

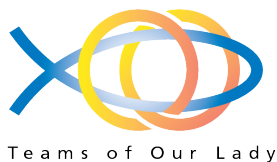
Study Topic 2024-2025
Annex

On the Road to Emmaus



Daily Meditations
based on the Gospel of Luke 24:15-35

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Teams of Our Lady

Meditation of the day
COMMENTARY ON LK 24, 15-35

TUESDAY, 7/16

Lk 15-18 : And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?"

Introduction

Good morning dearest Pilgrims! Good morning everyone!

Think how fortunate we are to be here!, What a great privilege it is to be able to pause for a few days with no other thought than to immerse ourselves in the Gospel... to go deep into God's word!

Outside there is a hectic world rushing by... some because of work, some because of vacations, and some because of constant tasks... in a constant chase toward a time that flees, and toward a happiness that cannot be reached!

For a few days we will STOP time here. We will live in dilated time... we will not have to run... we will not have anxiety! We will not walk forward, but descend inward, deeply. We will sit still in a chair, but take an exciting journey, full of discovery... an exploration within the Gospel, and an exploration within ourselves! We will come out transformed, because contact with the Word of the Lord renews life.

Each day we will be offered bits and pieces of the Gospel, a few verses, small crumbs, that we will quietly savor, to rediscover how much richness of flavor and fragrance there is in a morsel of the Gospel savored together.

I have no official expertise to lead you on this path. I am not a priest or a nun or even a Biblical scholar. And I do not know why I was chosen by the very good and kind organizers of this magnificent congress. Perhaps because I am a lover of the Gospel?

I can only assure you of this: that every word I will tell you is embodied in my life...it is the Gospel word tested in my life in its most painful moments as well as in its most joyful ones.

The word of the Gospel is a word that has never failed me, and has transformed me, AND continues to transform me. It is a force of life that always renews us!

The task entrusted to me is a challenging one, asking not only to comment on the verses in Luke, concerning the disciples going to Emmaus after Jesus' passion and death, but also to connect them with the Eucharistic liturgy.



Therefore, I will try each day to accompany you along three paths, which will be freely interwoven, without any fixed and rigid patterns, because I do not like to be didactic. The Gospel is life and life needs to move with freedom.

The paths along which we will walk are these:

1. Relive the experience of the two disciples of Emmaus through a narrative that leads us to empathize with them.
2. Carefully observe Jesus' behavior... what words and gestures he chooses... what they have to say to us now.
3. Connect the gospel passages to the Eucharistic liturgy... to the parts of which it is composed.

The goal is to have a transformative inner experience. To have the Hands of the Lord work on us. To be moved by the Breath of His Spirit to open ourselves... to be renewed.

To feel that His Word is to us what spring is to the meadows... to the meadows greening, budding, blooming.

To do it all together, here, with so many people, is something absolutely exceptional... it excites me so much! Just think: we are thousands of hearts here disposed together to be moved by God's Word!!

Here, I wish for all of us, with all my affection, that our hearts can burn, that Jesus can rekindle us... rekindle the flame of our faith! Think of how much heat we will all give off, together!

Commentary

Considering the two from Emmaus... exegetes explain that they may have been two friends or perhaps a couple. I walk with them and listen to their pain.

We do not think often enough about a fact that is the basic reality of the Christian faith... the faith arises from a trauma, the most terrible ever experienced by believers of all faiths, the Cross... the inconceivable trauma... God allowing himself to be killed!! Along with Jesus, dies on the cross the DREAM of a redeemed, healed humanity, a DREAM of universal brotherhood and love, the DREAM of DREAMS... a great cause, annihilated in a few hours of interrogation, torture and merciless execution!

There was a small community of disciples... disciples who had taken shape around that DREAM, a vibrant community, though not without, within it, misunderstandings and conflicts.

Those women and men had had to witness the rape of their hope. They had witnessed the violence unleashed against an Innocent with eyes as transparent and good as a child's.

A strong and arrogant power had spat over the Face of Jesus, over the face of a man who showed the true face of humanity.

And then the Blood from His sweet Hands... the Feet nailed to the wood... those Hands that had been able with so much love to care and caress... those tireless Feet always on their way to bring a word of life, an embrace of love even to the most distant and marginalized.



Jesus' friends have all this in their eyes and in their hearts: horror and unspeakable pain printed in their memories in indelibly blood-red characters. And, they feel the emptiness, fearfully as an abyss, of missing Jesus.

Stunned, disoriented, frightened, the disciples dispersed or shut themselves in.

Space has shrunk around them to the extent of their fears and disappointment. The expansive spaces to which the Rabbi of Galilee rode the lands and skies on the back of a donkey that they were accustomed to, are but a memory...their geography of the heart has suddenly become cramped and consequently their intelligence of reality has also shrunk.

From a goal that seemed close, within reach -- the Kingdom of God promised by Him -- they find themselves thrown back into the incomprehensible and dark depths of those who, having set sail for open seas with the enthusiasm of the most beautiful adventure, have felt the boat crumble under their feet.

The two from Emmaus are two castaways, two wrecks drifting, no longer having a course to head for. And, they feel that their lives no longer make sense.

They had cultivated a DREAM during those three years with Jesus, which had made their desires fly high. That Rabbi with calloused hands, at once simple and mysterious, had kindled that wonderful DREAM in them... instead of this sad history of ours, which seems to repeat itself over and over again -- a history of violence and abuse, of slaves and masters -- Jesus had opened wide to them horizons of new heavens and new lands. He had promised a kingdom of love, a place where everyone's face is as clear as a child's, and the hand hides no sting...a restored humanity, a garden where life flourishes and matures, and gives itself away, without enemies....

Those who had followed Jesus had believed Him, because they had seen Him at work. They had seen the sick healed, the poor suffering creatures, oppressed in body and spirit, resume the path of life, made new again. They had seen prostitutes, hardened in cynicism, return to weeping and love for real. They had seen hardened sinners, money grabbers, leave everything and give themselves to a dangerous mission, that of the Rabbi of Galilee persecuted by the Pharisees. They had heard criminals on the scaffold utter words of tenderness -- and the dead come back to life!

They had thought him Divine, that man, so capable of love and life-giving: Son of Man and Son of God.

But then this man-God, powerful prophet, who healed the dying and raised the dead - had been killed! Human hands had struck him...So simply, as one strikes any other poor human life, in this same way Jesus had been tortured, plagued, whipped, and killed.! Power had judged him a reject, a man to be eliminated!!

