

Let's light the candles of hope

By Michèle Sala Pastora

The Easter Vigil Mass has always been very significant for me and my family, possibly the most significant moment of the entire liturgical year. My husband German and I have always taken our two daughters, Joëlle and Magali, with us to this magnificent liturgy, and have since they were babies.

The liturgy of light has always impressed them. It is this amazing moment when, at the beginning of the celebration, in the darkness, the Easter candle is lit from a blaze fire. The flame is then communicated to the candles held by each member of the assembly.

Last spring, my youngest, Magali, said she was disappointed that we didn't leave our individual candles on long enough during the liturgy. She wished that such a rich symbolic moment had been savoured longer. I had already shared her remark with our parish priest, and he was sympathetic to Magali's request. But that was then. Now, we know there will be no Easter vigil!

This is totally unheard of. And, like my daughters, I am saddened to know that we will not be able to participate in person in one of the most significant rituals of our Christian tradition.

The flame that passes from one candle to another reminds me every year that the risen Christ is always with us, despite any individual or collective darkness. The Easter candle and all those little lights help me to continue to believe that Life is stronger than death, and that it will one day have the last word despite the cancer of loved ones, wars, famines and even the current pandemic.

Not being able to celebrate Easter in our churches should not prevent us from drawing on the hope of this powerful symbol.

And so, I extend an invitation to all Christians, and to all those who want to show their hope in this difficult time when, more than ever, we need to see each of our little lights

on. So why not light a candle in our homes for at least an hour after dusk on April 11, Easter Eve?

Please, join me and others and place a candle in front of a window as a sign of hope, and a reminder of what Christ himself reminded us: *We do not light a lamp to put it under the bushel.* (Mat. 5, 15)

Whether we are still in isolation or not, I will not let a virus deprive me of the symbolism of the Easter candle. I invite you to do the same...