

# LENT 2021

*Looking at the  
world with  
Hope in  
Crucified Christ*



We are approaching The Lent time... and we follow pandemic, we continue in anxiety, fear, worry. "Social distance" is now normative, the use of masks becomes normal. Lots of shops are still closed, people losing their jobs. The race to become the group of those who reach for vaccines sometimes brings out the worst in humans. As always some with power, with money they can skip the line and get the wanted vaccine even earlier than those at high risk. The numbers of the sick keep going up, you hear stories of people dying alone in hospitals. Racial, political, gender-based violence continues. Human trafficking remains a serious problem. The earth house is still wounded and raped. The poorest remain even poorer. They are most affected by natural disasters, lack of food, medicine, education. And the list goes on... in the face of that panorama as we can see the world with hope?

This reality that cannot be ruled out exists as well as moments when human beings let their best. The latest AAMC (*American Association of Medical College*), it was reported a striking increase in the number of incomes in the medical departments at U.S. Universities. The vast majority of new candidates said they were motivated by their volunteer work with hospitals suffering from the pandemic. Throughout the world, stories are heard from school-age children who have planned ways to raise funds, for those who have lost their jobs because of emergency closures in shops,

factories. In a CNN interview with Dr. Leana Wenn, an expert medicine analyst on contagious diseases, when the reporter asked if it was troubling how quickly they had taken out the Covid-19 vaccine, Dr. Wenn replied, among other things, that scientists had effectively taken out the vaccine in record time, but this was because the global scientific community had worked together. It was not a situation in which everyone kept the glory of their discovery but was put in common to be shared by the entire scientific community.

In natural disasters, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes... the global community meets the most basic needs of sister humanity.

If, although the world continues to suffer because of human sin, the hope of the seed of good that God has placed in each person remains significant. Evil, however much it deals with, cannot finally overthrow God's good. In the figure of Christ crucified in which we meditate every Lent can see the world from the vision of hope that Christ gives us. His sacrifice is the creator of hope and life.

This material presents an opportunity to reflect on a personal and community level as from the crucified Christ we can see signs of change for good in our lives and our society. Like Maria Antonia Paris who from her contemplation of the crucified Christ was able to discover the Holy Law of the Lord and the call to carry the gospel in a new order, not new in doctrine but in practice.

### **The message of God's Word**

Jesus' crucifixion is a familiar scene which is known to all. Today we are going to focus on a symbolic aspect. The garden or orchard is a place that expresses the cycle of birth and death and again to new life. Every winter, the garden/orchard dies, dries, it seems that everything is over and that from the dry earth can only be reborn. And every spring we are surprised again by the regrowth of small, fragile plants that unexpectedly become flowers and fruits that delight the sight, smell, palate. The garden/orchard is a symbol of hope, that with perseverance and patience each cycle is renewed. In the crucifixion of Jesus in which it seems that everything is finished, and completed, which fills us with discouragement and sadness we are also surprised to experience the life that springs up, the promise that fills us with the hope that, although it seems that everything is lost, we can trust that the Lord will always be faithful to his promise.

The narration of passion according to the Gospel of John is proclaimed every year in the liturgical celebration of Good Friday, all contemporary exegetes agree that the four evangelists have each developed their own theology and offer us different aspects of Jesus. And this is particularly remarkable in the narratives of the Lord's passion and death. Since Matthew differs very little from Mark in the narrative of passion, we can talk about virtually three different perspectives: Mark, Luke, and John. Mark offers us a Jesus who touches the deepest limits of abandonment

and only after the cross can he be recognized as the Son of God (cf. Mk 15:39). In Luke abandonment is not presented in such a fresh and radical way and passion and crucifixion appears as the occasion to manifest the greatness of love and divine forgiveness (cf. Lk 23:28.34.43). John's narration is very diverse. It is the narration of a Jesus who owns his destiny whose life no one takes away from him, but that he gives it voluntarily (cf. Jn. 10:18). That voluntarily given life brings with its great hope, the grain of wheat that bites bring out "a lot of fruit", a new life. Jesus' crucifixion will bring forth eternally new life.