The disciples had run away! They had been afraid... everything was too much bigger than they, and too unpredictably bewildering.

The world collapsed on them. The ground was missing under their feet... a fall into the unknown!

One does not pass unscathed from a trauma of this magnitude. I imagine them in shock, the two from Emmaus, walking close together to give each other some courage and fill the silence with words, with constantly repeated stories and unanswered questions, for fear of silence, for fear of being alone in front of that emptiness, that abyss.

They came from Jerusalem... Away! escape from that cursed place! Away, abandon there the rubble of the dream, the castles in the air!...To leave, to go back, to shrink back to the measure of



everyday life, to let the usual little everyday desires take over: more bread, less toil, a little more well-being... And maybe, who knows, to hope for a political reversal, but nothing else.

How terrible is the pain of the loss of dreams! How terrible it is to see that hopes are not realized, that love dies!

How cruel is the blow to our hearts when for the umpteenth time we see that it was unlove, bullying, injustice that won!

You feel lost, alone, and you'd like to lash out at someone, lash out at an enemy, but you realize that the disappointment, the defeat is also yours... you yourself let yourself down... you yourself feel like a loser. You find yourself not loving yourself, despising yourself, wondering if your life has any meaning.

Jesus comes into our lives on days like this, as we walk on regressive roads going back to an Emmaus that is for us the place of no hope, the place of disillusionment, of so-called "realism." The place where we go knowing that nothing new will happen there, and that we will have to accept the world as it is and come to terms with it, and dream no more.

We no longer want to look up, to dream big, because everything has collapsed and come crashing down on us. Life will go back to the usual grind, and we will shift our desires to small things, looking down, lest we feel hopeless.

I feel Jesus' disciples, those two, are similar to me. Similar, because they tread the same footsteps of my defeats, my disillusionments, my despair. Similar, because they go down the same dark valleys, go into the same nights where it seems there is not even a thread of friendly light to give you courage... Only darkness and sadness, darkness and fear... Nothing else.

And you can't wait to get home, to close the door behind you and defend yourself from life, from its fearful attacks.

But something happens... an unexpected and seemingly chance encounter. Along their road of disappointment the two from Emmaus encounter a stranger, one they have never seen.

Jesus' first words are a question: *What are these conversations you are having among yourselves along the way?*

Hear what finesse and also what irony is in this question of Jesus, pretending to know nothing about anything, as if he were a stranger dropped in from who knows where. And the answer of the two, in fact, is: *Only you are a stranger in Jerusalem! Do you not know what has happened there these days?*, which is equivalent to saying: but are you out of this world?

This is curious. It seems that Jesus adopts a kind of Socratic irony, that is, that method used by the philosopher Socrates of feigning ignorance in order to urge his disciple to explain his own opinion, so that he could see, on his own, that it was unfounded.

Jesus does not ask random questions. It is His method, His pedagogy to solicit responses from the disciples with questions. There are as many as 220 questions from Jesus in the Gospels.

"A Jewish saying goes that in the beginning God created the question mark and laid it in the heart of man" (E. Ronchi).



At the beginning of Jesus' public mission, when the first disciples had begun to follow Him, His first big question had been, *What are you looking for?* (Jn. 1:38), and it is a question Jesus asks us now as well... What do we seek? What moves us? What is my desire? My goal?...Because this is the mainspring of everything...It is what drives my life forward.

Now, on the road to Emmaus, the question is different. Jesus asks, What is this talk you are having? He wants to hear their interpretation of the facts, to hear what they understood about His life and death on the cross. To make them question and open themselves to a new, broader understanding of events.

"The form of the question mark is reminiscent of that of a fish hook, which the Gospel drops into us to hook us, pull us to itself, "fish us out," pull us up to air and conversion.

The great writer Rainer Maria Rilke in his Letters to a Young Poet exhorts his interlocutor to "live the questions well," not to rush immediately from door to door, from book to book, from teacher to teacher in search of answers. To love the questions, to let them work within oneself, like a gestation" (E. Ronchi).

"When someone has answers for all questions, he shows that he is on an ungood path... God infinitely surpasses us, he is always a surprise... Those who want everything clear and certain claim to dominate God's transcendence" (GE 41).

Jesus comes to the disciples bringing a question mark as the first thing.

Let us remember this when we seem to have the truth in our pockets, for Jesus urges us to always ask questions, and to question our reductive readings. Jesus, man and God, is a great mystery that always surprises us.

"Jesus Himself is a question. His life and death question us about the ultimate meaning of things, question us about what makes life happy. And the answer is still him" (E. Ronchi)

How will the two of Emmaus emerge from that despair?

It will be the unthought that saves them... a breach of wonder and newness within their shrunken existences, returned to a mere measure of factual reality.

The eruption of the new happens in the heart of trauma, of all our traumas. It disrupts and relaunches.

"For pessimism, the observation of facts is enough; for optimism, creativity is needed" (F. Mernissi).

And who can ever be more creative than God?

The resurrection is always there to tell us that there can be no loss, no anguish, no disappointment so overwhelming and burning that it cannot be overcome by the creativity of love.

"It is the unexpected news: there is a blessing hidden in our suffering. Somehow a gift is hidden in the midst of our tears" (H. Nouwen).

Our grief sometimes seeks a den, for licking our wounds. Let us give time to do so, to mourn, but let us remain listening, remain open... the Lord is calling us.

Come, He says, come and I will make you discover the light in the darkness of loss, the infinite within the grave of your hopes! There is a gift in tears.

In the Eucharist, this immense gift of Jesus, we retrace the road to Emmaus and meet Him.



For this is what the Eucharist speaks to us about: our lives...And not only does it speak to us, but it takes care of the hurting and wounded life. It renews life, celebrates it, blesses it.

"We come to the Eucharist with hearts broken by many losses, our own and also those of the world." (H. Nouwen). On this bumpy path we meet him again.

In the Eucharist we recite: *Lord, mercy*, a general, communal confession.

To interpret the meaning of this preliminary penitential act, I like to refer to the great poet Dante.

His *Divine Comedy* is a work known to the whole world!...one of the world's greatest masterpieces. And how does it begin? With a man walking in a dark forest, who does not know where to go, feels lost and is so afraid... "In the middle of the journey of our life / I found myself in a dark forest / for the straight path was lost...."

