



MESSAGE FROM NOEL SIMARD, BISHOP OF VALLEYFIELD, FOR EASTER 2020

"Do not be afraid..... He is not here; for he has risen. "(Matthew 28:5-6).

This is what the angel said to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who had gone to the tomb at dawn. Mary Magdalene meets the risen Jesus and is transformed: she goes from disappointment to joy and runs to announce the good news to the disciples.

As baptized people, we believe in the resurrection of Jesus who reveals the victory of life over death and who is the promise of our own resurrection. Despite this faith in us, we remain fearful and even terrified of the threats of the COVID-19 pandemic. This scourge has taken away loved ones to whom we have not been able to say goodbye; it deprives us of the hugs, the handshakes, the gatherings of family and friend, the physical closeness that is so vital to our personal and communal "living". It also deprives us of the opportunity to gather together especially in our churches. Pope Francis describes our present state very well: "We find ourselves frightened and lost like the disciples of the Gospel; we have been caught off guard by a furious storm. We realize that we are all in the same boat, all fragile and disoriented...We are all important and necessary, all called to row together, all needing to comfort each other...We cannot go forward, each alone, but only together" (March 27, 2020).



On this Easter Day, the Lord joins us at the tomb of our fears and doubts. He reassures us: "Do not be afraid...I am alive, I am with you". And as the slogan says, "it will be all right". "I am the God of life and not of death, I bring you my light that drives out the darkness that may be present in your hearts and in the world. I am with you in the boats of your lives to overcome the waves of fear, sadness or withdrawal. I am with you, the Lord tells us, through all those people who devote themselves in hospitals, in residences or homes, or at home; I am with you through all those who provide essential services, who seek effective treatment for the virus, who manage the crisis with great dedication and self-sacrifice. I am with you in all these words and gestures of mutual aid, consolation, compassion, sharing and solidarity. Look also, the Lord seems to be telling us, at all these signs of transformation that are taking place for the good of humanity and of Mother Earth: less pollution, greater concern for the weak or vulnerable, greater solidarity, more love...

Jesus reassures us: his presence helps us not only to make the crossing in these difficult times but also to believe in a sunny tomorrow and in new and unsuspected paths of life. As Pope Francis says, "Jesus brings serenity in our storms, because with God, life never dies". On this Easter day, let us allow the Spirit to regenerate us and reinvigorate our lives. Let us be hopeful and serene witnesses to the joy and life of the Risen One!

Happy and holy Easter! I am with you and I pray for you!

+ Noel, Bishop