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Let us share
what gives us Life



**Everyone is an expert
in their own experience**

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Warnings

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In the text, several formulations can refer to a woman as well as a man.

1. Why share?

When shared in connection with the Gospel, everyday **life** opens our hearts to the fullness of **Life**. The words of the Bible are illuminated by a new light.

"When two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them" (Mt 18:20). Françoise, Alex, Erik and Michel, the authors of this booklet, have all experienced this. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus (p. 7), we recognised the timbre of Jesus' voice, and our hearts began to burn.

We invite you to share this experience with us.

Browse through these pages. If you feel like experimenting with what is written, get together with a few people and start a small sharing group. You don't need to have taken any Bible courses to get started. *"The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything"* (Jn 14:26).

The members of the synodal assembly of October 2023 are giving us an example. They gathered at small tables in the large Paul VI Hall to receive from each other what the Spirit wanted to teach them. Pope Francis himself was at the table with them.

2. Tips for starting a small group

In the small group you're going to create, it's best not to have more than 5 or 6 people, otherwise some will tend to keep quiet. It's possible to start with 3 or 4 people, or even two, as a couple for example.

Choose when and where you will meet and for how long, between 1h30 and 2 hours. As there are only a few of you, it will be easy to quickly change a date that no longer suits everyone.

Chapter 4 contains *stories*. They relate life experiences which are intended to initiate the sharing of your own life experiences. Choose a story as the theme for a meeting. You don't have to take the stories in the order suggested. This allows you to easily welcome a new member to your group at any time.

Life aspires to spread. When after a while, on a regular basis, there are more than 6 of you, make a point of splitting into two groups, like the cells of a living body. And welcome new members into each group. Note that by splitting up, the cells of a body don't leave each other, they remain united and participate in the growth of the body. It's up to you to find a way to do the same.

3. Meeting procedure

Choose a **quiet** place and make it conducive to a warm meeting. Make sure everyone can **see each other**. You may want to light a **candle**.

Choose a **time keeper**. He or she will make a discreet gesture to indicate to the speaker that the time allotted to him or her is almost up. This will prevent anyone monopolising the floor, sometimes even without realising it.

Introduce yourself briefly (maximum 1 min. per person) if this is the first time you have met, or if you are welcoming one or more new people.

Share (max. 1 min.) an important personal event since your last meeting: death, success, failure, encounter, surprise... Or say in one word what state of mind you are in at the moment.

Choose a story that appeals to you from chapter 4, and listen to it together. You may also have chosen it in the days before, or at your last meeting.

Sing a song if you feel moved to do so.

Read together the *petition to* the Lord *for mercy*. This request is different for each story. We ask for the help of the Holy Spirit, (Jn 47, 47) this mysterious partner who will join our conversation.

Each of you should then take some personal time for silence (15 to 30 minutes):

- The **meditation** itself, thanks to the *meditation tracks* suggested. They are different for each story.
- **Conversation with the Lord** (always in the same way): I speak to Jesus in my heart, and I dare to believe that he is listening attentively. I imagine what he might say to me. If it helps, I write :
 - **Jesus** : ...
 - **Me**: ...
 - **Jesus** : ...
 - **Me**: ...I observe the feelings that this dialogue produces in me. Do I feel joy or hope? If so, I give thanks to the Lord.
- The **conclusion** (always in the same way): What has particularly resonated with me during this personal time of interiority? What do I choose to share with others? I write it down in a few words so that I can listen to others without worrying about what I have to say when it's my turn to speak.

Then you can **divide it up between you**. Here's how to do it.

Set aside **three rounds of speaking**, with a short period of silence between the first two rounds. These three rounds will not be of equal length and the timekeeper will need to be vigilant. If, for example, 45 minutes are set aside for all three rounds, you can devote 25 minutes to the first round, 15 minutes to the second and 5 minutes to the third. If there are 5 of you, a quick calculation shows how much time each of you gets for each round: 5, 3 and 1 minute. This way of allocating time will feel very fussy during the first few meetings. We encourage you to try it out. Everyone will be encouraged to prepare what they want to share. During the evaluation at the end of each meeting, you'll see if you need to change the time allocation at your next meeting.

