

JESUS SOURCE OF OUR HOPE

**1. Listen to the Word: 1Tm 1:1-2**

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, to Timothy, my true child in faith: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**2. Remain in the Word**

With these wonderful statements the Apostle Paul begins his letter to Timothy, his son in faith, immediately focusing on the fundamental teaching: Jesus Christ is the one who died and rose for the salvation of humanity (1 Tim 2:6). He, therefore, is our hope. The title "Jesus Christ" is familiar to the authors of the New Testament and the Christian liturgy, in that it clearly identifies the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God made man, sent by God for the salvation of humanity. However, Paul uses it several times in this letter in the inverted form "Christ Jesus" (1Tm 1:1-2 [3 times]; 1Tm 1:15, and 1Tm 2:5-6), to emphasize the messianic role of Jesus. He alone is the One awaited by all nations; He alone is the One sent in the fullest sense, therefore, He alone is the hope of all humanity (cf. Acts 9:22).

Jesus brings to completion these "semina Verbi"<sup>1</sup>, He gives it breadth and depth, basing hope in God Himself, who is faithful, loving, and who fulfills His promises. As the only-begotten Son, Christ and Savior, He is "the mediator between God and humanity. He is the man Jesus Christ, who has given Himself for the redemption for everyone" (1 Tim 2:5-6).

Benedict XVI emphasizes the uniqueness of Christian hope, highlighting that it "is a Person", "has a face", "has a name".<sup>2</sup> In the Encyclical *Spe Salvi* he affirms that "God is the foundation of hope - not just any god, but that God who has a human face and has loved us to the end: each individual and humanity as a whole."<sup>3</sup>

Living in hope today is an invitation to experience deeply the personal and loving relationship with God in Jesus Christ. It is the decision to constantly put "*Christ at the center of our life and of the world, because He is our hope, the hope of the Church and of all humanity!*"<sup>4</sup> Since He is the Living One, "everything that He touches becomes young, becomes new, and fills with life."<sup>5</sup> We, therefore, are called to live in hope, that is, to connect our lives with that of Jesus Christ; to always be pilgrims of hope towards God and towards our neighbor.

The certainty that "nothing can ever separate us from the love of God" (Rm 8:39) is the anchor that firmly holds our life. God is always present, accompanies us, and loves us. He allows us to live with joy, give meaning to our existence, and transmit this hope to today's world.

With his ardent love for Christ, Saint Paul became a credible witness of unwavering hope and faithful love in God. He an Apostle by vocation, had the courage to renounce himself, to follow the will of the Lord, to love without reserve, to live and die for Him. He lived fully his mission to proclaim the Gospel of hope, remaining deeply attached to the saving mission of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. VATICAN II, Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, n.2; Decree *Ad Gentes*, nos. 11.18.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. GARCÍA GUILLEN Domingo, *Khuôn Mặt Hy Vọng: Thông điệp Spe Salvi của Đức Bênêđictô XVI trong bối cảnh Thần học hiện đại* [II Face of Hope: The message of *Spe Salvi* of Pope Benedict XVI in the context of modern theology], in TRUNG TÂM HỌC VĂN ĐA MINH, *Thời sự thần học* (2015)69, 36-62.

<sup>3</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, n.31.

<sup>4</sup> MARTOGLIO Stefano, *Anchored in hope, pilgrims with the young*, *Strenna* 2025, p.5.

<sup>5</sup> FRANCIS, *Christus Vivit*, n.1.

### 3. Illumined by the Word

Hope places us in deep communion with God, the meaning of our life, the One we ardently desire. Pope Francis writes, *"May it be for all a moment of living and personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, 'door' of salvation (cf. Jn 10:7.9); with Him, whom the Church has the mission to proclaim always, everywhere, and to all as 'our hope'."* (1 Tim 1:1)<sup>6</sup>

In the Salesian tradition, the dream of the Two Columns is a call for every son and daughter of Don Bosco to live in union with Jesus in the Eucharist and in devotion to Mary Help of Christians. These two pillars represent the solid foundation that gives strength to live daily one's vocation and mission in the world. Don Bosco deeply experienced the spiritual strength that comes from the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He lived constantly in the presence of God, as if he saw the Invisible, with a deep trust in divine providence. Following his example, we are called to celebrate life with joy and serenity, fully entrusting ourselves to Jesus and letting ourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit. May our heart always be turned to God, "desiring the heavenly realities and directing our mind and spirit towards the things above" (cf. Col 3:1-2).

