14; 2:1-3

The words of St Paul’s letter to the Hebrews bring to us, on the second Sunday of Lent, a great warning about the neglect of the resurrection, the neglect of Christ’s victory over death. To neglect His love that moves Him to come from everlasting - You are from everlasting - into a world that is going to change and die. If the world inherited sin from man, and all creation was affected by it, it is also for the sake of man that Christ comes into our mortality, so that the old time will be renewed as well. A new creation for the sake of His son, to whom He speaks today directly: *“My son, your sins are forgiven.”* ... Jesus tells the paralytic today.

How can we neglect the resurrection? And what does it take to escape it, through our own neglect. Neglect brings about death. If we don’t water the plant, a time comes when what was renewed could become old again? We proclaim in church the victory of life over death, in Christ, while in the reality of our time we testify the reign of death and destruction that comes through that, through wars that spread, through ideologies that kill unborn babies, the elderly, the vulnerable people with disabilities and, with them, all of us. When we neglect the resurrection, we fail to recognize both the pain of the one who suffers and the good news for that soul as well. What is left then for us? Fantasia, because that’s the only place outside of truth, which we decorated with idols and false prophets. It is the only place where we can escape from the reality of our own sin and the good news of salvation. The fantasia that starts with one person aims to become collective. If what we create out of a weary mind, that refuses to ask for a sign, is not real but copied from others, the consequence of that is real and destructive. So much so that it makes us wonder, while we proclaim and believe in the universality of the resurrection and victory of life over death, beyond time, if we can question the reality of death in a time that is finite and growing old. We are tempted to believe that the renewal of life is somehow like a new clock on a new body. However, the renewal is manifested within a body that has experienced the power of death in this time. Renewal of life for us starts with remembering to water the plant that is dying. Where is the water to help us start taking care of the dying plant? We need to ask for the water that makes the dirt moist and gives life to the plant. We need to remove the curtain from the window for the light to break in and rest on the branches that are about to yield forth new leaves, giving warmth to what had become

frozen through our forgetfulness. We need to repent and to give water, not to us who are very thirsty, but to the one that is close to us. We must escape our own fantasia that keeps us away from the reality of the resurrection. It is pretty much what br Luke is doing with the basil plants on the second floor, trying to bring them back to life.

On Friday Carlos arrived at the end of our common reflection about the gospel of the day. We extended the time of sharing by a few minutes, so that he may read the gospel in Spanish and share with us his thoughts in English. He thought that sometimes we need to be shaken. To be woken up. Because we are lying down, paralyzed by an illness. It is needed for us to be shaken. That's what Jesus did with the paralytic. For us, at times this means to really give attention to the one who cannot move because of an illness that paralyzes. To attend, for instance, somebody who has depression, Carlos thought. This will shake up the person. The loving kindness shown to the sick shakes up the spirit from its paralysis.

It is precisely what we failed to do on Friday. We could not wake up a person who spent all day with us, in a very unconventional way. He was not sleeping, but not quite awake. He would not walk out or come in. He was physically present but would not speak to anyone. He could not eat but only chew a few Oreo cookies throughout the day. He seemed absent and yet his eyes were looking for someone. At lunch time, everybody avoided to sit at his table even though he was in the central point of the room. We were not able to speak to him or to communicate. Only to spend time briefly in his presence.

Many things could have been the reason for his behaviour, he could have been intoxicated or had a form of autism. He could have been under a type of shock, because of something that had happened, or was about to happen. Or maybe he was under the spell of a dumb spirit ... and so on. The image of this man standing at the top of the stairs, staring at the city who had no eyes for him, spread around the fear that he could fall anytime. But he did not. A sign that he was aware of his surroundings. While his body was avoiding people, his eyes were looking for a presence. His eyes had a story to tell, but the story seemed buried inside him, while suffering had made him captive and out of reach. We were not able to shake him up. He was paralyzed. He came that way and so he departed. Where and how, one could not know. Where is the water to give to him, so that he can be refreshed and made new again?

In him Christ revealed His face to us this lent. A face that was looking for the presence of others while living the experience of being avoided. He would not speak to us, and we could find no words in prayer to reach him. Maybe because our words were the same, he had heard over and over again. Words without a home because the heart is a foreigner to them. His face revealed a suffering that cannot be comprehended and spoken. A face that reveals the pain

and a relationship that is broken, that leaves nothing to be said. We pray for him, and he comes. But he does not look the way we expected. Even though his eyes could not be mistaken for somebody else's. The face of one who has been alienated remains faithful to us in silence, without sharing his suffering with strangers. The face that took upon him today all the modern indifference to suffering and the abyss of this time that harms out of its fantasia and the lies that come with it. All the abyss between us, the brokenness of communion and unity of faith was revealed in him. It was the face of Christ from the cross, in modern times, where death is not foreseeable for some, but sudden for others, the face revealing an inner crucifixion that cannot be seen and is hidden from the eyes of others, in order to celebrate the sacrifice of the innocent in silence.

It is the face that Christ reveals to us so that we may look at Him with a glimpse of love. It is Christ who suffers in the alienated person. He has no words for us, and so we need to pray and to love him in silence. Until he would give us a word again.

## *Fast - Chewing the Lenten fat...*

*Fasting is so we can look at the Lord and not at ingredient labels.*

*A general principle: the more frequently we receive Communion, the more frequently we go to Confession.*

### **About fasting and ascetical struggle – short community story**

M lives up the street and she is originally from Bangladesh. Her English is as broken as you can get while her sense of humour has no boundaries. And so is her "joie de vivre", while her sorrow torments her every time she thinks of something. "I lost 40 pounds", she said with a big smile. Weight is very important for her. It threatens her life and the doctor told her she had to loose weight. But she could not, of course, like some of us. But then she did. And how did that happen? "I eat only at the here now. Not at home. Only here." To prove me wrong in my disbelief, she showed me pictures. Yes, the evidence was right there. "Yes ... only here I eat. No home ..."

The following day we picked up the conversation from where we had left it the day before. "When I am home alone ... very bad thoughts for me ... I cannot sleep... Very bad ... When I come here, different ... me happy here ... And then I thought ... Maybe, when I am alone, with very bad thoughts, I eat. Because of that ... Only here me happy, that's why now I don't eat at home ... Only here."

## **Br Luke**

has taken a new path this week. New and yet not foreign to him. A path where the purity of his heart and prayer will be his walking stick. And the community opens to him full heartedly. He walks with those who are lonely and those who are poor and in need of clothing. He brings us closer to the poor. By becoming more like them. He associates with the lowly because that's the place where God dwells. Today, he chooses a path that many reject. A path that, for our continent, is unpopular and hard to walk upon. He walks against the "common sense" of the modern culture in which we still live. In a culture of death, he walks towards life. He walks against the current that makes people desire self determination and prosperity. An ancient path that is untrodden in modern times. It is his faith and his courage that allow him to follow Christ in this way, on the hard path, not often walked, taken over by weeds and thorns. It is because of that that he will receive plenty of grace, and grace upon grace. And because he opens again the ancient path to the new world, many others will follow.

Br Luke should know that our prayer is with him. As it is the love of the poor that heals any sorrow of heart and gives us fresh water when tired and in need of rest.

As the community is a gift for Br Luke, so is he for the community. A gift of faith and new life that is planted in this world that is stubborn against life, in order for the seed to grow and bear good fruits.

May God grant him many years and keep him always within the love of the poor. While walking alone with God, br Luke walks with the poor in a broken community, for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of new life.



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under  
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