

**Rekindling hope...**  
**to name the ashes to blow on**



**retirement february 2025**

**Training and Spirituality**  
PROVINCE OF OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR

*Dressed in patience, deliberately determined to remain, hope resists in the midst of our complex and disenchanting history, green in the fragility and beauty of a small sprout, making itself a small and vulnerable presence, but persistently sustained, wherever there is a cry, a lament, a need, a misfortune, a door that closes, an illusion that is cut short, a life that escapes. Without great luminaries, without provocative titles, without noise, without space in the media, without recognition in the talk shows... the small light of hope continues to burn and cause fires wherever "someone" has given up his time, has cancelled the appointment with his desires and has said goodbye to his legitimate aspiration to realise them, has postponed his work, has ignored his tiredness and forgotten his pain, his years and his fears.... to go out to meet "the other", to - in the midst of darkness, meaninglessness and the absence of a future - make the God of hope present.*

*Charles Péguy, the great poet of hope, compares **faith** to a faithful wife or a soldier, **charity** to an ardent mother and a hospital, but he calls **hope** "the little sister", "the little hope" that sleeps every night and that every morning must be awakened .<sup>1</sup>*

This month's proposal for prayer is an attempt to stoke the fire, so let's start at the beginning, along the path that tradition has marked out for us and which, if it has lasted for any reason, it will be for something: let us aspire to clothe ourselves in His way, with those virtues that are God's gift, the *theological* virtues, a guarantee of the presence and action of the Spirit in each one of us: faith, hope and charity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. Gayol, Núria, *La pequeña esperanza*. Semana Argentina de Teología.

<sup>2</sup> We will leave the *cardinal virtues* (prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance) for another day, lest we think we are capable on the basis of personal commitment alone.

♪ **Your way - C. FONES** [Click here].

And this is the invitation we welcome in this month's retreat: to walk the path inaugurated by Christ: to cross the door, opened wide by Him, to touch our heart, which has become Mercy, and to let our hope make its way into our small and humble history.

Hope is what remains, what stands on its own, what needs no explanation or excuse. Hope is based on the love of the Other and the love of others. Hope has reason to exist by going out of oneself, by overcoming our selfishness, by protesting and not conforming injustice, by walking by night through olive orchards, letting darkness, doubts and fear enter into dialogue with God, origin, fullness and companion of our history, human and fragile, but irremediably destined to rise again.

Let's go there, let's rescue the ember deeply protected by a pile of ashes and find the way to blow and blow, with skill and meticulous care, until infusing it with that necessary breath that transforms - what is apparently extinguished and dead - into living flame, devouring fire, heat of life, light that points to Hope. Another world will only be possible if we do not allow the comfortable, the despots, the insecure, the self-conscious to remain comfortable and at ease in their privileged position... hope makes its way among the poor, the sick, the mistreated, the sad, the vulnerable... for them, for "the preferred ones", we are women of HOPE.

*"Then the Lord God fashioned "adam" from the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and "adam" became a living being" (Gen 2:7).*

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Stay in this image and recognise that you are invited to recreate the creative gesture: your breath can also give life (or not), it can transform the inert (or not), it can begin a story of salvation (or not). Look for the embers in your pile of ashes... and blow... blow... blow... These quotations from the Word can help you.

- Genesis 8, 1: *Then God remembered Noah and all the beasts and cattle that were with him in the ark; he **blew** the wind upon the earth, and the water began to go down.*

- Ezekiel 37:9: *Then he said to me, 'Conjure up the breath, conjure up the breath, son of adam, saying to the breath, "Come, from the four winds, and **blow** on these carcasses, that they may revive".'*

-Ps 147:11-18: *The Lord esteems his faithful who hope in his loyalty [...] He sends a command, and it melts; **he blows** his breath, and the waters flow.*

- Sirach 28, 12: *if you **blow on** the spark, you will fan it; if you spit on it, you will extinguish it; both come out of your mouth.*

- John 20, 22: *When he had said this, he **breathed** on them and added, "Receive the Holy Spirit".*

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We continue with three biblical characters, who even without knowing it, were the cause of an incredible fruitfulness that continues to reach each one of us today.