Dante takes a few steps to get out of that dreadful situation, and lo and behold, three ferocious beasts ready to devour him stand before him! They are the image of the evil that is inside and outside him... in his person and in society. Dante freezes, unable to go on any longer.

And what are the first words that Dante, paralyzed by fear, utters? *Miserere di me*: have mercy on me.

These words are a plea for help, not a feeling of guilt, mortified before a judge, but it is asking a friend for a hand, telling him: get me out of here, look where I've gotten myself. It is disposing yourself to let yourself be helped and to let yourself be loved.

Lord mercy means then: help me, I can't do it alone. Give me Your hand and bring me out of my dark thickets, out of my crises. Renew me, and with me renew all these others who are now here in this church. Help us all together. It is "hearing God as a living person communicating with our living person" (Vannucci).

"Christ lives. He is our hope and the most beautiful Youth of this world. Everything He touches becomes young, becomes new, becomes filled with life.

He is in you, He is with you and He never leaves. No matter how far you may stray, beside you is the Risen One, calling you and waiting for you to begin again.

When you feel old because of sadness, resentments, fears, doubts or failures, He will be there to restore your strength and hope" (Francis, CV, 1-2).



Meditation of the day
COMMENTARY ON LK 24:15-35

Wednesday, 7/17

Lk 25-27 : *And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.*

Commentary

Jesus invites the two disciples on the road to Emmaus to tell of their experiences in Jerusalem concerning Jesus, the Nazarene - a story that seemingly ended in failure. They told of his death on the cross and the reports of his resurrection. We are small and our lives are short, but there is an infinite and an eternal continuum that gives our lives special and indelible meaning.

Jesus explains to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus that defeat, loss, trauma, and death are inevitable but do not permanently destroy anything. They exist, unfortunately, and we have to deal with them every day, but they do not have the last word; the truth does not lie in them. They hurt us, tear us down, prostrate us but they cannot destroy the promise of love, of light, of truth, and of life that God gives us.

There are people who would rather hold on to their pain than take the risk of still hoping. There are times when we would rather anesthetize our hearts and feel nothing more than to take the risk of still being hurt by life.

We had dreamed of a love, a perfect marriage, a perfect child, a rewarding job, a full life, but life betrayed us, the dream broke, burst like a soap bubble.

We had dreamed of a new world, so many of us had dreamed of it, and we had worked on building it in the dream of peace and justice -- God's dream -- but it all collapsed and that long, hard work seems to us to have been utterly useless.

So we go back to cultivating the little field at home, we lock ourselves there, in that fence, alone, and we don't want to see beyond it.

Our eyes are sometimes so fogged with sadness that we do not recognize Jesus, we do not hear his voice, we do not see him within our days.

Life offers us signs: gestures of friends, words, encounters, small facts that could open slits of light for us but we don't catch them, we don't want to catch them because we are wedded to our sorrow, our sadness, our resentment.

Jesus explaining the scriptures along the way "is a call to awakening, it is a tearing off of blindfolds, a demolishing of unnecessary protective devices.

He had to call the disciples fools to enlighten them.

And what is the challenge? To trust. "To trust in the larger scheme of things, to go beyond the sufferings of the moment, to see them as part of a much larger healing process" (Nouwen).



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"Things falling apart is a kind of test and also a kind of healing. We think the point is to overcome the test or overcome the problem, but the truth is that things don't really come together. They come together and then fall apart. Then they come together again and again they fall apart. It works like this.

Healing comes when you leave space for it to happen: space for pain, relief, suffering, joy.

When there is a big disappointment, we don't know if that will be the end of the story. It could also be the beginning of a great adventure" (Chödrön).

The joy given by faith adapts and transforms in the different stages of life. Even in the most serious difficulties, "little by little, one must allow the joy of faith to begin to awaken, like a secret but firm confidence.

Always it remains at least as a glimmer of light arising from the personal certainty of being infinitely loved, beyond everything" (Francis, EG, 6).

Jesus does this for us; he makes us feel loved. And when we feel loved, we discover how much beauty is hidden in a life of loving service to others. Jesus opens wide windows and we breathe pure air.

The great pedagogical intelligence of Jesus is to help us by his questions and life fulfilling Scriptures to open the windows of our minds and impact our way of seeing life and reacting to the world to constant changes. In other words, he teaches us true wisdom.

Jesus is a teacher of existence. Jesus, "a teacher in the school of existence, was not so much concerned with correcting outward behavior as with stimulating people to think and expand their understanding of life's horizons" (Cury).

Jesus explains the Word to the two disciples along the way and enlightens the two wayfarers, first confused and now attentive. And he invites them to remember the covenant which God made with his people.

The two disciples on the way to Emmaus are like us, uncertain, fragile and doubtful people to whom someone had lit their hearts. And Jesus reminds them of this.

They had found love in Him, someone who could love them as no one else ever could. And this someone not only loved them and made them feel unique, but had also been able to enlarge their hearts in a way they had never experienced.

By loving them, he made them like him, more able to love, freer to reach outside the narrow confines of their small selves.

Through their encounter with Jesus, they had experienced unfamiliar freedom, breathed surprising beauty, experienced intoxicating joy.

Their lives had been nourished, their hearts filled with that peace of God that abides even in the midst of life's thorns.

Behind Jesus' footsteps on the streets and paths of Palestine, the disciples had felt liberated from the bonds of fear. By his words and deeds Jesus had infected them with love for all that lives in this world, even for what seemed abhorrent to them-the sick, the discarded, the deviant, the dying.



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And he had made them children, taught them to enjoy the beauty of a flower, the flight of a bird. They had learned from him the joy of simple things, to find taste in a sip of wine and a bite of bread and to feel that they needed nothing more.

And when there was no bread, even a few uncooked grains of wheat - harvested from a field and eaten smiling with him and his friends - were enough to be able to say: here, here is everything, I don't need anything else; even if I died now, I would be happy because in this freedom, in this brotherhood, in this giving and receiving of love, in this rejoicing together in the little, here is the fullness of life, and I have experienced it.

Jesus asks the two travelers to Emmaus to look at the harsh reality of the cross with a new gaze. By dying that death, he had shown them a way: the way of self-giving, of the rescuing love that helps everyone to complete fulfillment.