In the same way, Eucharistic spirituality left an indelible imprint on Mother Mazzarello's spiritual experience. The window of Valponasca and the paths of Mornese still evoke her ardent devotion and her intense desire to join Jesus. Mother Mazzarello often recommended to her sisters, "Live in intimate union with Jesus, work only to please Him" (L 22). She invited them find themselves in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the center of their life, lighting in the hearts of her sisters and young people the fire of faith, love, and hope.

Today, with a heart animated by an ardent love for God, for the Sisters in the community and for young people, each FMA in her own action - contemplation is called to actualize the spiritual experience of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello with fidelity and creativity. In this way, she will become a witness of hope, rooted in the eternal values that the life of faith gives, through the grace, mercy, and peace of which Saint Paul spoke to Timothy.

### 4. Pray with the Word

In silence, listening to the Word of God, I let myself be guided by the Spirit, so that my heart may live in gratitude, humility, and self-awareness, renewing my life in relationship with God and others.

Some questions for reflection:

- In what do I place my hope?
- Do I let myself be attracted by the love of God to enjoy life in communion with Him, living in faith, love, and trust?
- What do I have to work harder on in order to fully live the virtue of hope?
- How can I kindle in the young people and in the environment in which I live the fire of hope and love?

### 5. Live the Word Together with Mary

Mary lived deeply the experience of hope since the moment she received the angel's message. She said "yes" to the will of God, following His plan. In this way, the Son of God became the center of her life, filling it and guiding it. Mary, Mother of God, is compared to the Star of the Sea - Stella Maris. In fact, Pope Benedict XVI writes, *"What person could be more than Mary a star of hope for us - she who with her 'Yes' opened to God Himself the door of our world; she who became the living Ark of the Covenant, in which God became flesh, became one of us, pitched His tent among us?"* (cf. Jn 1:14).<sup>7</sup> Mary guides us to the true Hope, who is Jesus Christ, Her Son.

*O Virgin of Hope, Mother and Teacher, help me to proclaim together with you, Hope to today's world. Amen.*

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<sup>6</sup> FRANCIS, *Spes non confundit. Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025*, n.1.

<sup>7</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, n.49.

PILGRIMS OF HOPE

**1. Listen to the Word: Rm 5:1-5**

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access [by faith] to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.*

**2. Remain in the Word**

The main theme of the Letter to the Romans is the faith-based salvation that God gives to humanity. It can be said that the first verses of chapter 5 act as a "hinge" connecting the part on justification (chapters 1-4) with the part on salvation (chapters 5-11). These words emphasize that justification and salvation are free gifts which God gives to humanity through the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ.

If the theme of the Jubilee 2025, "Hope does not disappoint," indicates the fruit of Christian hope, the reason expressed below, "because the love of God has been poured into our hearts" (Rom 5:5) shows the root of this hope.

***"Hope does not disappoint" - the full fruit in the present***

To list what believers are already benefiting from, "Justified therefore by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1), Saint Paul uses all the verbs of the present time. Next, to show that God has granted us "grace upon grace" (Jn 1:16), the Apostle lists the divine gifts in a kind of consequential connection.

When one is "at peace with God", one also has "access" to His grace (cf. Rom 5:1-2). And then, the state of life in the grace of God not only allows us to boast, "In the hope of the glory of God" but also "in afflictions" (Rom 5:2-3). This stems not from a heroic attitude of the person, but from the awareness that the virtues are cultivated day after day, step by step because, "Affliction produces endurance and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope" (Rom 5:3-4).

***"The love of God has been poured out into our hearts – Firmly rooted in the past, a secure foundation for the future***

The two parts of verse 5 are connected by the conjunction "because" - a short and simple word, but which emphasizes the certainty that the fundamental reason for "hope that does not disappoint" is precisely the love of God. In the original Greek text, the verbs, expressed in the passive divine form, unambiguously underline the priority initiative of God's action. God's love *has been poured* into our hearts and the Holy Spirit *has been given* to us (cf. Rom 5:5). God is the first to act, the sower who spreads the good seed, the giver who gives and remains hidden, but whose gifts are the root, the foundation of what we hope for.