- First round of sharing. In turn, each person shares what they have chosen to share at the end of their personal meditation time. The others listen without intervening, except to ask for an explanation of understanding. Let's be sure to share from the heart.
- A short period of silence (about 1 min.). Each person asks themselves: "What resonated with me in what the others shared? What gave me joy and enthusiasm? Or, on the contrary, what discouraged me? As you can see, it's not a question of asking "Who's right, who's wrong? We share experiences. Everyone is an expert in their own experience.
- Second round. Those who wish to do so express what has come to their hearts during this short time of silence. Interaction is now welcome. If anyone wishes to share something difficult, they can take a "talking stick", or a simple bic placed for this purpose in the centre of the sharing circle. As long as they keep the talking stick in their hand, they can be sure that they won't be interrupted, even if they fall silent to find their words or when the emotion is too great. The talking stick is also very useful when everyone wants to speak at the same time.
- **Third round of speakers**. Those who feel the impetus say thank you for what has enlightened them, what has moved them. It's a good idea to explain as clearly as possible at what point in the meeting they felt the most beneficial help from the One to whom we can give several names: Holy Spirit, divine energy of love, Transcendence....

Evaluation

Conclude your meeting by first silently asking yourself: "What was it about the way you shared that helped me? What, on the contrary, got in the way? How can we improve next time? Then, share your assessments and take a decision together to improve the way you do things.

4. Stories

Let's share our desires, our dreams

The energy that sets us in motion is the force of our desires, our burning thirsts, our most legitimate aspirations, our most profoundly human needs: the need to contribute to the well-being of our fellow human beings, to give life generously and receive it gratefully, to feel useful, to dare to leave behind what has become sclerotic and embark on something new... Wisdom warns us: "You will never realise the dreams you have not allowed yourself to have".

Here, taken from the Gospels, are the words of people who have taken their crazy dreams seriously:

"May they all be one [Jesus says], just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be one in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me" (Jn 17:21).

"I have come to bring fire on earth, [Jesus says] and how I wish it were already kindled" (Lk 12:49).

"Two disciples [of John the Baptist...] followed Jesus. Jesus turned round and saw them following him, and said to them, "What are you looking for? They said to him, "Rabbi - which means Master - where are you staying? He said to them, "Come and see. So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour (about four o'clock in the afternoon) (Jn 1:37-39).

"Jesus said [to Bartimaeus], "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "Rabboni, may I see again!" And Jesus said to him, "Go, your faith has saved you." Immediately the man received his sight, and he followed Jesus along the road" (Mk 10:46-52).

Request

"Lord, make me aware of my aspirations,
deepest desires and dreams".

Avenues for personal meditation

- **I let myself be touched by these words.** What do they awaken in me?
- **I apply these stories to my life.** I let my deepest, wildest desires rise up in me, for my couple, my family, my work, my region, the Planet. What desire burns in my heart? I imagine that I'm close to death; what would I like to have achieved in my life?

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion of this personal time: see the explanation in n° 3, at the end of p. 4.

Jesus takes part in our conversations

Gospel: Lk 24, 13-32.

"On the first day of the week] two disciples were on their way to a village called Emmaus, two hours' journey from Jerusalem, and they were talking among themselves about all the things that had happened. While they were talking and asking questions, Jesus himself came and walked with them. But their eyes were unable to see him. Jesus said to them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" Then they stopped, all sad. One of the two, named Cleophas, replied, "You are indeed the only foreigner living in Jerusalem who is unaware of the events of these days." He said to them, "What events?" They answered him, "What happened to Jesus of Nazareth, the man who was a prophet powerful in deed and word before God and all the people: how the chief priests and our leaders handed him over, had him condemned to death and crucified him. We hoped that he was the one who was going to deliver Israel. But with all that, it's already the third day since it happened. In fact, some of the women in our group filled us with amazement. When they went to the tomb at dawn, they did not find his body; they came to tell us that they had even seen a vision: angels saying that he was alive. Some of our companions went to the tomb and found things just as the women had said; but they did not see him." Then he said to them: "You unintelligent spirits! How slow is your heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for Christ to suffer these things in order to enter into his glory?" And, starting from Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them, in the whole of Scripture, what concerned him. As they approached the village they were going to, Jesus pretended to go further. But they tried to keep him back, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting close to evening and the day is already drawing to a close. So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread, pronounced the blessing, broke it and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us as he spoke to us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Request

"Lord, give me the courage to believe that you are interested in me,
what makes me suffer and what makes me despair".