How much we need these words of the Gospel every day, in the face of our small and great losses and bereavements, in the face of the great social and political defeats: wars -- inhumane tactics that should be banished from the face of the earth, which instead are still used to settle conflicts --; the abuse of the weakest, the mass selfishness that seeks privileges and discards people as if they were garbage...

Today the world appears to many to be a world adrift, a ship that will soon run aground and shipwreck.

Too much hatred, too much injustice, too much violence, too much shameful disparity between the gluttonous people and the spindly people like Lazarus, too many innocent deaths in our seas, deserts, too much rage on the earth, on Mother Earth who feeds us...

There is enough love and hope today for everyone to feel like those two in Emmaus.

My young students ask me with sad faces: is there no more future? And I shudder to hear 20-year-olds say that and think of Jesus: yes, there is a future!

The future is him, his promise!

In the Eucharist, the liturgy of the word is offered to us as a gift, so that our memory may be "overflowing with the wonders of God" (Francis, EG 142).

What the Scriptures say speaks intimately to us; it has to do with our lives in a very profound way. In everything we live, Jesus is with us, so even our daily life is sacred history.

We are part of the great river of sacred history, the same river in which the lives of Moses and the prophets, of Mary and Joseph, sailed.

Our stories are sacred history-the stories of God walking with us.

If we stop to think about it, we feel great awe:

We are a page of sacred history, the Scriptures are alive, fulfilled in our lives today.

Try to say it with me too, all together: *I am a page of sacred history, God is writing it through us, His instruments.*



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Jesus lives and "this is a guarantee that good can make its way into our lives and that our labors will be of some use. Then we can stop complaining and look forward, because with Him, we can always look forward. This is the security we have" (Francis, CV 127).

"Evil does not have the last word," (Francis, CV 126).

It is Jesus who teaches us this. He himself experienced firsthand the pain, the fear, the sense of abandonment in the night at Gethsemane and on the cross. He wept tears and sweated blood.

But "as the last winter leaf fell, when all seemed lost and there was room only for weeping and despair, Christ looked up and saw the flowers of spring hidden among the dry branches of life.

Unlike Christ, we abandon our goals, plans, and dreams at the first signs of trouble. We should learn from him to look up again, to look beyond the difficulties, the sufferings, the defeats, the losses, and to understand that the harshest winters can be a prelude to the most laughing springs" (Cury).

Beyond the visible, beyond the facts of my life and the news we get from the news, there is another happening within real life and it is much deeper. A watermark of light beneath the fabric of my days and of human history.

"I remind you of the good news that was given to us on the morning of the Resurrection: that in all the dark and painful situations of which we speak there is a way out" (Francis, CV, 104).

And whenever we feel dejected, disillusioned, let us remember that God is love, let us repeat "the first truth: God loves you. If you have already heard it, it doesn't matter, I want to remind you: God loves you. Never doubt it, no matter what happens to you in life. Whatever the circumstances, you are infinitely loved" (Francis, CV, 112).



Meditation of the day
COMMENTARY ON LK 24:15-35

Thursday, 7/18

Lk 28-29 : *As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.*

Commentary

Jesus makes it appear "as if" he had to go elsewhere, alone, into the night.

Just as before he pretended to know nothing, now he pretends to want to leave the disciples. This, too, is part of his clever pedagogy. Let us remember that the disciples still see him as a "stranger", they have not yet recognized him.

Jesus does not impose himself. He waits for a gesture, an invitation.

And the invitation comes and is expressed insistently and in warm words of humanity: *But they insisted: stay with us, for it is nearly evening*; which is equivalent to saying: we don't want you to set out alone, in the darkness of the night, amid the dangers and toils of the road; come with us, we will welcome you into our home; we will open the door for you because we trust you. We will share dinner, you can rest, have a peaceful night. It has been so good to be together along this road; you are no longer a stranger to us, but a friend!

And in the disciples there is also a desire to reciprocate: this stranger gave them words that rekindled them, gave them food for thought, nourishment for the heart, when they were short of ideas and hungry for closeness.

They wish to reciprocate with what they have, with what they can give: some company, a meal together, a safe place to sleep.

I imagine Jesus' happy heart, the joy of feeling welcomed and thus being able to have more time to give himself to the disciples. And the joy above all of discovering that the seeds sown in their hearts had sprouted: the two from Emmaus show by their hospitable words that they understood the heart of Jesus' message: love your neighbor, help him in need, share what you have, open your heart, look at the stranger as you look at a friend.

Let us remember that "man's only greatness is based on love of neighbor" (Boros).

By demonstrating hospitality toward the stranger, when they have not yet recognized Jesus in him, the disciples accomplish what St. Paul recommends in the Letter to the Hebrews: "Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels" (*Hebrews 13:1-2*).

This is something to always remember. These words of Paul give chills when we think of the foreigners we reject.



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Jesus started from here, from hospitality toward everyone and also toward the dark parts, hidden parts within us, toward the darkness and dirt in us, which Jesus knows how to caress with his tenderness, embrace with his mercy.

I also notice another aspect in today's gospel passage: it is the disciples who give to Jesus and he receives from them the gift of hospitality.

Jesus in the gospels repeatedly puts himself in the position of those in need of help: I remember his request for some fresh water to the Samaritan woman at the well and his request for companionship to the disciples during the passion night in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus desires our friendship, our love, our help.

How would the newborn Jesus have survived if he had not relied on the inexperienced hands of the little girl who gave birth to him? Helpless, vulnerable, he was totally dependent on the brave love of his very young mother and the honest and tender conscience of Joseph.

God is a father who promises salvation but comes as a son and asks us to welcome him into our arms, to nurture and cuddle him.

God needs us.

This is the greatest and perhaps most difficult mystery to accept: God curling up in my arms, asking me for care and milk to grow in the world.

"He depends on us to love the world and show it how much he loves it" (M. Teresa of Calcutta).
"Ultimately, it is Christ who loves in us" (Francis, GE, 107 and 21).

We can also offer hospitality to God, tell him: come to my house, I will be happy to have you near; I will share with you what I have, I will tell you about me and listen to what you have to tell me. You will be my closest friend. Come, we both need to embrace each other!

At each of our prayers and Eucharist let us remember to renew this invitation: I open my heart to you, come! Here is room for you, come! My heart is a complete mess, I know, but you love me, come!