## **FAITH**

### The unnoticed disciple

*Jesus sat in front of the place for offerings and watched as people put coins into the Temple treasury: many rich people put in a lot. A poor widow came and put in two small coins, of very little value.*

*And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who put into the temple treasury. For they have all thrown out their wealth; but she has thrown out of her poverty all that she had, her whole life" (Mk 12:41-44).*

In the story, Jesus observes how a widow places in the offering box two small coins, very small, a pittance compared to the ostentatious offerings of the rich, but which will become the definitive offering, because this woman has given "*all she had, her whole life*". And she does it all at once, all at once, like someone who is letting go of a heavy burden she has been carrying for too long, like someone who knows that her time is running out and she is either "all of it" or she will not be.

Look at this woman in the same way as Jesus does: without time, sitting quietly and calmly, in silence and at a distance, name her disproportionate offering, even without knowing her, without crossing words with her, just contemplate and let yourself be contemplated.

Jesus uses the occasion to denounce an unjust system that abused the "last ones", those who always come off badly. And no one would think that Jesus could ever praise the action of a woman who, in her offering, renounces her chances of living in dignity. Jesus did not want poverty and never praised it, this passage is a lamentation for a system that demands disproportionate sacrifices from the weakest, while the rich maintain their privileges and accumulate honour, appearance, false security and excessive ambition.

We too want to see this woman as a woman of faith, who was "a mirror for Jesus". The only widow in Mark's gospel, the only woman Jesus speaks of without ever having said a word to her, insignificant and unnoticed among the comings and goings of those who liked to pass through the vaults and make a lot of noise with their continuous almsgiving .<sup>3</sup>

How long would Jesus be sitting, watching all those who are busy throwing out and throwing out what is left over, what is unnecessary, hoping for an impossible change and cheating themselves in the solitaire of life?

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- He has already said everything he wanted to say, it only remains for him to recognise himself in her, entrusting his whole life to her. In Jerusalem, in the Temple, near the end of his life, Jesus discovers that this woman embodies all the faith that he tried to transmit to his disciples and that gives meaning to his own life and his coming death.

With her, we ask ourselves: does it make any sense to offer everything you have for a living

Probably the same as dying on a cross.

- Surrendering our poverty, this is the faith that will make us peaceful people, without complexes, who flee from confrontation and live in peace. Surrendering our poverty is the precious sign that unites us with our brothers and sisters.

To surrender our poverty is to believe that we are capable of God, to believe that we are creatures loved to the extreme... so loved, so extreme... that we can live surrendering with total confidence, even our poverty.

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<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Aldave, Estela. *La viuda pobre del Templo*, San Pablo, Madrid, 2023.

## HOPE

To be born again/to be born on high

*Among the Pharisees there was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish magistrate. He went to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you have come as a teacher from God, for no one can do the signs that you do unless God is with him.*

*Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

*Nicodemus asked him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter his mother's womb again and be born?"*

*Jesus answered, "Truly I tell you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I told you that you must be born again. The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit. (Jn 3:1-8)*

Nicodemus is an intriguing figure who appears at three key moments: by night he seeks answers; by day he sticks up for Jesus before his peers; and after the Hour, he brings kilos and kilos of unnecessary embalming substances to the one who was to be resurrected<sup>4</sup>. One becomes very fond of this faithful follower of Jesus, who always remains half-hearted, in constant conflict between his inherited faith and the search for truth, in evidence or making too many efforts... he is the prototype of the hopeful person.

And we tiptoe into the private conversation between two acknowledged teachers of the Law: how can human life be saved and brought to fulfilment?

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<sup>4</sup> Gospel of John 3,1 | 7,50 | 19,39

This is the question that each one of us is trying to answer: where can we blow to make the fire in our communities burst into flames? And hope, a gift of virtue, asks us for time, the time needed for something to happen, time not to rush answers but rather to ask new questions that will sustain life until the right moment. Time that may seem useless, of paralysis, of waiting, but necessary to be able to illuminate the right word, the only truth, serene beauty and sincere goodness.

How much hope is contained in Nicodemus' kind words, his subtle acknowledgement, his long introduction that only wants to create the space... and let something happen.

Born again to see the kingdom? Not only to be born again, Nicodemus, but also to be born from above, from the water and the Spirit. To be born and reborn, because we walk along without understanding, letting hope tug at our reluctance.

- It is time to educate our sensitivity to be able to grasp the presence of God who accompanies us and waits for us where we never imagined.
- It is time to exercise the habits of the heart and to make a journey of interiority, silence, encounter and truth.
- It is time to wait, to give time, even without understanding, for things to happen. It is a time to cheer up the waiting and to put all the humour and joy we can into it.

