

EASTER 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

From Easter Sunday to Pentecost, the Church daily proclaims in the readings in the liturgy pericopes from the acts of the apostles. These texts are dear to us because they are at the origin of our canonical way of life. The mystery of the Church is a consequence of the passion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Living ecclesial communio echos the grace of forgiveness we experience on Easter.

In the light of Easter, the suffering and death of the Lord, yes, his entire life, appear as a testimony to the great love of God, His Father. In the passion narratives, the evangelists masterfully know how to weave in motifs to make us aware of the meaning of Jesus' life sacrifice beyond the horror of the death on the cross. One of these is the tearing of the veil in the temple of Jerusalem. Especially in the Gospel of Mark, this event takes on a particularly powerful meaning because the word he uses for "to tear" is also, and only there, used in his narrative about the baptism of Jesus. As the heavens are torn open at baptism, so the veil of the temple is torn at the death of Jesus. In both contexts, Jesus is referred to as "Son of God".

Exegetes have and are still engaged in lively and fascinating discussions about the precise meaning of this event. Equally well, the parallel between the baptism of Christ and his death (referred to in the Gospel of Mark as a baptism that Jesus – and his disciples – must undergo) and the torn veil is open to discussion. Nor is there full unanimity about which veil it is exactly.

What is certain is that a barrier was broken, that a veil was lifted. As the heavens conceal God's glory, so the veils separated the holiest place from the outside world. The rent symbolizes a revelation in which God himself appears accessible, deeply concerned with and caring for the world. Jesus died because God, His Father, wanted to undo the separation between Him and the people. The torn veil shows that his sacrifice is accepted, that his mission is accomplished. Some interpretations go even further and state that God's glory takes possession of the whole world through Jesus' gift of self. The whole world becomes his sanctuary. Every human situation is, as it were, radiated with the light of its presence.

Our answer to that can only be attention, reverence, and concern because we feel invited to view the world and people as the Father of Jesus sees them. The motto of our Jubilee: "Together, with God, with men", puts us in the midst of this newly opened sanctuary. Where God reveals Himself as Father, we can

only try to be Sisters and Brothers – through trial and error, but strong and resolute in the footsteps of Him who has gone before us. May the celebration of Easter renew our communities so that through our fragility shines the light of God's presence.

† Jos Wouters, abbot general