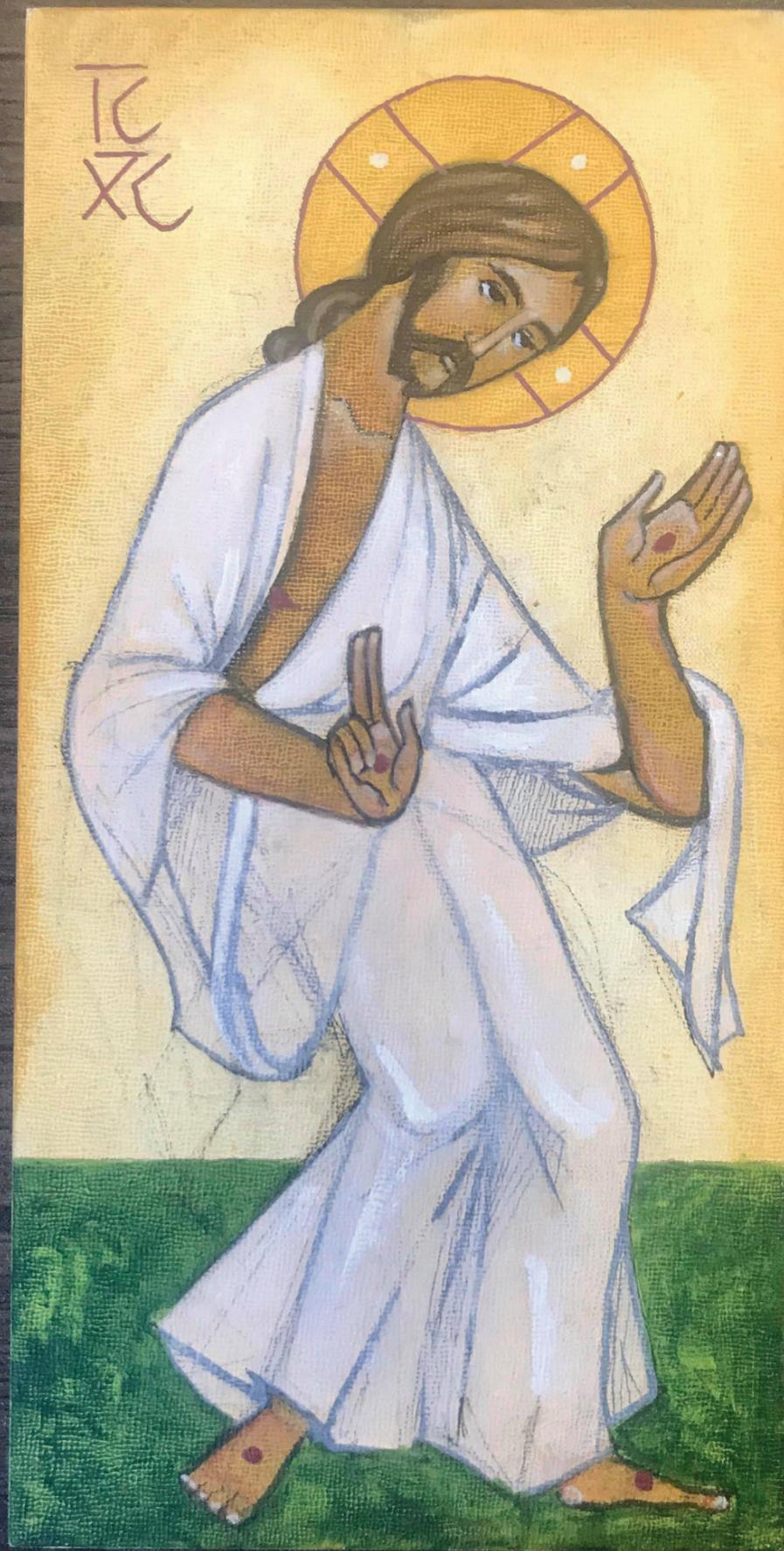


THE EASTER ENCOUNTER:

PRAYING THE FILIPINO
SALUBONG AT HOME
IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC



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THE RISEN CHRIST

JESUS' TRIUMPH

Here's Jesus, the Risen Christ, who seems to be waving and blessing us, and showing us His wounds, the proofs of what He has just won against, death. He seems to be saying: "I have fulfilled my promise. Truly, I will never bring you down." He is truly risen, and He lives forevermore. His resurrection is not His triumph for Himself, but rather His triumph with the Father, that finally, they have regained humanity. They have regained us, out of their immense love for us.