This making ourselves hospitable, making space in ourselves for God, with less clutter in our hearts to welcome him, is perhaps the most important thing we can do. Because it all starts from there, from allowing him the space and freedom to act in us.

We can connect this hospitable gesture of offering of the two of Emmaus to two other moments of the Mass: the Apostles Creed and the offering of gifts. In saying *Creed*, I say I *trust*, I want you with me, and I offer you what I have.

"Perhaps we are not used to thinking of the Eucharist as an invitation to Jesus to stay with us. We are more inclined to think of Jesus inviting us to his home, his table, his meal. But Jesus wants to be invited. Without an invitation he will continue on to other places.

It is very important to realize that Jesus never imposes himself on us. Until we invite him, he will always remain a stranger....

The *Creed* is the big yes: Yes, we trust you..." (Nouwen).

And now, since we still have a few minutes, as we have reached the halfway point of our journey today, the third day, I propose to recapitulate the steps we have taken in the footsteps of the two



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disciples over the past few days, looking at the narrative junctures of the passage from Luke's gospel chosen for this conference. It is an exercise, I believe, that holds illuminating surprises for us.

We have read three narrative sequences so far, one per day.

If we observe carefully, we find that each of these sequences is open-ended, that is, its outcome is not a foregone conclusion, but depends on the free choices of the protagonists.

Take the first sequence, which we read on Tuesday: the two disciples argue along the road, Jesus approaches unrecognized and asks a question, to which the two respond.

Jesus asks the question, *"What are these conversations you are having among yourselves along the way?"* What follows this question is not at all obvious. Let's think about it for a moment: the disciples had several options. Faced with the encounter with the stranger and his question there were many possibilities for reaction. They could, for example, have been annoyed by the stranger, feeling him as an intruder (remember they were sad and all caught up in their own affairs, locked in their own problems). To get him out of their way, they could have responded to him rudely (what are you meddling with? These are our things) or politely (so sorry, we don't have time, we're in a hurry) or not responded at all, just have given him an annoyed look, moved to the other side of the street and quickened their pace.

The disciples make a different choice: they are surprised by the impertinent question from the man who seems "out of touch" and decide that he is worth talking to. Jesus throws them the ball and the disciples do not drop it but throw it back. This is a decisive fact because, since the disciples are on a journey, in order to talk to him they must welcome him as a fellow traveler.

Let us now see the third sequence, which we heard today: evening is coming, the disciples invite Jesus to stay with them, and Jesus accepts.

Here, too, we see the disciples at a crossroads in the story: they were not necessarily going to decide to accommodate him. After a nice walk with that stranger who was so fascinating to listen to, they could have politely said goodbye to him, thanked him very much for what he had explained to them, wished him well on his way and a good evening. In this way they would never have recognized him, their paths would have parted, and the story would have ended there.

You see, I am suggesting that you read the gospel as if it were a "fork in the road book" or a game book, those stories that have several possible alternatives that the reader can choose, identifying with a character. His choices condition the unfolding of the plot, landing in multiple endings. These are books that we can group under the formula: "Choose your own adventure."

By immersing ourselves in Luke's narrative, we too can "choose our own adventure." We see that at each "fork in the road" the disciples choose to put themselves on the line, freely opting for the most challenging alternative, which is also the most creative because it produces a new segment of the narrative that has an important transformative function on the lives of the disciples:

- accepting him as a fellow traveler allows them to hear the explanations of Scripture made by Jesus and feel their hearts burning;
- welcoming him to their table as a guest enables the disciples to recognize him.

To pause and think about this is enlightening. It makes us realize how our lives always have an open ending and how we can, through generous and creative choices, change the outcome, and direct us toward the most beautiful ending.



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In a word: the situations, the encounters that life offers us are opportunities to grow in awareness, love and freedom, as Jesus wants us to.

We are free to seize opportunities or not and waste them or make them opportunities for growth. I think each of you would have many testimonies to bring on this. I'll give you a small example.

As I was writing this commentary, in January, I was at home and there was a knock on my door, a foreigner, Maghrebi, who comes occasionally. His name is Khalid and he carries a bag with socks, undershirts and small rugs inside to sell. The first reaction inside me, seeing him - unseen - through the window, was this thought: I pretend I'm not home, I have so much to do! In seven days the commentary for the END congress is due and Khalid is a chatterbox who won't stop!!!

Then another little voice inside me said: but you can't send him away!!! He will be cold, open the door and offer him hot tea!

I listened to item number two, but reluctantly because when I interrupt my writing, it is difficult for me then to get back into focus and I grow anxious that I won't be able to meet deadlines. Between all the magical juggling I have to do to keep my university work, evangelism commitment and being a grandmother of four grandchildren together, even half an hour of missed work becomes a problem...

I opened to Khalid. We sat at the table and it was more than an hour before he left. That hour flew by, I didn't even notice his passing.

Khalid, calmly drinking his hot tea, in no hurry, as if he did not notice my anxiety, told me about his religion. I don't know why the talk immediately fell on this topic. He told me that, according to Islam, he was giving a gift to me at that very moment. I did not understand. Khalid continued, Yes, I am giving you a great gift, because I am giving you a chance to become better, as Allah wants us to be. If I had not come, you would not have had the chance to be hospitable to someone and your heart would have been more closed, and Allah does not like that. But your God does not like it either. Because on this thing I am convinced that your God and my Allah think alike.

What a great teaching! How many times I have discovered pearls of wisdom that have enlightened me in the words of the poor, the foreigners, the believers of other faiths, the uneducated, the different from me.

If you listen to them, they allow you to look at things from another perspective, and this can be enlightening and allow you at the next fork in this exciting and difficult game that is life to make the best choice.

"Our destiny as Christians: giving and begging. To give the gift so that others can give us something.

God wants us to beg from others. He demands of us that our humility take the form of begging. In all situations of life" (Boros).



Meditation of the day
COMMENTARY ON LK 24:15-35

Friday, 7/19

Lk 30-32 : *And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him. But he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way, and opened the Scriptures to us?"*

Commentary

We have arrived at the high point of our journey following in the steps of our two friends. We have arrived in Emmaus, the disciples are at ease with the mysterious stranger who seemed to know nothing about the new events but actually knows more about them than anyone, because he knows the deep dynamics of the events.

We see them all sitting at the table, and suddenly the story takes an unexpected turn for the two disciples who had invited Jesus to dine with them. The parts are reversed: now they are no longer the ones offering something to Jesus, but Jesus is the one giving them the bread.

