



Common Letter No. 21
M. Angela Strobel, OSB
Easter 2010

Dear Sisters,

Holy Easter to all of you!

It is Easter! We were “looking forward to this holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing” (RB 49) during the forty days of Lent. Now it is Easter: the climax of Christian joy and spiritual fulfillment.

Thinking of you in different situations and conditions, difficult and challenging at times, I would say: most probably no one has yet arrived at the zenith of utter joy and spiritual fulfillment. Saint Benedict is not exuberant either. Is it by chance that Chapter 49, where we are supposed to arrive at Easter, is followed straight away by Chapter 50 which is about “Brothers working at a distance or travelling”? We are still distant from our goal, we are on the journey to Easter. Nevertheless Easter is, for St. Benedict, the center of monastic life: Liturgy is arranged around Easter ((RB Chapters 8,10,15). The meals are scheduled according to periods in relation to Easter (Chapter 41), and so are Work and *Lectio Divina*. - Easter is the center and the Goal.

Today is Easter! How do we celebrate Easter here and now? The simple story in Pope Gregory’s II Book of Dialogues may enlighten us. On Easter Sunday a priest brings the feastday meal to the hermit Benedict, who in his wild cave and environment is absolutely ignorant of the day of the Liturgical Feast. Benedict exclaims: **I know it is Easter because I was given the grace to see you.**

The only time our Constitutions mentions Easter is in the Chapter regarding meeting each other, of living, praying and working together, in the Chapter on Community. “*The early Church gathered around the **Risen Lord** is the prototype of our Community.*”

Easter is the Feast of Community

All the exciting Easter stories of the Gospels - foremost among them is Luke whose story we listen to in this Liturgical year C - tell us about the disciples’ anxiety, sadness, confusion and doubts and how they all end with an explosion of joy when the Risen Lord manifests himself.

The evangelist Luke presents us with the continuation of the Resurrection story. The Liturgy offers us this account of THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES throughout the Paschal Season. The Acts of the Apostles, the “second volume” of Luke’s compendium, is the mission book. At the

end of Luke's Gospel Jesus orders the disciples: *stay in the city.....* However, at the beginning of the Acts, Jesus announces that: *you shall be my witnesses, in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria and until the ends of the earth....*

The Easter message could not be contained in Jerusalem and Judea, it had to expand to the ends of the earth. The essence of Peter and Paul's preaching is always Easter: The Death and Resurrection of Jesus. "*God has raised this very Jesus from death, and we are all witnesses to this fact*

(Act 2,32; 3,15; 4,10;10,39; 13,30;.....)

Easter is the Feast of Mission

Our world, torn apart by natural and man-made disasters, is longing for this message of life. Our 139 Missionary Benedictine communities all over the world are called to bring this message to people, because the Risen Lord is the center of our Community. When we live in love, joy and peace we give witness to our Risen Lord who calls all to community with Him and with one another (Conf. Constitutions IV).

Dear Sisters,

May the blessing of the Risen Lord be with us on this missionary Journey from Easter to Easter.

Lovingly,

S. Angela Strobel O.S.B.