The narration of John's passion can be divided (Jn 18:1-19,42) into five large blocks: 1. The confrontation in the garden (18,1-12); 2. Interrogation before Anas and the denial of Peter (18,13-27); 3. The Roman process before Pilate (18,28-19, 16a); 4. Death in Golgotha (19,16b-37); 5. Placed in the tomb in a garden (19.38-42).

For our reflection today we will concentrate on the first and last blocks and meditate on the symbolism of the garden.

### **Garden showdown (18.1-12)**

The narration begins in a garden (Greek: *Kepos*) and ends in a garden (19,41). Isn't John thinking of the garden of Eden of Genesis 2-3? More than once John seems to evoke Genesis: "In the beginning..." (Jn 1.1; Gn 1.1); the initial week of the gospel (Jn 1,29.35.43; 2.1) and the initial week of the creation (Gen 1); after the Resurrection Jesus "breathed" upon the disciples (Jn 20:22) as Yahweh in the creation of man (Gen 2:7). Probably by reading the passion of Jesus, John wants us to think about the narration of a new creation, which will spring from the open side of the Lord (cf. 7:39). In the Joanic narrative, the orchard episode is a real clash between light and darkness. Jesus is not surprised, rather he is ahead (18,4). Darkness is represented by Judas and his companions, symbols of all those who close to Truth and Light. Judas has preferred the darkness in the light that has come into the world (cf. 3:19). When he abandoned Jesus during dinner, he entered the night: "As soon as Judas took the bite, he came out. It was night" (13.30). He now needs artificial light because he has rejected the one who is "the light of the world" and who, when followed, is not walked in darkness (cf. 8:12). Jesus who confronts Judas and his companions does not appear prostrate on the ground asking the Father to be delivered from that hour, as in the other gospels. In John, Jesus and the Father are one (10,30). "Now my soul is troubled. And what am I going to say? Father, deliver me from this hour! But I've come at this time for this. Father glorifies your Name" (12,27). It's the beginning of the hour of glory. "The cup the Father has given me, won't I drink it?" (18,11).

If anyone falls to the ground in the garden it is not Jesus but his enemies before the solemn declaration: "I am" (18:5). "I am" is the name of God. And before God, their enemies fall and

retreat. "Confusion and shame upon those who seek my life" (Psalm 35:4); "When the evildoers come against me to devour my flesh, it is they, my adversaries and enemies, who stumble and fall" (Psalm 27:2). Jesus appears to dominate the situation with sovereign freedom: "I give my life, to recover it again. No one takes it away from me, I give it voluntarily" (10:18). He is also the Good Shepherd who does not abandon his sheep: "If ye seek me, let them go" (18:8). And John writes, "Thus would what he had said be fulfilled, 'of those that have given me, I have not lost any of them'" (18:9). Jesus had said of his sheep, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall take them out of my hand" (10:28). In short, we witness a real confrontation, between "the world" (the forces hostile to The Truth) and Jesus and his (the light of the world). This confrontation will be permanent in history. That is why Jesus has prayed for his own to the Father: "The world has hated them, for they are not of the world as I am not of the world. I do not ask you to withdraw them from the world, but to keep them from the Evil One" (17:14-15).

### **Placed in the tomb in a garden (19, 38-42)**

The burial of Jesus is also narrated by the other evangelists, but in John, once again, he wears other accents to accentuate the sovereignty of Jesus. It is not only the traditional Joseph of Arimathea who appears on stage but a character typical of the fourth gospel, Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus "at night" (3,1-10). Nicodemus now goes to Jesus, openly (19:39). Jesus' words are fulfilled again: "When I am raised upon the earth, I will draw everyone to me" (12:32). Glorified Christ is every man's goal on earth. On the other hand, the body of Jesus, the new and eternal sanctuary destroyed by men and raised by God (2:19-22), where men will find full communion and will be able to worship God "in Spirit and Truth" (4:24), is revered as such. It is the body of a king, sanctuary full of glory. That is why it is "wrapped in bandages with aromas" (19:40) and with an immense amount of myrrh and aloe (19,39). His tomb is not just anyone, "he is a new tomb" (19:41), in keeping with the absolute novelty of his glory.

