

## “STAY WITH US, LORD”: JOURNEY, ARDOUR, PERSONAL LIFE PROJECT

### **Biblical Icon: The Disciples of Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)**

At the beginning of a New Year, our hearts carry many realities: gratitude and expectations, weariness and desires, questions and hopes. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we are called to allow ourselves to be encountered by the Lord along the journey of our lives, to let the Word of God rekindle our hearts, enlighten our spiritual path, and help us reread our personal history in the light of His love. The recent General Chapter has invited us to renew our consecrated life, so that it may become ever more authentic, fervent, and fruitful. May this monthly recollection be an opportunity to listen to the Lord who walks with us and to allow ourselves to be transformed by His love.

### **1. Setting out on the journey: Spiritual Renewal**

“And *behold, on that very day, two of them were on their way...*”. The Gospel presents to us two disciples walking toward Emmaus with heavy hearts. They walk, but without joy; they speak, but without hope. Within them echoes a phrase we know well: “*We had hoped that...*”. It is the voice of disappointed expectations, of weariness that keeps returning, of questions that seem to find no answers.

At the beginning of a New Year, we too may recognise ourselves in this journey: faithful, yet tired; willing, yet tested; still moving forward, yet with hearts weighed down. Perhaps we ask ourselves: What will this year be like? What will it bring me? And it is precisely there that the Lord draws near. He does not reproach us; He does not hurry us along; He does not demand explanations. He walks with us. He listens. He welcomes.

Spiritual renewal does not arise when everything becomes clear or resolved, but when we allow the Lord to meet us as we are, in the very situation in which we find ourselves. When we stop concealing our weariness, fears, disappointments, expectations, and hopes, and allow Him to enter into these inner conversations of ours. The New Year does not ask us to become someone else, but to stand before God with honesty, sincerity, and availability.

#### **\* Listening to our Mother Foundress**

Our Mother Foundress invites us to remain united in charity and to mirror ourselves in the love of the Infant Jesus, who loves each one of us personally. From this love, we can draw new strength and courage to live our vocation with fidelity and trust: “*We therefore wish to celebrate this gracious Feast united in charity, against which physical separation can do nothing. I cordially invite you, my dear daughters, to take advantage of it by drawing new strength and the courage necessary for the exercise of our holy vocation, especially in the new year that is about to begin. Let us mirror ourselves in the magnanimous love of the Word of God made man out of love for us.*” (Letter to the sisters, 20 December 1910).

**\* For personal reflection:** As I stand before the Lord at the beginning of this year, what weariness, resistances, hopes, and desires do I carry in my heart, and how do I entrust them to Him so that He may journey with me?

### **2. With burning hearts: Consecrated Life and Witness**

Jesus does not merely walk with the disciples; He opens their hearts to the Scriptures. He rereads their personal history in the light of God, so that their hearts may gradually be transformed. The disciples will recognise this later: “*Were not our hearts burning within us?*” Consecrated life is renewed in this encounter when the Word of God sets our hearts ablaze.

If this inner ardour is lacking, consecration risks becoming habit, duty, or an empty role. But when this inner fire is alive, even fragility and weakness become places of witness. The consecrated woman is called to be light and witness, not because she is perfect, but because the love of God dwells within her heart. Thus, the professed vows are transformed into a living language: poverty becomes trust, chastity becomes free love, obedience becomes attentive listening. Faithful witness is always born of encounter: whoever recognises the presence of the Lord in her own life becomes light for others, even in silence and in the simplicity of everyday life.

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With maternal tenderness, our Mother Foundress invites us to safeguard inner peace and to bear witness to it in our daily relationships. She reminds us that God loves us, and that every small gesture of kindness and love spreads the true peace of Christmas: *“With a maternal heart, in these days I implore the blessings of Heaven upon all of you, my daughters - and **Deo gratias** - I feel a certainty that my prayer is being heard. You all possess goodwill. You are all for me a source of joy and consolation. And therefore, at Christmas, the holy Angels will also sing for you the hymn of peace: yes, peace - the holy, beautiful peace! Hold it firmly in your hands, and may each one of you, beside the manger, resolve to contribute to this peace through a loving and considerate attitude”* (Letter to the sisters, 22 December 1908).

**\* For personal reflection:** As I look at my daily life, what helps to nourish the ardour of my consecrated life, and what tends to diminish it, in prayer, in community life, and in service?

### **3. Setting Out Again Without Delay: A Personal Life Project**

When the disciples recognise Jesus in the breaking of the bread, they do not remain still: *“They set out at once and returned to Jerusalem.”* Night does not stop them; fatigue does not hold them back. A true and profound encounter with Christ leads to movement, to decision, to a gaze turned toward the future. In the same way, our personal life project is renewed - not through a well-constructed plan, but through a heart that has encountered the Lord. When the Lord is recognised, life regains its direction, even today, even when our strength is different, or the path seems shorter or more hidden.

To renew our personal life project means to renew our “yes”: not once and for all, but today, this month, this year; all that lies ahead we leave to the Lord in trust. To renew our personal life project also means to return to where the Lord sends us, with who we are and with what we have. Fruitfulness does not depend on the intensity of our activity, but on the authenticity and generosity of our self-giving to the Lord. Like the disciples, we too are called to set out again - perhaps not by changing place, but by renewing the heart.

**\* Listening to our Mother Foundress**

Our Mother Foundress invites us to shape our personal life project in the light of the example of Jesus, beginning from the heart of Christmas, beside the manger, where our choices take form: *“Let us make our choices close to the manger of the Lord and clearly define a program for the whole year, following the example of the choices made by Jesus”* (Letter to the sisters, Rome, 20 December 1910).

**\* For personal reflection:** As I listen to the Lord today, what concrete step is He asking of me to renew my “yes” and my personal life project, now and throughout this year?

At the beginning of this New Year, the Lord gently repeats to us: **“Walk with me.”** As we walk with Him, the heart is renewed, zeal is rekindled, and life regains its direction. Let us entrust our journey to Him, trusting that each day lived in love draws us closer to eternity.