The past tense of the verbs in the second part of verse 5 and the following verses (Rom 5:6-11) further highlights the initiative of God. It is not only a chronological anticipation, but above all, a superiority in love. "Now, hardly anyone is willing to die for a righteous person; perhaps someone would dare to die for a good person. But God shows His love for us in the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:7-8).

If the merciful love of God, manifested in the sacrifice of the life of the only-begotten Son, is the foundation of "hope that does not disappoint", it is the same love that opens to us the hope of being "saved by his life" (Rom 5:10). Thus, the future becomes not only a promise, but also a certainty; a goal already reached for us by Christ, who makes every step on the path of life more solid and decisive.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. MARTOGLIO Stefano, *Strenna 2025 - "Anchored in hope, pilgrims with the young"*, p. 10.

### 3. Illumined by the Word

In the Jubilee of Hope, the life of Venerable Cardinal Francis Nguyen Van Thuan shines as a credible testimony that arouses praise, awareness, imitation.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his address to the officials and collaborators of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the death of Cardinal François-Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, stated, "Cardinal Van Thuan was a man of hope; he lived with hope and spread it among all those he met. It was thanks to this spiritual energy that he withstood all the physical and moral difficulties. Hope sustained him as a Bishop isolated for 13 years from his diocesan community; hope helped him to glimpse in the absurdity of the events befalling him - he was never tried during his long imprisonment - a providential design of God."<sup>9</sup> Speaking of the role of prayer as food for hope, Pope Benedict XVI recalled the example of the Cardinal, "During thirteen years of imprisonment, in a situation of apparently total despair, listening to God, being able to speak to Him, became for him a growing force of hope, so that after his release, it allowed him to become for people all over the world a witness of hope - of that great hope that even in the nights of solitude does not end."<sup>10</sup>

### 4. Pray with the Word

In the second week of the Month of Gratitude, we remember in a special way the young people who - "in themselves represent hope"<sup>11</sup> – and migrants, "who leave their land in search of a better life for themselves and their families."<sup>12</sup>

With the words of Cardinal Francesco Nguyen Van Thuan, we can address the Lord with this prayer: "Jesus, I will not wait; I live the present moment, filling it with love. The straight line is made up of millions of small dots joined together. My life is also made up of millions of seconds and minutes connected to each other. I perfectly arrange every single point and the line will be straight. I live every minute with perfection and life will be holy. The path of hope is paved with small steps of hope. The life of hope is made of short minutes of hope."<sup>13</sup>

Questions for reflection:

- Do my words, my attitude, and my way of acting nourish the hope of my Sisters, young people, and collaborators?
- How can my community be a credible sign of hope for the young, the poor, and the migrants around us?

### 5. Together with Mary to live the Word

In the silence of the years spent with Jesus in Nazareth, we can imagine what they left in Mary. Mary let her hope be nourished by the Word, in contemplation and trusting abandonment to the guidance of God's provident love. Her words of spontaneous but profound praise in the Magnificat show how she never stopped 'counting the graces' of God in her own life and in the history of her people (cf. Lk 1:46-55).

Mary is a model of constant orientation towards God in daily life, especially at times when we encounter difficulties and obstacles as we sow the Gospel of hope (cf. Lk 2:19/51; Jn 2:1-5).

*O Virgin of Hope, our Mother and Teacher,*

*grant that, together with You, we may proclaim hope to others, young people and migrants. Amen!*

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<sup>9</sup> BENEDICT XVI, in [www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/speeches/2007/september/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20070917\\_card-van-thuan.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/speeches/2007/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070917_card-van-thuan.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Spe Salvi*, n. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, *Spes non confundit*, n. 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Ivi*, n. 13.

<sup>13</sup> NGUYEN Van Thuan, *Five loaves and two fish. From the suffering of prison a joyful testimony of faith*, Milan, Editions San Paolo 1997, 20-21.

### WITNESSES OF HOPE FOR THE WORLD

#### 1. Listen to the Word: 1Peter 3:13-17

<sup>13</sup>Now who is going to harm you if you are enthusiastic for what is good? <sup>14</sup>But even if you should suffer because of righteousness, blessed are you. Do not be afraid or terrified with fear of them, <sup>15</sup>but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. <sup>16</sup>Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, <sup>17</sup>when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.