Avenues for personal meditation

- **I let myself be touched by the Gospel story.** Through the eyes of the imagination, I see and hear the disillusioned disciples. I see Jesus reaching out to them, drawing close to them and making himself present to their suffering. I hear him remind them of the essence of the Good News: "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24). I notice that the disciples' hearts burn when they hear Jesus speak to them.
- **I apply this story to my life.** I remember disappointments and painful events that are still very much alive in me. I compare my personal experience with that of the disciples conversing with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. I remember that the risen Jesus is present in my heart and that I can converse with him.

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion of this personal time: see the explanation in n° 3, at the end of p. 4.

The Lord works wonders for us

The following is an account by Merlin Carothers (1924-2013), an American Methodist minister and army chaplain (*De la prison à la louange*, Foi et Victoire, 1974, pp. 98-104).

It takes place during the Vietnam War (1975-1975). Ron is in the army and has come to see Merlin, his chaplain.

I've been called up to go to Vietnam," says Ron, "and my wife, Sue, is completely demoralised. She's even threatening suicide. I'm all she has in the world. She was adopted as a child and has no family. Very well," said Merlin. Come into my study, both of you.

When the three of them met again, Merlin opened his Bible to verse 28 of chapter 8 of Saint Paul's letter to the Romans and read: "*When men love God, he himself contributes everything for their good*". He then said to the couple: "We are going to kneel down and thank God.

Sue and Ron are stunned: "How? Thanking God when Sue is going to be alone?"

Merlin: "We thank God because he does everything for our good. Everything, even the dramatic. Remember: the horrible death of Jesus on a cross gave rise to an immense grace for humanity. Not only did Jesus rise from the dead, but his disciples, who had lost all hope, became 100% alive again. Believing they have nothing to lose, Ron and Sue agree to kneel. They make a strong effort to fight their scepticism. And they give thanks that God is at work in this dramatic situation and that he is bringing good out of it.

Then Ron returns to his unit and Sue goes back through the waiting room. There was a soldier there with whom she struck up a conversation. As she spoke, the man opened a file. There was a photo in it. Sue asked him: "Who is it?" "Not at all, it's my own mother," Sue tells him. I was adopted as a child. I saw the adoption file. This same photo was in it.

Sue had just discovered a blood brother. And this, just minutes after giving thanks to God who makes everything work out for our good. She was no longer alone in the world.

Request

"Lord, give me the courage to believe that in such a dramatic situation of my life, you make everything work for my good".

Avenues for personal meditation

- **I let myself be touched by the story.** What does it awaken in me? I notice this: saying thank you in a dramatic situation won't necessarily change the situation into a wonderful event, as was the case for Sue and Ron. But saying thank you to the Lord will always change our hearts and give us strength to get through a dramatic situation. In other words, our thanks will not necessarily prevent a tragedy from happening (for example, the murder of an innocent person or the death of someone suffering from cancer). But our thanks will open our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit, so that good may come of this trial.
- **I apply this story to my life.** (a) Do I remember any wonderful coincidences in my own life? (b) I remember a dramatic situation in my life. I try to say thank you to God for working through it.

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion: see the explanation in no. 3, at the end of p. 4.

The Son of God became one of us

Text taken from no. 102 of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius

In their eternity, the three divine Persons - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - look down upon the Earth. They see human beings enduring so much suffering. They are moved with compassion. They consulted each other and decided, by common accord, that the Son of God would become man in order to help the human race. When the time was ripe, they sent the angel Gabriel to Mary.

Text of the Gospel of Lk 1, 28-38

"The angel came to [Mary] and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. When she heard this, she was deeply distressed, and wondered what this greeting could mean. Then the angel said to her: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. Behold, you will conceive and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great; he will be called the Son of the Most High [...]. Mary said to the angel, "How is this to be, since I know no man?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you [...]. And behold, in her old age, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son and is now in her sixth month, although she was called the barren woman. For nothing is impossible with God. " Then Mary said, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word. Then the angel left her."

