

Walking together

Walking together means to move, to go forward. How ? Together. This adverb indicates a relationship of union and company, of unity and cohesion, of contemporaneity and simultaneity. Why ? To reach an aim. Waiting for the “not yet”, we, Christians, feel the need of the “here and now”, to move forward together while witnessing Christ Ressuscitated, present in our history and living among us. And, step by step, we build together God’s Kingdom which is “*a Kingdom of truth and life, a Kingdom of sanctity and grace, a Kingdom of justice, love and peace*”. (Preface of the solemnity of Christ King).

The Acts of the General Chapter 2023 remind us of this:

We want to walk together, it is our way of being a community, living the gospel of Jesus Christ. (110). “Walking together”, accompanied by a common project, where Christ is at the centre of our life. (111). We walk together because it is what we have professed in our consecration. [...]. “Walking together” invites us to be attentive to the joys and sufferings of the brothers in the community. We value the time we. We must be conscious that we belong to a family which chooses to live together and in a mission. In this way, synodality is a life style affecting all fields, personal or institutional. (112)

Lectio divina

The Gospel of Luke 24,13-25 proposes to us the icon of the two disciples of Emmaüs and challenges us personally. One of the disciples has a name, Cleophas, the other one is unknown. Let us give him a name, it could be me. Together, they leave Jerusalem and their broken dreams. They walk together, sharing their disappointments and questioning their future ; once more they undergo a crisis while listening to a stranger ; they go back to Jerusalem together, transformed by an experience they had not foreseen, and still less foreseeable.

a) *They were on their way to a village called Emmaüs.*

- Both disciples *leave Jerusalem*: their trust in Jesus is sorely tried. However, apparently, they possess all that is necessary to believe. They know the texts of the Old Testament,

the message of Jesus, his work and his death on the cross.

They have listened to the women telling the experience they hardly lived: they were announcing: “he is alive”; Both go away from Jerusalem, abandoning the group of disciples formed round the Nazarean. Jesus being dead, surely the group is separating without him, staying together does not make sense. When Jesus dies, hope also dies, the hope he had awakened in their hearts; The dream has vanished.

- Both disciples *are walking together* in a state of mind which inspires pity. They go on their way plunged in sadness, and disheartened. They have the face of those who are angry with life. All the negativity of life is found in their hearts. They feel dead inside. All the hopes placed on Jesus have disappeared with the failure of the cross. Jesus has disappeared from their lives. They have no more hope in Him. They only have to go back home, disappointed, sad and disheartened.

b) Jesus himself drew near, and he was walking with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.

- Jesus, who follows them unnoticed, joins them and walks with them. Jesus starts his act of recovery. How? He lets them say what they have in them. It is the system used by the one who knows the human soul and its weight of sadness, with the person “dead inside”. And both men, deeply sad, open themselves to this unknown man who was walking with them. However, they do not succeed in forgetting Jesus: “They talk and wonder” about him. They remember his “words” and his “acts” as those of a great prophet.
- “What were you talking about when walking?” Both men let the stranger explain to them what happened. Their eyes do not open at once, but “their hearts start burning inside them”. Jesus shows interest in talking with them. He asks them to go on telling their experience. He lets both disciples tell their anguish and their fears; he lets them show their despair, expressing all their pain for what has happened, the disappointment, the disillusion and sadness to see their dreams broken; the bitter conclusion of an experience which had warmed their hearts... Here they are now, coiled up on a past that can’t come back. Jesus listens to them with attention and uses the Scriptures to comfort them by understanding “suffering and glory”. By talking with him, they will discover their blindness. Apparently, these disciples have what is necessary to keep faith alive, but something is dead inside them. They know the Holy Scriptures: but they were of no use for them. Their eyes will open when, guided by his word, they will have made an interior path.
- Jesus does not impose himself by revealing his identity. He patiently leads both disciples “from despair to celebration”. He feeds their faith little by little so that, later, they may see his “real presence by breaking the bread”. They lack the only thing which can “make their hearts burn”: the personal contact with Jesus alive.

c) Emmaüs, a periphery.

- “They were coming near the village where they were going”. Both men, at last, arrive in the home where they will have many things to tell, and the time to recover. They are in Emmaüs, their village which was living on the glories of the past: the town had become a village, the place had been the theatre of the revolt of Juda Maccabeus against the Seleucid army. Now, both disciples shall have to calm the tempest raging deeply in them, and climb up the slope again to go forward, with their family. But they still need this stranger, able to warm their hearts.