#### 2. Remain in the Word

The First Letter of Saint Peter the Apostle was written in Rome about two years before the Apostle suffered martyrdom under the emperor Nero. It was sent to the Christian communities of Asia Minor, where persecutions of various kinds were taking place, with the intention of encouraging them to keep their faith strong. In a few essential words, the Apostle describes the authentic face of true witnesses of hope. The passage 1Pt 3:13-17 constitutes, in fact, the beginning of the section concerning the attitude of the Christians before persecutions (3:13 - 4,19).<sup>14</sup>

**“Now who is going to harm you if you are enthusiastic for what is good?”** (v.13). The beginning of the passage is marked by a direct question, which shakes personal conscience and sensitivity, "Now who is going to harm you if you are enthusiastic for what is good?" (v.13). This question is impressive because it draws attention and engages the reader in a direct dialogue, immersing one in reflection on the subject. It is effective because it establishes from the beginning, the condition that allows the disciple to remain firm in all circumstances: be enthusiastic for what is good.

**“Suffer because of righteousness”** (v.14). The reality of persecution prompts the Apostle to refer to a painful situation that the disciples might find themselves facing. He, therefore, clearly recalls the condition in which the disciples live, but at the same time remembers and emphasizes the blessedness reserved for those who undergo this suffering because of Christ and His Gospel. "But if you should suffer for righteousness, blessed are you!" (v.14). These words echo the beatitudes that Jesus proclaimed on the mountain. Blessed are those persecuted for righteousness, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you, persecute you and, lying, say all sorts of evil against you because of Me" (Mt 5:10-11).

**“Do not be afraid or terrified with fear of them, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts”** (vv. 14-15). In the face of hostile forces that are pressing on the daily reality and threaten it, the disciples must not be disturbed because, as Jesus taught, these are "those who kill the body but have no power to kill the soul" (Mt 10:28). However, the invitation of Saint Peter is more demanding! He, in fact, exhorts the disciples to give glory to Christ "as Lord" in the depths of their hearts. This means that, according to the Major Apostle, the fierce attack of enemies not only must not disturb the disciples outwardly, but can even become an opportunity to deepen their inner life.

**“Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope ... with gentleness and reverence”** (vv. 15-16). The Apostle Peter continues his exhortation by bringing the reflection to a further depth. He desires that the testimony of the disciples be not limited to the personal sphere, be not a simple inner conviction, but be manifested in an explicit defense of the faith ("apologia", which appears 8 times in the New Testament, of which 7 refer to the apologetic activity of Saint Paul). This testimony must be constant ("always"), ready ("available"), mild ("with gentleness and reverence") and universal ("to anyone").

**“keeping your conscience clear ... suffer for doing good”** (vv. 16-17). The testimony speaks for itself, but when it uses words, they exude the eloquence of blood, the courage of faith, the tenacity of love, the hope of resurrection. It is, however, the upright and virtuous life of the faithful that can put into crisis the attitude of those who persecute them. An integral conduct in Christ does not leave anyone indifferent, even those who judge and condemn. Indeed, it can lead to recognizing one's own error (v.16). Once again, it affirms the superiority of believers over the forces of evil and recognizes the inestimable value of "suffering for doing good rather than for doing evil" (v.17).

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. VANNI Ugo, *Lettere di Pietro – Giacomo – Giuda*, Roma, Paoline 1977<sup>2</sup>, 8.

### 3. Illumined by the Word

In *Spes non confundit* Pope Francis writes: "The most convincing testimony to this hope is provided by the *martyrs*. Steadfast in their faith in the risen Christ, they renounced life itself here below, rather than betray their Lord. Martyrs, as confessors of the life that knows no end, are present and numerous in every age, and perhaps even more so in our own day. We need to treasure their testimony, in order to confirm our hope and allow it to bear good fruit."<sup>15</sup> The martyrs, in fact, answered all those who provoked them and questioned them about their hope with the price of blood, with an ardent love, with a deep faith, and with an unshakable fidelity in Jesus Christ.