Request

"Lord, grant me to be like Mary,
fully open to the work of the Holy Spirit in me".

Avenues for personal meditation

- **I let myself be touched by this story.** I contemplate the people (the three Divine Persons, Mary, the angel), what they say, what they do.
- **I apply this story to my life.** How does this story relate to me, how does it speak to me?

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion: see the explanation in no. 3, at the end of p. 4.

Today a saviour is born

Text: Lk 2:1-20

"In those days, the Emperor Augustus issued an edict ordering a census of the whole world. This first census took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And they were all going to be registered, each in his or her home town. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, into Judea, to the town of David called Bethlehem. For he was of the house and lineage of David. He had come to be registered with Mary, who had been given to him in marriage and was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her first-born son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, for there was no room for them in the common room. In the same region, there were shepherds who lived outside and spent the night in the fields to look after their flocks. The angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were filled with great fear. Then the angel said to them: "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign given to you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was an innumerable heavenly company with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to mankind, whom He loves." When the angels had left the shepherds for heaven, they said to each other, "Let us go as far as Bethlehem to see what has happened, the event that the Lord has made known to us." They hurried there, and found Mary and Joseph with the newborn child lying in the manger. When they had seen, they told what had been announced to them about the child. And all who heard were amazed at what the shepherds had told them. Mary, however, remembered all these events and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds set out again, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been foretold to them".

Request

"Lord, help me to welcome you".

Avenues for personal meditation

- **I let myself be touched by this story.** I contemplate Mary, Joseph, Jesus and the shepherds. What are they doing? What do they say? What do they feel?
- **I apply this story to my life.** I look at the cot. Where do I want to rest? Which character or object in this scene represents me most? I see the inner and outer events of my own life, of the world, of the earth of which I am a part. With fluidity, without tensing up, I let go and welcome what is given to me. In my poverty, am I afraid? Do I dare take the baby Jesus in my arms? What does he do? Laugh, cry? What emotions do I feel? What do I want to do, say, be? What rises to my heart? I listen and I welcome.

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion: see the explanation in no. 3, at the end of p. 4.

Let's share our deep experiences of God

Bible stories

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water, and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him. And a voice said from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Mt 3:16-17).

"Come and see a man who has told me everything I have done. Is he not the Christ?" (Jn 4:29).

"One thing I know: I was blind, and now I see... He has opened my eyes" (Jn 9:25 and 30).

"The two disciples] told what had happened on the road [to Emmaus] and how the Lord had been recognised by them in the breaking of the bread" (Lk 24:35).

"I heard a voice, [says Paul,] saying to me in Aramaic: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to resist the goad.'" And I said, "Who are you, Lord?" The Lord answered, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting'" (Acts 14:14-15).

Request

"Lord, help me to recognise you in my life".

Avenues for meditation

- **I let myself be touched by these stories.** Through the eyes of the imagination, I see and hear the people who speak in them. They tell what happened, how God made himself known to them.
- **I apply these stories to my life.** I recall one or other important spiritual experience in my life. I revive my memories: places, people, significant events. I become aware of how God has made himself known to me.

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion: see the explanation in no. 3, at the end of p. 4.

Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit

Explanatory notes to the following text :

- The Samaritans were separated from the official Jewish faith. They were considered heretics by the Jewish people.
- Men didn't usually talk to women.
- A psalm compares the thirst for God to that of a deer seeking living water: "*As a thirsty deer seeks living water, so my soul seeks you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, the living God*" (Ps 41:2-3).
- Here, the expression "living water" refers to the Holy Spirit, divine Love, the Life that flows from the heart of God.
- The Samaritan woman experienced that Jesus knew her intimately. He knew the tragedy of her life: the failure of her love life. She deduced that he had received this knowledge from God himself, and said to him, "*You are a prophet*."
- The Samaritans worshipped God on Mount Gerizim. A temple had once been built there.

