

“Miracles of spring”

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Dear Brothers, Sisters and Laity,

We are at the beginning of the Lenten journey. The liturgy, with its readings and prayers, offers us a privileged time to enter into the heart of God, into his patient and at times demanding love, that gives us everything in every moment and moulds us to give ourselves to him, more and more, each day.

It is also a time to be with Jesus even more in prayer. Pray more simply to put yourself within reach of Jesus' gaze; just as he appreciated the simple two coins the poor widow could offer. Also pray to listen to Him more, in His Word, in the events of your own life, in what the province and the Congregation are experiencing, in the beautiful and often dramatic events of our world.

Last Saturday the community here in Rome watched the film “The Snow Society” (2023, by Juan Antonio Bayona), which tells the story of a plane crash that occurred on the border between Chile and Argentina on October 13th, 1972.

The plane carried, among other passengers, the Uruguayan rugby team 'The Old Christians Club' that was to play in Santiago de Chile.

They remained on the mountain for 70 days until they were rescued. Of the 45 passengers, only 16 survived. One of the things that stands out in the

film was the groups realization that the possibility of being saved required they renounce the desire to save themselves individually, but to be ready to join forces and support each other in their weakness.

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In these extreme conditions, the survival instinct manifested itself in caring for the weakest, in supporting each other, even physically to keep each other warm, and even to the point of sacrificing one's own life to save others. There is a moving dialogue in which each one speaks of their faith. God seems to have abandoned them, and their prayers have not been heard. The God I believe in," says one of them, "is seen in the one who cares for the wounded, in those who go for help, in the one who shares out the food. That's the God I believe in. God, who makes himself present in our fragile mediations, even in the most extreme conditions, in gestures of service, of care, of listening and of love.

God speaking in the brothers and sisters

We are in preparation time for our General Chapters of brothers and sisters. This invitation to pray more is good for us. Also, to share with simplicity what the Lord is doing in each one of us when he speaks to us or even when he makes us go through times of aridity and desolation.

So let us overcome a certain modesty that inhibits us from sharing and let us prepare what we want to say. These simple words, prepared with simplicity of heart, give depth to our fraternity. It is with emotion that I listened to the words that Vicente Arnés (who died on the 25th December last in Spain) recorded to share with the brothers of his generation (those over 80 years old). He made his own the words of the poet Antonio Machado in "Al olmo viejo" (The Old Elm Tree). And with his unmistakable voice he recited:

*Elm, I want to write down in my wallet
the grace of your green branch.
My heart waits
too, towards the light and towards life,
another miracle of spring.*

This month we celebrate the *dies natalis* of our Founder, Father Coudrin. As the Congregation was growing and consolidating, greater difficulties were appearing both

among the brothers and in their pastoral service. And as a father who cares for his brothers and sisters, he recalls in simple words, the essence of the Gospel, which is summed up in "love one another" (*Diligite invicem*). In the mutual love between brothers and sisters, God speaks. And from there, as Jesus tells Nathanael, "You will see greater things than these" (John 1:50).

Fraternally,

Alberto Toutin ssc
Superior General