With her missionary journey in the Amazon jungle, Sister Maria Troncatti offers us today a model of "white martyrdom"<sup>16</sup> because she lived daily martyrdom through the renunciation of herself, carrying the cross every day in the footsteps of Christ, with fidelity and total trust. In a small notebook, she wrote, "We must leave with peace our homeland and relatives... Jesus walks before us, softening the thorns but He wants us to follow Him with courage".<sup>17</sup> The secret of this courage is found in a letter she wrote to her mother. "How much I would like to embrace you, mama, and tell you so many things! Every time I think of you, I cry and feel you so far away! [...] At the feet of Jesus, I comfort myself; looking at the cross that I carry around my neck gives me life and wings to work...."<sup>18</sup>

In contemplating this figure of holiness - "*Mother, Missionary, Artisan of peace and reconciliation*"<sup>19</sup> – We are committed so that we too, together with the educating communities and the many young people we meet, may shine as little lights in daily life and be signs of the prevenient and merciful love of the Father, as was Sister Maria Troncatti.<sup>20</sup>

### 4. Pray with the Word

Holy Week is a time of grace. Pope Francis invites us: "Let's look at the Cross! What do we see from the Cross? We see Jesus stripped, wounded, and tortured. Is this the end of everything? No, our hope is there!... The wood of the cross, a sign of suffering and humiliation, has been transformed by God into the greatest sign of love. The wood of death has become a tree of life."<sup>21</sup> we can ask ourselves:

- Jesus- what is the Crucified One telling me about the quality of a "witness of hope?"
- What testimonies of hope does the Paschal journey of Jesus offer to today's world?

Turning our thoughts and prayers to those who are proclaiming the Gospel of Hope today, especially to the FMA engaged in missions throughout the world, let us pray:

*"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:*

*where there is hatred, let me bring love; where it is injury, let me bring pardon,  
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith; where there is error, let me bring truth,  
where there is despair, let me bring hope..."*<sup>22</sup>

### 5. Insieme a Maria vivere la Parola

*O Mary, Vergin of Hope!*

*In the extreme pain lived at the foot of the Cross,  
You let the hope in you be strengthened in the trial.  
Courageously accepting the most painful reality,  
the death of your Son, you continued to believe in the faithfulness of God,  
Becoming a living witness of hope for every generation.  
Stand by me in the moments of trial  
and help me to walk courageously on the path of hope 'against all hope' (Rom 4:18).  
O Virgin of Hope, our Mother and Teacher,  
grant us to proclaim with you, hope to today's world. Amen!*

<sup>15</sup> FRANCIS, *Spes non confundit*, n.20.

<sup>16</sup> A homily of the Irish monks, written in the seventh century, speaks of three types of martyrdom: besides the red martyrdom which consists in bearing death because of Jesus Christ, there is also the *white martyrdom*, which consists in abandoning everything that a person loves for the sake of God; and the third is the *green martyrdom* which focuses on extreme penance and fasting for love of God: <https://it.aleteia.org/2017/11/01/3-tipi-martirio>.

<sup>17</sup> GRASSIANO MARIA DOMENICA, *Selva - patria del cuore*, Roma, Istituto FMA 1971, p.25.

<sup>18</sup> CIEŹKOWSKA SYLWIA (a cura di), *Lettere di suor Maria Troncatti FMA Missionaria in Ecuador*, Roma, Istituto FMA 2013, p.104.

<sup>19</sup> Slogan chosen in view of the upcoming Canonization of Sister Maria Troncatti.

<sup>20</sup> MOTHER CAZZUOLA CHIARA - FMA, *Circular 1046* "A holiness that generates life with a missionary heart".

<sup>21</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, *General Audience of 5 April 2023: Our wounds can become sources of hope*.

<sup>22</sup> PHANXICO ASSISI, *Peace Prayer*.

## Fourth Lectio Divina

### LIGHTING THE GOSPEL OF HOPE

#### 1. Listen to the Word: Lk 24: 28-35

<sup>28</sup>As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup>With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup>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?" <sup>33</sup>So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them <sup>34</sup>who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" <sup>35</sup>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.