Gospel: Jn 4, 6-42. *The text is that of the Bible. But it is arranged in such a way that several readers can read it, so that it is more lively.*

- **Narrator** : At that time, Jesus came to a town in Samaria called Sykar, near the land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired from the journey, sat down by the spring. It was the sixth hour, about midday. A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her:
- **Jesus**: "Give me a drink.
- **Narrator** : His disciples had gone into town to buy some food. The woman said to him:
- **The woman**: "What! You, a Jew, are asking me, a woman, for a drink?" Jews don't mix with Samaritans. Jesus replied:
- **Jesus**: "If you knew the gift of God and who it is who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink', you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."
- **The woman**: "Lord, you have nothing to draw from, and the well is deep. Where did you get this living water from? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself, with his sons and his cattle?"
- **Jesus**: "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst again; and the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."
- **The woman**: "Lord, give me this water so that I will no longer be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.
- **Jesus**: "Go, call your husband, and come back.
- **The woman**: "I don't have a husband.
- Jesus said, "You're right to say you don't have a husband: you've had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband, so you're telling the truth.

- **The woman:** "Lord, I can see that you are a prophet! ... Well then! Our fathers worshipped on the mountain there, and you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.
- **Jesus** said: "Woman, believe me: the hour is coming when you will no longer go to this mountain or to Jerusalem to worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour is coming - and now is - when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: these are the worshippers whom the Father seeks. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth".
- **The woman:** "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will make all things known to us.
- **Jesus:** "I who speak to you am". [...]
- **Narrator:** Leaving her pitcher there, the woman returned to the city and said to the people:
- **The woman:** "Come and see a man who has told me everything I have done. Is he not Christ?"
- **Narrator :** And they went out of the city and came to him. [...] Many of the Samaritans in that town believed in Jesus because of the words of the woman who bore witness, "He has told me everything I have done. When they came to him, they invited him to stay with them. He stayed there for two days. Many more believed because of what he had said, and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of what you have told us; we have heard for ourselves, and we know that he is really the Saviour of the world.

Request

"Lord, give me your Holy Spirit,
fill my heart with your love".

Avenues for personal meditation

- **I let myself be touched by the Gospel story.** Through the eyes of my imagination, I see and hear Jesus and the Samaritan woman talking to each other. I ask myself: "What are they thirsty for? What made it possible for a dialogue to take place between them when everything could have opposed them? Why did Jesus ask the Samaritan woman to call her husband? What did Jesus like about this woman? What does she like about Jesus?"
- **I apply this story to my life.** I remember difficult, conflictual relationships. I compare my personal experience with that of the Samaritan woman conversing with Jesus. I remember that the risen Jesus is present in my heart and that I can converse with him.

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion: see the explanation in no. 3, at the end of p. 4.

Jesus came to save what was lost

Gospel: Lk 19:1-10.

"When Jesus entered Jericho, he was going through the town. A man called Zacchaeus came along. He was the chief tax collector. And he was rich... He tried to see who Jesus was. But he couldn't because of the crowd, because he was short. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was about to pass by. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly: I must stay in your house today." Zacchaeus quickly came down and welcomed him joyfully.

When they saw this, they all murmured; they said, "He has gone to lodge with a sinner." Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Well! Lord, I give half of my possessions to the poor and, if I have taken too much money from someone, I give him back four times as much." Then Jesus said: "Today salvation has come to this house, for he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost..."

Comment

This attitude of non-condemnation is fundamental. Jesus condemned no one; he came to save, not to condemn (Jn 12:47). That is his central message. And to pass it on to the world, we have to live it together. Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus is a wonderful illustration of the Lord's attitude. It was a healing of the heart that had all the effects of a miracle. While Zacchaeus was seen as an evildoer by those around him, and probably by himself, the way Jesus looked at him turned everything upside down. It was a look devoid of all judgement. It restored Zacchaeus to his original generous nature.

The tragedy of Adam and Eve (Gn 3, 1-5), that is to say of all of us, is to condemn God. We give credence to a poisonous thought: "God is not good. He imposes a ban on us to make us feel that we are nothing but vile creatures totally dependent on an all-powerful Master". The one who frees us from this mortifying thought is the Son. He lives his dependence on the Father in absolute gratitude: he rejoices in receiving everything from the Father: being, life, love.

