

# EASTER 2023

*Episcopal Homily and Paschal Message*



**BISHOP ALDO BERARDI, O.S.S.T.**

Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia

## **“The first day of the week”**

*(John 20: 1-9)*

Dear brothers and sisters: **Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!**

*Christ is risen!* This cry of joy has resounded for 2,000 years as a cry of hope, a shout of victory, a song of love. He who was rejected, tortured, crucified, has risen. He who was rejected by the builders, has risen. He has risen, this Jesus of Nazareth, adopted child of a carpenter, son of Mary, master of a band of disciples ready to go out to the world, this particular rabbi who was close to the little ones and the simple. He is risen!

Since the beginning of the week, we have not ceased wondering, marveling, speculating. The crucifixion event has upset His friends and family, even His enemies too. It has changed the course of history, overturned philosophical arguments, and revived social and political interests. The Resurrection was a far greater historical event but without any catch, a cosmic event but completely beyond us, a spiritual event but affecting both matter and spirit. For it meant the assimilation of the divine into the world, the irruption of eternal life in our mortal life, and the birth of love in the fibers of our being.

The Resurrection is not only the reanimation of a body, but the transformation of the flesh and the transfiguration of matter. It is light in our darkness, and grace in our weaknesses. It comes to touch our existence as it sanctifies our being. It rekindles the flame in us and prepares our flesh for the encounter with the divine.

*He is risen!* Nothing will ever be the same again, everything begins to make sense. Nothing is lost, everything contributes to our spiritual journey, everything leads us to the ultimate encounter. All of us are called to love, and thus to communion with the Trinitarian love.

### **THE RESURRECTION IS A NEW CREATION**

The Apostles were no longer perplexed as they finally understood. How many misperceptions and misunderstandings are there in the life of Jesus! The Apostles wanted to follow a spiritual master but they found the Master of Life. They wanted a good place in a reign that is too human, instead they would reign with the King of the Universe. They wanted a perfect organization; they would establish an institution at the service of communion. Jesus gave them a promise that far exceeded their expectations. He handed them prophecies that were fulfilled in their hearing. He gave them signs that they did not believe with their eyes or with their hearts. The New Creation, the one that gives a new heart and a new spirit, is at hand.

*Being new:* The Resurrection comes to touch our being. Just as the Incarnation unsettled something, placing the divine and the human in direct contact in the one Person of the Word, the

Resurrection on the other hand unifies, revitalizes and sanctifies this indissoluble link. Prepared by creation and animated by incarnation, our being is shaken by the Resurrection. Light and grace pierced our being and raised it to the divine sphere. Consequently, we can no longer escape grace, love and communion. Our being is forever attracted by beauty, by goodness, by purity. It is carried away by the power of love within us. It becomes the place of encounter with the Lord!

*Transfigured body:* The Resurrection comes to touch our body. The Incarnation of the Son changed something in our perception of things and of the natural order. It made the heart move and ask for more, love more and give itself. But it is the Resurrection that prepares our hearts to bleed for others, to weep before sin, to surrender to the Trinitarian Heart. Our relationships inevitably change, our gaze is transformed, and our hands are stretched out. Finally, our body is pierced by grace, elevated by love, and transfigured by the sole presence of the Risen One. We become participants in the glorious Body of the Son, the Body that He takes with Him to the Divine Presence, which now forms part of the divine.

*Renewed spirit:* The Resurrection comes to touch our spirit. The Incarnation enlightened our intelligence, and hence, knowledge was given to us. We received an intuitive, serene and natural knowledge – the speculative, organized, intelligent kind. But the Resurrection joins our spirit with the Divine Spirit who gives true meaning and significance, who makes us perceive and recognize differently, who knows how to show us the way. Our spirit is elevated to the divine sphere to unite with the Spirit of the Father and the Son, to be united with the Trinity. What was foretold by the prophets is fulfilled: a new spirit animates us for the service of the world and the manifestation of the invisible.

*Person saved:* The Resurrection comes to transfigure our person. We are saved "whole", totally, completely. Not only from sin and death, but also from all devastations, from all estrangements - from all loss. Hope is at the heart of life; love animates it; joy shapes it. It is with all that we are that we enter into "the joy of the Father", that we enter into communion with the Trinitarian life, that we love with divine love.

The first day of the week is truly the Day of the Lord, the Day of Feast and Joy, the Day of Salvation and Sonship, the Day to Love. A day that lasts forever!

## **THE RESURRECTION IS A NEW LIFE**

The disciples who believed were not mistaken. They understood that life was manifested in Jesus Christ, that love was at hand, that joy was coming. This is the Good News: He has risen and now we rise with Him, we partake in the divine nature, we enter into the mystery. To enter becomes possible because it is the loving Heart of the Son!

*From life to Life:* our human life, our daily life, received in the Resurrection a seed of eternity. We are not dragged out of reality, it is eternity that unites us. Limited by space and time, we are destined for eternity and continuity. The finite and the infinite have met in the Person of Christ, it is now up to us to live infinitely by living our finitude. It is up to us to make our space a springboard towards the eternal - to make our life a plunge into the Divine Life. Grace assures us this, the Resurrection triumphs over apparent contradictions.

*From beauty to Beauty:* our world is indeed beautiful and our universe utterly perfect. For ages, we never stopped discovering and marveling. Creation culminates in man, the image of the Creator, the only one who can pose questions and discern. The human person has received divine blessing and thus, he journeys in beauty towards plenitude. At the Resurrection, it is this natural, simple, delicate beauty that becomes an expression of Divine Beauty. Our human hands create to reach the Creator. Our human beauty expresses the Beauty of the Trinity, a wonderful communion of love and relationships!

## **THE VICTORY OF LOVE**

A day of celebration between feasts, Easter is the way to the Father in the Son through the Spirit. A day of joy between joys, Easter is the fulfillment of our desires and needs. A day of light between all lights, Easter is beauty and life, love and grace. We are carried away in a mystery that transforms us into Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Risen One.

I wish you all a very Happy Easter! Receive my blessing.

+ Aldo Berardi, O.S.S.T.  
Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia

Awali, Kingdom of Bahrain, April 9th, 2023



APOSTOLIC VICARIATE  
OF NORTHERN ARABIA

*(Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia)*

*P. O. Box 25362  
Awali, Kingdom of Bahrain.*

**[www.avona.org](http://www.avona.org)**