And we end up where we started, in the garden. From start to finish Jesus' passion in the fourth gospel is the narrative of a victory. "I have overcome the world" (16:33). The royalty of Jesus has been revealed. "It was life, and life was the light of men, and light shines in darkness and darkness did not overcome it" (1:4). Every believer, every community, united to Jesus, Truth, Light and Life, overcomes the world. "He gave all who received him the power to become children of God, to those who believe in His Name" (1:12).

(Full exegesis can be found in <http://www.clerus.org/clerus/dati/2000-05/11-7/Elrelato.html>)



Stop for a moment to look at these images.

- ✓ If it were a painting, what could be the title of the work they represent?
- ✓ If they had a voice... what would they tell you?

*Everything is reborn when  
in you there is a hope*

Now let's think of our Congregational garden/orchard. As we can motivate ourselves not to lose sight of the hope that even at a time when everything seems to be in crisis, the life cycle will be reborn again. As our Congregation, at this particular moment of restructuring and pandemic, can manifest that "Christ has overcome the world". As I can Claretian Missionary Sister be a flower, a fresh fruit of hope and beauty for the world

*Without losing sight of the environment, my gaze is projected with a sense of gratitude and hope. I recall that in the forum of the Congregation held on December 6, 2020, with the motto "Mary Immaculate Opens us to hope" we have shared the wealth that has arisen in this time of limitations and confinement. We have wondered what calls we perceive and what changes reality asks of us. How much vitality in the communities that energizes the mission by looking for new ways to continue in evangelical service! The values that give us life have resonated again in this context: the depth, the style of Jesus, the care of relationships. Even proposals, plantings... if, just as we are organized, we can respond to the needs of today's social reality.*

Letter from Jolanta Kafka, rmi to the Congregation, Feb. 2, 2021

*Let us look at our Founders, examples of passionate people, missionaries and reformers (DC 2017, 5). Maria Antonia Paris discovered her vocation in the encounter with Christ and with the suffering Church. The two loves remained alive and emerged naturally throughout their lives, in times of joyful growth in communities, and in times of crisis. In a prophetic spirit, he saw the members of the new Order "as a living copy of the first Apostles, as pilgrims on this earth." St Anthony Maria Claret set out as a missionary because Jesus was enthused of the Gospel who becomes a Joyful Word and proclamation of salvation. In one of his last letters from Rome, he wrote to Mother Antonia: "My occupations have been and are now of the holy ministry. In Paris ... I predicted all of Lent." He was urged by Christ's charity.*

Letter from Jolanta Kafka, Rmi to the Congregation, Faith. 2, 2021

## The Foundress' Message

### Maria Antonia Paris

✚ *Severing one night in prayer, intensely pleading with the crucified Christ to remedy the needs of the Holy Church, which on that occasion were many, I offered him my life in sacrifice as I had other times done. but since he had no virtues in me to offer him, he begged him to deign to teach me what he had to do to give him taste and glory by fulfilling his most holy will. l'm s. 2*

- ✚ *One day our Lord made me see the beauty of his Most Holy Law, presenting to me insight a beautiful and very long meadow, all full of beautiful flowers of all kinds; gave a smell that tasted to all the most delicate smells. And I saw that they were all stained, some more and some less: some that had nothing but a little stained but smooth that very beautiful beauty. And our Lord said unto me; "see, my daughter, the beauty, of the divine commandments? These stains that shave these beautiful flowers, is the breaking of my most holy law, that I have no one to keep it because no one who fulfills the precept of charity." Aut. 27*
  