And not only that: this reversal opens the eyes of these disciples, who until that moment had been as if blind: they had talked with Jesus, walked with him for a long time, listened to him interpret the Bible, but had not recognized him.

It seems impossible; we wonder how they had not realized before that it was Jesus, but here the evangelist Luke is using a narrative strategy, which he uses to give us a thorough understanding of this story.

This strategy is called agnition narrative, from an ancient Greek word meaning recognition or acknowledgement. It has been used extensively in literature since ancient times; Aristotle already mentioned it, calling it "a transition from ignorance to knowledge accompanied by reversal" (*Poetics*).

The first aspect of an agnition narrative is an absence, the loss of a loved one that causes so much suffering. Suffering underlies the path that through signs, insights, memories or testimonies will lead to recognition.

Recognition - it is important to note - is not only that of the loved one finally being found, but it also means an understanding of what that person represents.

Think of Odysseus, who returns to Ithaca dressed in rags, as a beggar, and at first no one recognizes him except his dog, who, however, cannot speak. The first person to recognize him will be a humble woman who is one of the palace servants, Odysseus' nurse. The sign that allows the nurse to recognize him is a scar that Odysseus bears on his body, an indelible and unique mark.

In our Gospel passage, the disciples need Jesus to break the bread for the veils to fall from their eyes, for recognition to take place.



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The breaking of bread is Jesus' indelible sign and hallmark.

His giving of himself, making himself bread for all and inviting others to do the same. It is something that is engraved in him much like a scar is: an unmistakable mark.

Only Jesus breaks bread like this, and this gesture sums up his life.

The disciples now see and see Jesus *alive*. The theme of blindness is recurring and important in the gospels.

And it is also so in literature. The highest literary pages teach us just that; we can remove the blindfolds from our eyes, and no longer be blind to our own faults and the virtues of others, to open our eyes wide to the truth.

"But again, all good stories, in one way or another, revolve around seeing": characters can be dazzled by desires that obsess them, for example, but there is also "blindness" as the focus of social oppression.

The truth is that in real life, even more than in books, we are captive to illusions and prejudices, to the things we want to see and hear. Isn't blindness to others the source of all evil in the real world? If the masters had seen the slaves for what they were - human beings like themselves - would they have been able to inflict such cruelty?" (Nafisi).

Their eyes were opened, Luke writes of the disciples, and Dante in the dark forest says: *I found myself*: these are awakenings.

"Jesus' witness of God's presence points to the mode of an awakening by which we make contact with the One who abandons no one....

There is no point in wondering where God is and how he can help us.

It is not God who is far away, it is man who has fallen asleep, who is absent and disintegrated, lost to himself" (Mancini).

The evangelist Luke tells us that the disciples' eyes were opened at the precise moment when Jesus broke the bread and shared it.

Only then did they understand the meaning of the other sign they had received: the burning of their hearts as Jesus interpreted the Scriptures along the way.

Only now do they become able to connect one sign to the other.

These verses about recognizing Jesus have extraordinary power: in very few words they encapsulate a fundamental process of faith.

When we recognize God within our lives -- by an intuition, an experience, a word read or heard -- we become able to link together the signs of God's presence that we have received over time but did not previously recognize and understand.

Let's try to think of the game that children play: there's a sheet of paper with lots of dots on it in bulk, and when you look at it you just see a collection of dots and you don't get any meaning from it.

However, when the child takes a pencil and draws lines connecting the dots to each other, lo and behold, they reveal a shape, a design, for example, the shape of an animal or a house, and it is like a recognition: the design was already there on the paper but the child's eyes could not see it before.

The disciples see Jesus breaking and offering the bread, connect the dots, and finally understand. Here a pattern appears; there is no longer the confusion as before.

And the design that appears, what is it?



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"The central symbol of the new vision of life, the kingdom of God, is a community gathered together in a festive meal, where the bread that sustains life and the joy that sustains the spirit are shared with all" (McFague).

"A communion with God and a communion with the earth and a communion with God through the earth" (Fr. Teilhard de Chardin, quoted in McFague).

"The Christian mystery is a mystery of communion" (Vannucci).

"Not the holiness of the elect, but the fullness of all" (Schüssler in Sallie 82).

The Eucharist: such a deep and vast theme... When I started thinking about it, I felt that it is like a huge tapestry of many colors. You follow a thread, and you find a knot that connects you to another thread and then you find another knot and another thread again, and so the weave widens, it becomes vast, and you realize that the tapestry encompasses the whole Gospel.

The Eucharist, a total symbol, holds within it the whole proclamation of Jesus. Therefore, the sense of awe, of wonder it arouses is great. The thrill of a mystery so deep, so rooted in life, that if I dig, I find even more depth and then again and again...

What happens, though, is that anything that lasts a long time and that we repeat often tends to lose its charge of excitement. The wonder, the sense of mystery fades and routine takes over.

This is normal; it is in the order of things that what is steeped in time over the years will become tarnished. It happens to even the most beautiful and precious events.

It happens like silver, which oxidizes over time. The luster is still there but it is left underneath, covered by sediment and the processes of time.

This also applies to the Eucharist.

What happens is that time and repetition turn the sacred gesture into routine for us, empties it of mystery, tarnishes awe. People can enter Mass without feeling wonder or joy, and leave without feeling their hearts burn, without having recognized Jesus alive among them.

Then we need to do as with silver: polish it.

When Jesus spoke to his own about eating his body and drinking his blood, everyone winced. It was unheard of, and it was shocking. Some disciples walked away, disappointed and disgruntled that they had wasted their time behind that eccentric lunatic of a Galilean.

For us, however, the Eucharist is no longer the unheard of. We do not find it shocking. Over time it has been domesticated, it has become what it was not at first: an outward act of worship separates from life while it should be a life-transforming experience.

Let us liberate the Eucharist from the dull patina. Let us rediscover its beating heart.

I have been to Greece. One of the first words you learn when you go there, within reach of even the tourist least able to get by in languages other than his own, is eucharisties. You hear it all the time and you learn it willingly, because it is a useful word.

In Greek, thank you is still the same word the church uses to identify the Lord's Supper. And it is a word on the lips of everyone, believer and non-believer, every day. It is a word that tastes like home, a word of the mother tongue.