#### 2. Remain in the Word

Luke is the only evangelist who gives the account of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Symbol of the community, they walk with a sad heart, weighed down by disappointments, discouragements, and frustrations. The pain of defeat pushes them to leave Jerusalem, their roots, the community itself, in search of other ways, alternative solutions. But Jesus knows them well, so He "came and walked with them" (v. 15). It is always God who takes the initiative, who takes the first step, who approaches the person, to listen to first! In His dead and risen Son, He walks with the human step and then leads us to walk with the divine step."<sup>23</sup>

Jesus meets His disciples, enters into their history, warms their hearts, becomes the Word and Bread broken, and thus kindles hope. He evokes in them the significance of the Scriptures, makes Himself recognized, then guides them through the events that have upset them in order to interpret them. In the heart of the evening, He performs the gesture very familiar to everyone, unmistakable, unique! "He took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them" (v. 30). There is no doubt; it is Him, precisely Him. The heart burns, the night is illuminated, the path is resumed, takes them back to Jerusalem, with the community of the Risen One! Visibly, Jesus is no longer there, but He has left them the fire of the Spirit that drives them to return to be missionaries. The meditation of the Word of God and the breaking of the bread of the Eucharist invigorate the way, illuminate hope, so that it can light up the life of those who seek the encounter that saves! Hope, therefore, is born from the Word of God, is nourished by the gesture of giving the Eucharist, and finds its meaning in living within the ecclesial community.

#### 3. Illuminated by the Word

Enlightened by the journey of the transformation of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, General Chapter XXIII of our Institute exhorts: *Broaden your vision. With the young, missionaries of hope and joy.* We are certain that the encounter with Jesus also transforms our daily life, creates and nourishes communion, makes us, together with the young people and the whole educating community, convinced evangelizers, prophecy for the world."<sup>24</sup>

The source of hope, the strength to go forward and share joy with young people is born from an authentic encounter with Christ. It is this encounter that enables us to overcome the challenges and temptations of disappointment, division, selfishness, and indifference in order to walk in joy and hope. Very useful in this regard are the recommendations of General Chapter XXIII: deepen and share the Word of God; make prayer an experience that nourishes our life, and place the Eucharistic Jesus at the center of community life.<sup>25</sup> In this way we, can give a concrete response to the appeal of Pope Francis: "All the baptized, each

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid* 380.

<sup>24</sup> INSTITUTE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, BROADEN YOUR VISION. WITH THE YOUNG, MISSIONARIES OF HOPE AND JOY. ACTS OF GENERAL CHAPTER XXIII, Rome 2014, 43.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. INSTITUTE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, CONSTITUTIONS, art. 40.

with their own charism and ministry, be co-responsible, so that multiple signs of hope may bear witness to the presence of God in the world.”<sup>26</sup>

#### **4. Pray with the Word**

Let us take a moment of silence to open our hearts to the action of the Holy Spirit, the Teacher, who guides us to understand the Word of God.

- Do I really desire to encounter the Word of God through personal and community prayer? How do I prepare for this encounter?
- Am I truly transformed by the encounter with the Word of God and with Jesus in the Eucharist to become a sign of joy and hope in the community and among young people? Is there is something that hinders this journey?

#### **5. Together with Mary live the Word**

Mary is our icon in listening to and putting into practice the Word of God. She "kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart" (Lk 2:19,51). With Jesus in her womb, she experienced the joy and hope of visiting her cousin Elizabeth. The painful events, the difficulties have not locked her in a self-referential attitude, but have opened her to hope. She is a sign of hope for peoples who suffer the pains of childbirth until justice sprouts. She is the missionary who comes to us to accompany us in life, opening our hearts to faith with her maternal affection. Like a true mother, she walks with us, struggles with us, and unceasingly pours out the closeness of God's love.”<sup>27</sup>

Like Mary, the first woman missionary, like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we too are called to start again "with burning hearts, eyes open, feet on the road, to make other hearts burn with the Word of God, open more eyes to Jesus in the Eucharist, and invite everyone to walk together on the way of peace and salvation that God in Christ has given to humanity.”<sup>28</sup>

*Hail Mary, Virgin of hope, You are our Mother and Teacher; teach us to live together with the Word so that, like You, we may become prophets of joy and hope for the world. Amen!*

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<sup>26</sup> FRANCIS, *Spes non confundit*, no.17.

<sup>27</sup> ID., *Evangelii Gaudium*, n.286.

<sup>28</sup> FRANCIS, *Message for the 97<sup>th</sup> World Missionary Day 2023*, no.3.