- “Stay with us (...) so he went to stay with them”. Both disciples show that they are open to the stranger, by inviting him to stay with them to dine together in their company. “By offering hospitality to the fellow at Emmaüs, (the disciples) reveal themselves able to transcend their self-consciousness, their sadness, their madness, their slow hearts, to prepare themselves for the experience revealed around the Last Supper”. (Jan Lambrecht). When night falls and the day is nearly over, one feels the noightly fears are drawing near, darkness surrounds us and we feel ourselves lost: in these conditions, Jesus must stay with us, sitting at our table, and even “lying down” in great intimacy.
- “When he was at the table with them, he took the bread, he pronounced the benediction, and having broken the bread, he gave it to them . Then their eyes opened and they recognized him”. Jesus shows himself in a house, not in the town where he died. We must look for Jesus where he lets himself be found, as a “sranger” who walks near those who know how to welcome him. By accepting to stay with the two disciples, Jesus gives them the way to stay “in him” and to enter a deep communion through the sacrament of Eucharist. Then, the face of Jesus grows blurred, and becomes a way, that of the Master who is with them, hidden in the fraction of the bread which opens the men’s and women’s eyes and give them to recognize him ...When minds are enlightened and hearts softened, the signs start speaking.

d) Jerusalem, the place of sharing lived experiences.

They started witout delay and went back to Jerusalem. The mystery of the two disciples of Emmaüs coming from this scene will be the mystery of announcement: it is an announcement starting from the periphery. Emmaüs is not in Jerusalem. They undertook this journey “ to symbolize the change of their hearts, which from “sad” becomes “burning”, and they went back at once to Jerusalem to share their experience with the community of the disciples (Luke 24,33). Enthusiasm fills their lives. They feel the need to share with others what has happened and the good news: Jesus is alive. After entering in communion with Christ, they feel the duty of being missionaries, to be a community going out.

The road to Emmaüs.

Our image of the Synode.

The picture of Jesus and the two disciples (representing our communities) is explained in these words: “ He was talking to us on the road” (Luke 24,32).



Both disciples¹ are walking towards Emmaüs. Jesus draws near and walks by their sides. First, Jesus listens to them to make them go out of their despair. The three are listening to each other; something happens; enthusiasm and hope are kindled again in both travellers. During the Holy Supper, something unforeseen happens: the fire which, on the way, had slowly burnt their hearts, now takes the darkness out of their eyes. They are sure he will always be with them. They stand up and return to Jerusalem, full of zeal and energy, full of joy and enthusiasm to share this good news: he is truely ressusitated!

1) On the logo of the Catholic churches of the Holy Land for the diocesan phase of the Synode, the disciples were depicted as a man and a woman.

Ideas for a personal revision.

The Easter narrations reveal for us different ways of meeting the Ressuscitate. I only tell two:

1. To listen to the words of Jesus. It is the first thing we need in our communities: to remember Jesus, to go deep into his message and his work, to meditate about the crucifixion... If, at a certain moment, Jesus moves us, his words reach us and our heart starts burning, it is a sign that our hope is coming back to life, not according to our dreams but according to his project.
 - *Do I let me questioned by the Word of God? When and how do I meditate it? Do you remember when God's word helped you to get out of a particular situation, Bless the Lord!*
2. To celebrate the Eucharist. When their eyes open, they discover Jesus as one feeding their lives, sustaining them when they are tired, and giving them strength along the way. His company does them good.
 - *Is the Eucharist in the center of my life? Am I glad of my way of celebrating mass? Do I consecrate time and place to silent adoration? Celebrate the Lord!*

Suggestion for a communautary reflection.

1) *Narratio fidei*: to share the moments of confusion, disorientation... lived in the first place, and lo! a star (= a word, a gesture, a silence...) has shown the way to find again pece, interior serenity, reconciliation with oneself and the other.

2) *My sacerdotal ministry*: I wonder why so much mediocrity and disappointment between us? Why só much indifference and habit?N And however I preach, I read excellent encyclical and pastoral letters, I consult learned studies about Jesus. Words and celebrations are not missing. Perhaps our commuunities (religious, pastoral, diocesan) need a more vivid experience of Someone who can be replaced by nothing or nobody: Jesus Christ, the Living.

3) *A missionary Synodal Church*. These terms show a way of being a 'Church' joining communion, mission and participation. Did I let me get implied in the diocesan phase of the Synode? Or did I prefer to stay on the side of the road, on a balcony to admire the show? On the whole, am I positive or negative in front of this process wanted by the Pope after having listened to the Episcopal Conferences?

4) *Betharramites in the whirl of the Synode*. The third part of the synthetic Report of the first session of the Bishops underline the importance of "weaving links, building communities. As religious of the Sacred Heart, have we recognized the fact that the configuration of our congregation Government is synodal§ Community, Region with the intermediate Vicariate, Central Government. Do I understand the link between the different instances? The gravest sin would be to find refuge in Emmaüs out of disillusion or pessimism, to be tempted to abandon and go along my way alone or with others who have the same difficulties as me.

"I thought my fire was extinct and I stirred up the ash... I burnt my hand". (Antonio Machado)



Societas S^{mi} Cordis Jesu
BETHARRAM

Generalate House via Angelo Brunetti, 27 • 00186 Rome • www.betharram.net