



FROM LENT TO EASTER 2020

The Lenten period is a time of preparation for the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ. Generally, it is characterized by sacrifice as a means of overcoming our weaknesses. Fasting may be symbolic, but it is about accepting difficult privations in order to live better Christian values.

This year, 2020, Lent is out of the ordinary, due to the worldwide spread of the coronavirus. We are obliged to stay at home to avoid contagion and therefore to save lives. There are different ways to respond to this situation: accept or endure. Live it as Lent or suffer it as punishment.

To suffer, that is resignation, is to be passive and there is a feeling of powerlessness. We can consider the current situation as a punishment that we must undergo and that we can do nothing about. This can lead to death. On the other hand, accepting it would give us new impetus. Acceptance leads to transformation, to seeing the future differently, to being open to new perspectives.

This Lent 2020 helps us to put what we do into perspective and we see what is essential. We notice that it is possible to stop our daily activities that we think are necessary and unavoidable. In this way we can open ourselves to new ways of living! Focus on the essential and put the rest into perspective. God alone is the absolute, the essential, the only inescapable because He is the origin of everything, and everything ends in Him, He is the Alpha and the Omega.

The present situation deprives us of security. We are continually terrified by the figures published every day about the increasing number of people affected by the coronavirus, those who are sick and those who have died. We are afraid of death. We are doing everything, globally, to survive.

Let us contemplate Christ who had the same experience in the garden of Gethsemane. He was afraid of the death that threatened him. He lifted his prayer to God the Father: "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to go away without me drinking it, your will be done" (Mt 26:42). Then he surrendered himself to the will of his Father.

The Paschal Mystery that we celebrate is the contemplation of Christ's death and resurrection. We must die in order to live, "If we die with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him" (Rom 6:8). Do we have enough faith to accept this at the depths of our being and live accordingly? This is the necessary condition to remain at peace despite life's adversities. We do everything we can to avoid death, God does the rest. We accept his will.

At least, could we die in the sense of letting go certain habits to acquire a new way of living, more efficiently, more in conformity with God's will? To adopt a new way of doing things that would respond better to the present reality and to the emerging needs? To open ourselves to the values of our time such as solidarity and living as a global family?

Let us celebrate the Paschal Mystery with faith and continue to live with hope, the true life of the risen Christ!

Sylvain Ramandimbarisoa fms