- ✚ *To more than I saw in these Sacred Letters (without seeing letters with the eyes of the body as I said above), an inner voice at the bottom of my soul explained to me the meaning of them, and how to fulfill them. In that, I remain (for a moment) in a sea of confusion, because in the convent that I was then did not keep what I had just read in that Holy Book (I say book because I do not know how to express where I saw these sacred letters written: in my way of understanding everything I saw in Christ Crucified. Aut. 6*
  
- ✚ *When the archbishop put on the crown, I felt such an extraordinary weight on my head that it made me bow, and naturally weighed very little the crown because it was very thin flowers. Admiring me greatly from that great weight said to me Our Lord, "This is my daughter the burden upon you of the reform of my Church"; And he called me three times "my wife" with great affection, implying to me that the Father loved me very much, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And Our Lord said to me, "My child, from now on I want to be sitting amid your heart." And he wanted to celebrate it for eight days by preserving the sacramental species of one communion for another. RC 9.*
  
- ✚ *Shutting up I can't and talking is recklessness. Of course, then, my God, that you send it to me, I will speak... So be the first point as God Our Lord wants general reform throughout his Church. None are excused for impossibility, and corruption of customs or times because God our Lord all times is present and has given us nothing but a Holy Gospel. He asks for nothing new our Lord in his Church; he only asks us all for what we have promised him. The keeper of his Most Holy Law ... and what was the cause that the Church of God flourished so much in its principles, with so few operators? Because they preached with the gospel in their hand, kept in their mouths. Be true all the Pontific that greed has lost all religion; this way the devil has opened up for all the evils that the Church is suffering. (cf. PR 1. 2. 8. 12. 41. 49)*

## San Antonio Maria Claret

- ✚ *Oh, Jesus of my life! I know, know and I know that sorrows, pains and jobs are the currency of the apostolate. With your grace I embrace them, I see them, and I say that helping me, Lord and my Father, I am soon to drink that chalice of inner sorrows and I am determined to receive that baptism of outer sorrows, and I say: away from me in glory in something other than, on the Cross, where you are nailed by me, and I too want to be for you. So be it. Aut. 427*
  
- ✚ *Oh, my neighbour, I love you, I love you for a thousand reasons. I love you because God wants me to love you. I love you because God sends it to me. I love you because God loves you. I love you because you are raised by God in his image and for heaven. I love you because you are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. I love you for how much Jesus Christ has done and suffered for you; and in proof of the love, I have for you, I will do and suffer for you all the sorrows and jobs, until death if necessary. I love you because you are loved by Mary Most Holy, my dearest Mother. I love you because you are beloved of the Angels and Saints of heaven. I love you, and out of love, I will deliver you from the sins and sorrows of hell. I love you, and out of love I will instruct you and teach you the evils that you must turn away and the virtues you are to practice, and I will accompany you on the paths of good works and heaven. Aut. 448.*
  
- ✚ *I say to myself: A Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is a man who burns in charity and burns where he passes, who desires effectively and seeks, by all means, to light everyone in the fire of divine love. Nothing will take away from him; enjoyed in deprivation; addresses work; embraces sacrifices; is pleased in slander and rejoices in torments. He thinks only how he will follow and imitate Jesus Christ in working, suffering, and always seeking and only the greatest glory of God and the salvation of souls. Aut. 494.*
  
- ✚ *In every population in which he preached, until half a function he was very persecuted and slandered by the bad guys of the same population; from half a mission onwards, they became, and all praised me, and then the persecutions of the Government and Higher Authorities began. Here's why my Archbishop made me go from one point to another so far. In this way, the persecution of the Government was mocking me, because, when persecuted in another Province, it was already passing me to another. The government made me chase to light up, but they could never make it. Aut. 457 providences were against me in one Province of Catalonia given, I had already completed the mission and had gone away and moved to another Province, and, when I was persecuted in another Province, it was already passing me to another. The government made me chase to light up, but they could never make. Aut. 457*

## And what about me...?

I can distribute the times to reflect on praying the material over several days.

Reflection can be shared with the sisters of the community, with other groups, with laypeople... seeking to illuminate the believing path we are making towards Easter.