Request

"Lord, help me to condemn no one, neither myself nor others".

Avenues for personal meditation

- **I let myself be touched by the Gospel story.** Through the eyes of my imagination, I see and hear Jesus, Zacchaeus and the crowd. I ask myself: "What did Zacchaeus want? What did Jesus want? What were the thoughts of the crowd?"
- **I apply this story to my life.** I remember one or other difficult relationship in my life. What does this Gospel tell me about it?

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion: see the explanation in no. 3, at the end of p. 4.

Simon-Pierre abuses his authority

Introduction

This story marks a turning point in the disciples' life with Jesus. Until then, Jesus had shown himself to be a powerful man in deed and word. He performed healings. He attracted crowds. He raised great expectations. But he also aroused enmity and jealousy among the religious leaders.

At the beginning of the story, Jesus calls himself "the Son of Man".

Gospel: Mth: 16, 43-23

"When Jesus arrived in the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They answered, "For some, John the Baptist; for others, Elijah; for still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Jesus asked them, "And what do you say? Who do you think I am?" Then Simon Peter spoke up and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Yonas: flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the power of death will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ. From then on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he had to set out for Jerusalem, suffer much at the hands of the elders, chief priests and scribes, be killed, and on the third day rise again. Peter, taking him aside, began to rebuke him vehemently, "God forbid, Lord! this will not happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me: your thoughts are not of God, but of men.

Request

"Help me, Lord,
to make God's views my own".

Avenues for personal meditation

- **I am touched by this story.** Peter clearly understood that Jesus was appointing him "head of his Church". Armed with this new authority, he behaved like a "leader": he reproached Jesus vehemently. And Jesus violently put him in his place. Peter was attached to Jesus. He thought the prospect that the salvation of mankind would come through the cross was crazy and scandalous.
- **I apply this story to my situation.** How does this story relate to me? How does it speak to me? How does it concern me?

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion: see the explanation in no. 3, at the end of p. 4.

Translate any criticism into an unmet need

One of the great precepts of Jesus is: "Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned" (Lk 6:37). M. Rosenberg (1934-2015) explains how to proceed. This American psychologist is the inventor of NVC (Non-Violent Communication). One of the keys to NVC is to replace accusations, reproaches and condemnations with the formulation of one or more unsatisfied needs. Here's an example.

In one prison, Mr Rosenberg met a prisoner who was angry because he had written to the management asking to take a training course, but after 3 weeks the management had still not replied to his letter. Referring to the management, the prisoner said: "These are people who think they are superior and they treat us like rubbish. Mr Rosenberg asks the inmate: "What do you need?" The inmate replies: "To be respected. Marshall: "Yes, but more specifically?" New answer: "I need an answer". Marshall: "Yes, but deeper still?" Answer: "I need this training, because if I don't get it, as soon as I get out of prison, I'm going to offend again. Marshall: "OK. How are you going to get what you want? By shouting in the warden's face: "You think you're so superior and you treat us like rubbish? Or by saying to him: "Warden, I really need this training, otherwise three days after my release I'll find myself back in prison"?

If, in a family exchange, at work, at school or anywhere else, someone gets angry, paradoxically this is a good thing. Because anger is sustained by energy, but misdirected. We can transform the direction of this energy by reformulating these words and replacing the accusation with one or more deeply unmet human needs, for example the need for communion, justice, listening, participation, food, unpolluted air, peace, etc. The Holy Spirit will do the rest. Marshall Rosenberg asserted that it was up to us to do this work and that "the divine energy of love" then worked surprising reconciliations Such was his experience.

Request

"Lord, make me aware of profoundly human needs
what lies behind the accusations

Avenues for personal meditation

- **I am touched by this story.** When the prisoner thought: "I need an answer" or "I need respect", he was expressing his needs, yes, but he was indirectly blaming the warden for not answering him and for disrespecting him. In so doing, the prisoner was implicitly making an accusation against the warden, who would then have been inclined to defend himself, which would have severed their relationship. When the prisoner says: "I need training", he is talking only about himself and not about the behaviour of the warden. He is therefore much more likely to have his need heard and met.
- **I apply this to my own situation.** I think back to a conflictual relationship and try to eliminate all accusations against anyone (other people or myself) by specifying what my needs are and what the needs of the person with whom I'm having difficulties might be.