Too bad this is not the case in Italian. When the church uses a word that is not in the language of everyday life, that word can become specialized for a single religious use, the only one in which it



has meaning. So, it has happened that the word eucharistia seems to have nothing to do with everyday life.

But instead, what is more immersed in life and more familiar, spontaneous, natural than a thank you?

We say thank you many times a day, and we do so because we are beings who have needs, dependent beings who continually receive: from other human beings and nature, from air, water, sun, animals and plants... If we did not continuously receive, we could not stay alive.

The Italian word *grazie*, although it has no connection with the word *eucharist*, nevertheless maintains a very clear connection with the word *gratis*. The eucharist is a *thank you* for something we receive *for free*; it is therefore a gift, *a gift in response to our need*.

I do not know if this is clear for all people who go to Mass. I am afraid that by some (or many, I don't know) participation in the Eucharist is not felt as a gift for a need we have, but on the contrary as a request from God to us. It therefore takes on a sense of a duty, an obligation. But this is not what Jesus had in mind; in fact, it is the exact reverse.

Jesus thought of the Eucharist as a gift for our need, an answer to our hunger and thirst.

So, I think a priest before celebrating the Eucharist should ask himself: what are my people hungry for today? What do they need to receive from the Eucharist? What do they lack? Thus, the priest will function emulating Jesus, who came to serve, Jesus always serving people's needs.

I believe that this is the right direction and not the reverse direction, the one that questions what condition people must be in in order to approach God.

The right direction is always that of Jesus, of course, who never started from people's sins but from their needs. As when he asks blind Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mk 10:51; Lk 18:41). Or, when he cares for the hunger of the crowd who have come to listen to him, or again when he responds to the thirst of the woman with many husbands by offering her living water, or when he serves bread and wine even to the man who will betray him, because Judas' hunger is the same as everyone else's.

Perhaps, we have not yet metabolized the truth Jesus brought us: the God of the last supper, of the washing of feet, with a towel on, kneeling on the ground, removing the scabs of dirt from his friends' feet. A God at our service, our foot-washer.

So shocking, so scandalous is this idea, that we have not yet assimilated it. And maybe we don't want to assimilate it -- even though the gospel speaks clearly -- because if we really understand that Jesus does this for us, then we should do the same to one another.

And it is good to close with words not mine but Pope Francis'. They are words addressed particularly to priests but to be extended, I would say, to all of us when we find ourselves speaking about the gospel to others:

"Anyone who wants to preach must first let the word of God move him deeply and become incarnate in his daily life." (EG 150).

Meditation of the day
COMMENTARY ON LK 24:15-35

Saturday, 7/20

Lk 33-35 : *So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem, where they found gathered together the Eleven and those with them, who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

Commentary

We have arrived at the last sequence of Luke's gospel passage: the disciples leave immediately to return to Jerusalem, report to the Eleven what has happened, and discover that Jesus has appeared to them in the city as well.

We can see that even in this last stage the narrative presents a fork in the road and could have alternative endings, and this depends, again, on what the two disciples decide:

1. the disciples might decide to wait, not considering the trip to Jerusalem urgent;
2. the disciples might decide not to go to Jerusalem, thus keeping the news of the resurrection to themselves.

As we have already seen in the previous sequences, here again the disciples make the most creative choice: going to Jerusalem enables them to experience the news of the resurrection not only as a personal joy but as a life force that revives the community, the community that was in danger of dying out and of which they can now instead become a living part again as heralds of the risen Jesus.

Let us note one relevant aspect: the disciples are not sent to the city by an order from Jesus, but act of their own volition, feeling the urgency in their hearts. Jesus does not say do this and that, no; what he explained of the Scriptures and the Eucharistic experience together transformed the disciples and set them in motion, without the need for orders, commands.

They are free and do what they do because they want to, because they feel something urging within them, not because it is commanded to them from outside.

This is one of those passages in the Gospel where there is a great emphasis on freedom, and it is a beautiful thing. I find it exciting.

We too can set ourselves in motion out of longing because we feel something urging within us. The Eucharist ends with the words, *Mass is ended, go in peace* or, on Easter Sundays, *Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord*. We can interpret these as: go on mission (Nouwen). And it is not that you have to have a specific mission to fulfill, you just have to go back to your daily life feeling on mission.

"One forgets that it is not that life *has* a mission, but that *it is* mission" (Xavier Zubiri, in GE 28).



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I like to use the image of a construction site: Christian commitment as work on a construction site. The kingdom of God is a construction site at work under our roof. We are its workers.

Choosing the mission means choosing one's identity.

On the one hand, there is the possibility of rejecting responsibility, on the other of assuming it, and on a third hand there is indecision, procrastination.

What identity do the two disciples of Emmaus choose to want?

They go back to Jerusalem where Jesus a few days before had been executed as a criminal. What did it mean to go to that city from which they had departed?

It meant embarking again on the very dangerous and magnificent adventure for which Jesus had called them.

Without a second thought, they left and went to take the proclamation to Jerusalem, rejoined the community, feeling that they had such an important contribution to make that it was worth even risking getting arrested like Jesus.

The two alternatives between going or not going to Jerusalem make us think about what sin really is.

A religious reading that sees God as a monarch who from on high wants our obedience interprets sin as "refusing allegiance to the Sovereign." But the freedom left by Jesus to those who follow him makes us realize that sin is something else: it is "refusing to take responsibility for nurturing, for loving... It is the desire to separate ourselves from others as if we did not need them or they did not need us" (McFague).

The overall movement of the entire passage from Luke that we have read over the past five days goes from resentment and a sense of loss, anger, fear and depression to gratitude through amazement; this leads to a desire to reconnect with community and engagement.

This transformation, thanks to the encounter with Jesus, took place in the disciples at the center of a loss, at a very hard time in their lives, when they lacked the ground under their feet, when they were giving themselves completely wrong answers, had taken a wrong direction and were blind.

This reassures us that that strength of faith, capable of rekindling our will and ability to be useful to the world, is not a condition of idyllic moments; there is no waiting to feel "right" with God, secure, without doubt, when all is well.

"In fact, it is precisely that way of looking at things that keeps us unhappy... Right now, at the very instant when we lack the ground under our feet, the seed of caring for those who need our help and the discovery of our goodness takes root" (Chödrön).