Let us not be frightened by doubt, there is nothing wrong with it, it has no intention of devouring us, it only wants to introduce us to different people, new proposals, hitherto unknown paths, realities that we have not been able to touch, because they are alien, because they are distant... let us be born again, let us allow ourselves to be born.



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- Like Nicodemus, we are perplexed and recognise our difficulty in accepting the message of Jesus. Let us today give ourselves the opportunity to ask impossible questions... it is a matter of HOPE not ANSWERS.

Ask Jesus everything that is in your heart, allow yourself to be yourself, without masks, without concealment... the night protects us, Jesus listens to us.

- We also invite us to pray attentive to our ways of being born and reborn: what moves us, our interests, our concerns, what we like, what affects us, what moves us, our relationships, our feelings, the whispers of our inner self....

What do you want to be born in your hope, what do you have to leave behind in order to be born again?

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## CHARITY

*The teacher of the law, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus: "Who is my neighbour?"*

*Jesus answered and said, "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of bandits, who stripped him naked, beat him with sticks, and went away, leaving him half dead.*

*By sheer coincidence, a priest was coming down that road and, seeing him, he circled around and passed by.*

*And so did a Levite who came to the place: when he saw him, he turned and passed on by.*

*But a Samaritan on a journey came to him, and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and putting him on his own beast, he led him to an inn and took care of him.*

*The next day, taking out two denarii, he gave them to the innkeeper and said: "Take care of him, and whatever you spend extra I will pay you back when I return.*

*Which of these three seems to you to have become a neighbour to the one who fell into the hands of the bandits?" He said, "The one who showed mercy to him". Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise". (Lk 10:29-37)*

Hope sustains our will to live, and because it also sustains other people's will to live, we can say that we live for others.

All humanity dreams, dreams, dreams, recreates a future full of peace, love, prosperity, beauty, relationships... brotherhood! How then can we be content with injustice, war, disease, loneliness, hunger? We have a tendency to God, to compassion and mercy, to forgiveness, to solidarity... to Charity made Hospitality.

The master of the law came out of the first challenge with flying colours (he knew it by heart), but in the second, he did not know what he was getting into: we ask about our neighbour and Jesus speaks to us of sensitive looks, generous gestures, abundant care, true love. There is no roundabout way around the real question:

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And that is what we are invited to do in this time of prayer:

- Who is my neighbour? that's the trick question... that's where we get tangled up, whether this one or that one...

Go to the end of the passage and listen now, dear teacher of the law, to the real question:

- Who has become a neighbour? Let this be our prayer, here is the task... Who are we going to make a neighbour?
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## NECESSARY CONFIDENCE

Our existence, as a gift from God, is sustained by these three marvellous virtues, which make us women who need to trust, to support life (faith); to hope, to yearn, to imagine a horizon (hope); and to love, to live in relationship and to generate spaces of encounter, communication and care (charity).

So let us pray, so that no one steals our *trust*, which is the substratum of tenderness in which to continue to grow, our small but generous offering to the Lord of our life so that he may continue to do his part, our willingness to be born again and to contemplate the future as a possibility, our compassionate gaze that hopefully ends in gratuitous donation.

*Our time is the time of hope, "the little hope"... always hand in hand with its big sisters faith and charity. That is why it is necessary to take root in faith, but also to let this faith energise us and let love make us creative. Accepting does not mean stopping. To accept is not to stop. We will have to say goodbye to many forms that belong to the past and are no longer eloquent, neither in our proclamation nor in our witness. We will have to ask ourselves over and over again about the how, without giving an inch of ground to doubt about the why or the wherefore. This is what faith and love do. Hiddenly, without glories, but opening a space in which to allow the small hope to sprout and be nurtured .<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> Ob. Cit. M. Gayol, Núria.

## PRAYER

*"On the steep, sandy, narrow road,  
dragged and hung by the arms  
of her two elder sisters, (faith and charity)  
who take her by the hand,  
goes the little hope  
and in the midst of her two older sisters,  
she gives the impression  
to be dragged along  
like a child who had no strength to walk.  
But, in reality, it is she who makes the other two go,  
and the one that drags them along,  
and the one that makes the whole world go  
and the one that drags him along.  
Because in truth, one works only for others.  
and the two older ones only advance  
thanks to the younger one".*

(Ch. Péguy)

♪ **Love - AIN KAREM** [[Click here](#)].



HNAS. de la CARIDAD de SANTA ANA