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion: see the explanation in no. 3, at the end of p. 4.

Jesus allows himself to be challenged

Gospel: Mt 15:21-28. What follows is the biblical text. But it is arranged in such a way that it can be read by several readers, to bring it to life.

- **Narrator:** *Behold, a Canaanite woman [from the non-Jewish territories of Tyre and Sidon] cried out and said:*
- **The woman:** *"Have mercy on me, Lord, son of David! My daughter is being tormented by a demon.*
- **Narrator :** *But he did not answer him. And the disciples came and asked him:*
- **The disciples:** *"Send her away, for she is shouting at us!"*
- **Jesus:** *"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel".*
- **Narrator:** *But she came and bowed down before him, saying:*
- **The woman:** *"Lord, help me!"*
- **Jesus:** *"It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.*
- **The woman:** *"Yes, Lord; but that's just it, little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.*
- **Jesus:** *"Woman, great is your faith, let it be as you wish!"*
- **Narrator:** *And that very hour, his daughter was cured.*

Comment

We are made according to our thoughts. Here are three types of thoughts this mother might have had about Jesus:

- "I thought he was a man of God. But he's just insulted me by calling me a bitch. So he's not a man of God. I'm walking away.
- "He's a man of God. He tells me what God wants. God doesn't want my daughter to get better. I'm resigned to it.
- "This man of God suffers from a narrow vision of his mission. The Holy Spirit led me to discover in the word 'dog' a truth that would unleash God's saving power. I rejoice when I open my mouth to say what I have found.

Request

"Lord, release in me the right and true words".

Avenues for personal meditation

- **I let myself be touched by the Gospel story.** Through the eyes of my imagination, I see and hear Jesus, the Canaanite woman and the disciples. What do these dialogues awaken in me?
- **I apply this story to my life.** I remember one or other important encounter in my life. I become aware of what happened when I dared to speak out.

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion: see the explanation in n° 3, at the end of p. 4.

Lazarus, come outside!

Gospel: Jn 11, 3-7.17.20-27.33b-45

"At that time Martha and Mary, the two sisters of Lazarus, sent to Jesus, saying, "Lord, the one you love is sick." When Jesus heard this, he said, "This sickness does not lead to death; it is for the glory of God, so that through it the Son of God may be glorified." Jesus loved Martha and her sister, as well as Lazarus. When he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was for two more days. Then, after that, he said to the disciples, "Let's go back to Judea." [...]

When Jesus arrived, he found Lazarus lying in the tomb for four days. When Martha heard that Jesus had arrived, she went out to meet him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now, I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again. Martha said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live; whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She answered, "Yes, Lord, I believe it: you are the Christ, the Son of God; you are the one who is coming into the world." [...]

Jesus in his spirit was seized with emotion, he was overwhelmed, and he asked, "Where have you laid him?" They answered him, "Lord, come and see." Then Jesus began to weep. The Jews said, "See how he loved him! But some of them said, "He who opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented Lazarus from dying?" Jesus, overcome with emotion, arrived at the tomb. It was a cave closed by a stone. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, he already smells; this is the fourth day he has been there." Then Jesus said to Martha, "Didn't I tell you? If you believe, you will see the glory of God." So the stone was removed. Then Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, I thank you because you have heard me. I knew that you would always hear me, but I say this because of the crowd around me, so that they may believe that you sent me." After this he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come outside!" And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, his face wrapped in a shroud. Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." Many of the Jews, who had come to Mary and had therefore seen what Jesus had done, believed in him."

Request

"Lord, help me to believe that you can and will
bringing life to what was dead".

Avenues for personal meditation

- **I let myself be touched by this story.** I see the characters one by one. I hear what they say and how they say it. I observe what they do. I sense how they feel. I detect their desires, their aspirations.
- **I apply this story to my own life.** Where do I want to be in this scene? How does it make me feel? How does this story relate to me? I put myself in the place of Lazarus, sick, dying, (dead). I observe the reactions of those close to me. Do I want to be resurrected? Do I have hope of resurrection and can I believe that my life can be reborn?