Accordingly, as we wait from darkness to light during Easter Vigil, and as we begin walking from dusk to dawn during the "Salubong" procession, we are called, in the same way, to cross over from sin to grace. Jesus, from the very beginning of His life, has been crossing over from Nazareth to Bethlehem to Egypt to Galilee and has continuously called His disciples to cross over to the other side of the sea, to cross over from their comfort zones to radical discipleship, from fear to freedom, from apathy to love. Thus, evidently, He has triumphed to cross over from death to resurrection.

More so, as we may not have been permitted to literally walk in procession this year with the Risen Christ, we still have the ultimate chance to journey with Him, as we crossover from melancholy to joy, from hatred to reconciliation, and from selfishness to generosity. The Risen Christ mainly gives us one message, and that is HOPE, making us see that like Jesus and with Jesus, we can be victors too.



THE BLESSED MOTHER

MARY'S HOPE

It's her arms that first carried Him when He was born. It's the same arms that carried His dead body down from the cross. It's her eyes that looked for Him so attentively and stressfully when He was lost in the temple, and it's the same eyes now that saw His resurrection. It's her heart that loved Him despite the many things she couldn't understand. It's the same heart that, aside from being "full of grace", is also full of hope that indeed, after three days, His son will rise from the dead.

What has always been remarkable during this procession is Mary's unveiling. When I was a child, I would struggle to see this scene around taller people who enthusiastically wait for it. It seemed, that Easter is not yet complete until the angel gets Mary's black veil. In my parish, the black veil is attached to a bunch of balloons and it's released in the air. With this sight, people rejoice with warm applause, cheering and singing. Jesus is alive! We exult with Mary, for the triumph of her Son.

As her black veil is removed, we see not only joy but also a sense of mother's pride, that seems to be telling: "That's my Son! I knew from the start that He will never bring us down." This year, we may not see the actual unveiling of Mary, but in the silence of our hearts, we can reflect and discern on our own share of black veils. What is your black veil that covers your eyes to completely see Jesus' glory, and covers your heart to completely accept His message of hope? It may be the right time to unveil yourself from it and be finally free and happy.



AN INDISSOLUBLE BOND



Recalling life moments where my sister and I received an amazing news such as a school award or a job promotion, we would automatically call and inform mom first and foremost. It's not that she has obliged us to, but we naturally found ourselves doing it. It's an unexplainable instinct, that before our closest friends learn about our victory, mom knew it first. Evidently, I believe that the relationship of Jesus and Mary is no exemption to such indissoluble bond of a mother to a son.

Thus, deep in our hearts, we believe that this is the unwritten reason of the Salubong. Indeed, the connection of Jesus and Mary is incomparable and unbreakable not even by death. It's a connection that does not only represent maternal love, but also a representation of humanity's "salubong" with God, proclaiming to us that the victory of Jesus over death is also hallmark of our reconciliation with the Father, and our regaining of our lost filial identity to Him.

During this season of Easter, let us look at the Salubong images more closely, and realize that beyond the reunion of a mother and her Son, God unceasingly calls us for a reunion with Him. Let us ask for the grace to cross over. Let us ask for the grace to "unveil" our hearts.

"MANO PO, INAY"



The "*mano po*" is a traditional Filipino gesture of respect for elders.
It is done by pressing one's forehead on their offered hand.



THANK YOU FOR PRAYING WITH US
ASSUMPTIONISTS



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