The disciples' desire to return to Jerusalem, to return to the heart of the violent conflict between the political-religious power and Jesus, highlights the social value of faith, the desire "to change the world" that Jesus kindles in us. And Pope Francis wrote a beautiful page on this in *Evangelii gaudium*, which I am pleased to propose to you:

"Reading the Scriptures, it becomes clear that the proposal of the gospel is not only about a personal relationship with God.

Nor should our response of love be understood as a mere sum of small personal gestures toward some needy individual, which could constitute a kind of "charity *à la carte*," a series of actions tending only to appease one's conscience.

The proposal is *the Kingdom of God* (Luke 4:43); it is about loving God who reigns in the world.

To the extent that He succeeds in reigning among us, social life will be a place of fraternity, justice, peace, and dignity for all.

So, both proclamation and Christian experience tend to prompt social consequences [...].

True Christian hope, which seeks the eschatological Kingdom, always drives history [...].

Consequently, no one can demand of us that we relegate religion to the secret intimacy of people, without any influence on social and national life, without concern for the health of the institutions of civil society [...].

An authentic faith-which is never comfortable and individualistic - always implies a deep desire to change the world, to pass on values, to leave something better behind after our passage on earth."

I wish you, with all my heart, to be able to make your contribution in this change of the world, and to do so with joy, even if in the inevitable labors.

I wish you to be able to act in your own mission territory, giving the best of yourself, because each of you is unique, special, and no one can put you in your place, no one can bring what you can bring, with your talents that belong only to you.

There are many paths that can be taken. Pope Francis points to a few priorities: peace building, the fight to eliminate poverty, and the preservation of the environment on which we depend.

Where to start?

I believe that the story of the disciples of Emmaus can provide us with very useful insights for our challenges today. Luke tells us that the two have an experience of reversing their judgments and opening their eyes.

In today's words, we can say that instead of mulling over news reports and being manipulated by distorted narratives of reality, we can seek the truth. We can listen to the good news of Jesus who calls no one an enemy and sides with the poor, the oppressed, the rejected.

We can work on ourselves and help others to "create a new mentality that thinks in terms of community, of prioritizing the lives of all over the appropriation of goods by a few" (EG).

At the end of the day, that's what it's all about: aiming the focus of our lives on the things that matter and not getting distracted by the insignificant ones. We waste energy and time behind such things as: hustling for more money, trying to look good, shopping, looking at the smartphone every minute, living a self-centered life... it is a bleeding of precious time, distracting us from the important things and stealing the time from our life, which is gone forever. Thus we risk arriving at the end of life full of regrets for what we failed to do.

"It is not that we are given a short life, it is that we throw away a large part of it. It is we who make it short by wasting time. Life is long enough and we are given a sufficiently generous sum to achieve the highest results if it were all well invested... Life is long if you use it well" (L. A. Seneca, *On the Shortness of Life*).

If we are clear about our goal, at every crossroads in life we can choose our adventure well, go toward Jerusalem instead of stopping in Emmaus, and thus not waste our time.

Starting from a young age, from decisive choices such as what studies and work I want to undertake, and then throughout life, at every small or big choice, every person should ask himself at every crossroads: if I go down this road, will I make the world a little better? Will I bring a little more love, a little more care, a little more tenderness? Will there be more health, more education, more justice, more culture? Will I add some beauty and joy? Will the natural environment in which I live be in a better condition?

If the answer is yes, I can trust that that is the right way.

The two from Emmaus, whether they were a couple or two friends, felt an urgency to point the focus of their lives toward the things that matter. And they chose to live their faith not only in an intimate dimension: they left home and set out.

One theologian recalled that "religions die when their light fails; that is, when their teachings no longer illuminate the real lives of their followers.... Where people experience that God still has something to say, the lights stay on" (Johnson).

The disciples felt their lives rekindled in their encounter with Jesus; they understood that they were part of a great story in which God gives men and women the strength to create a world other than this one, a world as God's will dictates.

Luke tells us from the very beginning of his gospel what this new world is. From the last chapter we are now in we jump back to the first chapter and find Mary's words in the *Magnificat*, a song that has not only spiritual but also social significance: to overthrow the mighty from their thrones and lift up the lowly, to fill the hungry with goods and to send the rich back empty-handed... (Luke 1:52-53).

It is a song that unleashes all the liberating power toward the "least" in the gospel message, the "great things" that God works (Luke 1:49).

Today we have a tremendous need to resurrect the great ideals, starting with peace, which means abolition of war once and for all, and its roots which are found in a sick economic system that *needs* wars.

In these days we have heard words of the gospel that make us witnesses of hope.

In a climate of widespread pessimism and resignation, they come to tell us that "death is not the last word, the new energy of the resurrection reaches beyond today; the branch that seemed barren and shrunken, becomes tender.

Therefore let the excited quiver of resurrection enter and dwell in you.

And win and free and release in you the energies of a new resistance to evil; free, release in you all the authenticity of your life" (Casati).

As we conclude our journey together, I wish each and every one of us to be more and more instruments in God's hand for these "great things." And I would like to end with a beautiful prayer by Father John Vannucci, servant of Mary and contemporary mystic. A prayer with which we ask for the strength to overcome our crises, to move forward even when we lack the ground under our feet, keeping alive the certainty that Jesus is waiting around the corner to join us on the journey.

A prayer that makes us feel united, makes us experience the power of goodness circulating among us, the Spirit of God who loves us.

A prayer to encourage us to live our lives as a mission, as courageous people who are not afraid to go against the tide, who are not resigned to the world as it is, who dare to revive the greatest ideals.

Because if Jesus is risen, it means that love, peace, freedom, justice cannot die; they will always rise with him.

"I ask for a glimpse of the stars, that healthy spirit of utopia that leads to gathering energies for a better world (Francis, *The Wisdom of Time*).



I embrace each and every one of you with much love.

Marina Marcolini

Pass on your Spirit, by John Vannucci

*Pass on your Spirit, O Lord, like the spring breeze
That makes life bloom and opens up love*

*You pass your Spirit like the hurricane
Unleashing an unknown force
And raises sleeping energies*

*Pass your Spirit into our gaze
To take it to farther and wider horizons*

Pass into our heart to make it burn with an ardor eager to radiate

*Pass your Spirit over our saddened faces
To make us smile again.*

*Stroke our weary hands
To revive them and joyfully put them back to work.*

*Pass your Spirit upon us [...].
And remain in all our lives to expand them
And give them your divine dimensions.*

Amen.