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion: see the explanation in no. 3, at the end of p. 4.

The Risen Jesus gives us his peace

Text: Jn 20 19-23

"When evening came on the first day of the week, and the doors of the place where the disciples were staying were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, "Peace be with you!"

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

When he had said this, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive, they will be forgiven; whose sins you uphold, they will be upheld." "

Request

"Lord, allow me to welcome your peace".

Avenues for personal meditation

- **I let myself be touched by this story.** I see the scene described in the text through the eyes of my imagination. I look at the characters. I hear what Jesus says to the apostles. I imagine what state of mind the apostles must have been in before Jesus came. Peter denied him. The others (except John) abandoned him. Judas took his own life. It was in such a context that Jesus said: "Peace be with you".
- **I apply this story to my own life.** Jesus says: "Peace be with me", "Peace be with us". How does that resonate with me? Jesus breathed on his apostles. What does that mean for me, for us, here and now?

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion: see the explanation in no. 3, at the end of p. 4.

A little foray into the world beyond

Introduction

This story was told by Andrea Pfeifer. She is a musician. Her instrument is the harp. Following a bout of food poisoning, she was overcome by intolerable suffering. She lay on her bed and was unable to move. At one point, she was no longer conscious of her body. Here is her testimony (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLzcOFJ3O1o> from 4'40 to 6'26 and from 7.47 to 12'42; 2 May 2020).

Story

I suddenly felt transported into space [...] and I was looking down on my life [...] This provoked in me a feeling of profound sadness. This sadness was provoked by the incredible regret of not having left my mark on the world because I had not shared my talents. At the time I was already writing music, but I always preferred not to show what I'd created, because I didn't dare share it. I was very shy. I always thought I hadn't done well enough. And now I felt I hadn't been generous enough by not sharing my talents. The fact that I hadn't offered the world who I really was had been quite fatal. And this feeling of sadness was so strong that I was forced to return to my body". [...]

And the simple fact of accepting the situation [...provoked] an explosion of uncontrollable joy. I found myself floating in an infinite ocean of light, love, bliss, infinite freedom and also consciousness. [...] I was at home, truly at home [...]. I was part of this decision to return, knowing that it was logical: I had to come back. From that moment on, a feeling of deep joy always accompanied me. [...] I've lost all fear of dying. I'm waiting for that moment when I go home. [...] When I'm about to die again, I'd like to be able to look back on my life and say: "Yes, it was good, I gave it my all. I was a real gift to life, and now I have the right to die. [...] Now I'm able to express myself through my music in the truest, most authentic way possible. Because by doing that I'm really giving myself, my whole being, through my music, to everyone in the world, just as I really am."

Request

"Lord, kindle in me the desire to share in the fullness of Love
now, on this earth and later in heaven".

Ideas for personal meditation.

- **I'm touched by this testimony.** How does it make me feel? Curiosity? Doubt? Hope? What Gospel story does it remind me of?
- **I apply this story to my life.** What image do I have of what awaits me in the afterlife?

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion: see the explanation in no. 3, at the end of p. 4.

The unavoidable consequences of sharing

Wisdom of the Gospel

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field; the man who finds it hides it again. In his joy, he goes and sells everything he owns and buys that field" (Mt 13:44).

"New wine is not put into old wineskins; otherwise the skins will burst, the wine will spill out, and the skins will be lost. But new wine is put into new skins, and the whole is preserved" (Mt 9:17).

"Whoever hears the words I am saying and puts them into practice is like a man with foresight who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams poured down, the winds blew and battered that house; but the house did not fall down, for it was built on rock" (Mt 7:24-27).

Request

"Lord, help me to choose concrete means
so that the discussions we've had so far bear fruit".

Avenues for personal meditation

- **I let myself be touched by this wisdom from the Gospel above.** What does it awaken in me?
- **I apply this wisdom to my life.** I remember what we shared. What are the unavoidable consequences if I want to be consistent? What is the Lord calling me to do? What generous and realistic ways can I choose to respond to this call?

Conversation with the Lord and conclusion: see the explanation in n° 3, at the end of p. 4.

5. Contact

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We look forward to receiving your suggestions and feedback.