- ✚ The passion according to John begins in an orchard/garden and ends in a new orchard/garden. What signs of hope, of life can be seen in a garden? What signs of hope do you see in you, in your community, in the Congregation?
- ✚ Write a list of times when you felt hopelessness darken your days.
- ✚ What does it mean to you that we can see the world from the hope of the crucified Christ?
- ✚ **Summarize in a word like Christ can fill you with hope.** Make it an instrument of prayer, an instrument of life review and discernment.

# COMMUNITY CELEBRATION OF HOPE



It can be done as part of the Vespers, closing a space for reflection in community,  
as a liturgical celebration.

**Ambience:** In the chapel put one dry plant and one alive. Or a plant photo growing on concrete. Crucifix or photo of the Christ of the M. Founder. A basket with candles to exchange moments of hopelessness for moments of hope.

## **Introduction**

Our founders fully trusted God. They identified themselves with the suffering of the church of their time and lived day by day in the face of the reality of their world in the hope that in Christ crucified their labours would bear fruit of a better world. We Claretian missionaries throughout the world have received this hope in inheritance and we also hope that our work to proclaim the gospel to all creation from different ministries, talents, and initiatives will bear fruit of new life.

**Singing: Show us Lord Your Mercy – Psalm 85. Jaime Cortes (or other)**

Eng: <https://youtu.be/zx-5k8mUTe8> Sp: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEYN12yARXU>

## Bible Reading

Jesus said to them, " Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. <sup>25</sup> Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me..." [John 12:24-26].

**Background music:** A moment of Silence

## Invitation to look at the world from the hope of Christ crucified.

Bring the sheet where the moments of hopelessness we have lived and the word that symbolizes the hope we hope to receive in this Lent have been written.

Each sister passes the basket where the candles are and changes her sheet of hopelessness to a candle, reads the word she has chosen and places it on the altar with the candlelit on top.

After each one we sing the chorus:

Hope against all hope (\*2 CD Wait against All Hope – José Manuel Montesinos)

**Magnificat** (to be sung)

**Preces:** pray spontaneously

## Final Prayer

Convert us to you, our saving God, and help us to progress in the knowledge of your word, so that the celebration of this Lent may bear abundant fruit in us. By our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives with you and reigns in unity with the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

*Be like the lotus flower:  
be reborn every day and  
prevail over adversity*



**Dear sisters,**

An affectionate greeting to each of you and wishing you on this Lenten season that God's mercy may be experienced more strongly, lived and celebrated on a personal and community level. The awareness of the merciful God who forgives with tenderness and compassion, accompany us on this journey of encounter and conversion what the Lenten liturgy proposes us every year.

May we enter this journey with humility which drives us to hope and opens us to the ministry of reconciliation, as Apostle Paul reminds us (cf. 2 Cor 5,18), because having been loved, being forgiven in Christ we become witnesses of the renewing power of that healing.

The General Spirituality Team (EGEs) place a simple material at your hands for personal reflection and / or community meeting, in order to help us live this time with resilience and hope when the human family experience the wound of sickness, death, distance, separation, that shatters assurances and awaited projects.

It is a favorable time for the Word to be the daily comfort; silence be the ground to receive it; faith be the firm rock to live it and, assurance in its transforming power, the creative power to announce and bear witness to it.

*Let us welcome this new opportunity what the Lord offers us, trusting in the renewing and redeeming mercy, for it is the encounter of two hearts: that of God who goes out to meet and that of man (Pope Francis) who hopes and wishes to be welcomed, loved and sent as a channel for the goodness he received.*

The risen Jesus awaits us at daily and extraordinary crossroads and encourages us to collaborate with him so that others may recognize him as the way, the truth and the life, the Life that we are called to illuminate through charity and on the last day taste in eternity.

Have a good journey. Happy encounter with the light of the risen Jesus.

With sisterly affection.

Rome, 17 February 2021.

**Your sisters,**  
*of the Prefecture and General Spirituality Team*