

pietre **Vive**
THE JOURNAL



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FRONTISPIECE

(detail) *Miraculous Draught of the Fishes*, early 6th century
(source: Wikimedia Commons)
see p.38 for a reflection about the image

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AFTER TEN YEARS: A “SYNOD FOR LIVING STONES”

Dear Living Stones, dear friends,

I write these words on our 10th birthday, half-way through the Synod in which I am participating as an “auditor” (which means “assistant”), by undeserved grace. The role of the 32 “assistants” (in the past they were called “experts”) is to listen very carefully to the interventions in the aula, coming from around 270 bishops and cardinals and other guests. We are asked to focus on the issues that are often mentioned, to link them with each other in order to catch some “screenshot” of the deep process with which the Spirit operates in the assembly. We then send our reflections to the central secretariat that, in turn, prepares a summary for the Pope. In other words, we “assistants” are like a “reflected echo” of the assembly in the service of the Pope.

It is evident that, in this deep listening and reflecting. I am very often (perhaps, always?) thinking about Living Stones. And I must say that I am experiencing this Synod as “a Synod for Living Stones”. For different reasons:

First: if you remember, last March, two of you, Giulia Privitelli (Malta) and Maximilian Gigl (Munich), were called to the “Pre-synodal assembly” wherein 300 young people met for one week in Rome to prepare part of the document which the bishops are now using as a “foundation” for their discussion. It was an amazing privilege to be so well represented in such an important world assembly.

Second: I was called to be an “assistant” not because I teach theology or out of some other motivation but, as is written on my “passe-partout” badge, as “*animatore Pietre Vive*”.

Third: during the coffee breaks, the interest I observe in the eyes of bishops and cardinals when I explain “what is Living Stones” (their normal question when they look at my badge)

is just incredible. Some of them already knew or have heard about Living Stones (and I think to myself: “Ten years of life of Living Stones sure did a lot!”).

But if I so strongly feel this Synod to be one for the Living Stones, it is mostly for a forth reason: 270 bishops are telling us “what is Living Stones”. The contents are sometimes at very, very high levels, and they speak directly to our identity and mission. Living Stones was born from the Church and for the Church, and now the Church is speaking directly to our being and becoming. I would like to sketch out five important insights the “synodal Fathers” are telling us. Allow me to continue my “job” of “synodal assistant”, as if you were the “central secretariat” (or the Pope!), who receives from an “auditor” this reflection about some “often mentioned issues”:

Protagonists in the transmission of faith:

In the Western world, the specific challenge for the new generations is the “transmission of faith”. The personal encounter with Jesus “is the highest gift we can give”. But the best evangelisers of the young people are the young people themselves. They are not only the “object” but also the “subject” of evangelisation. All the synodal Fathers agreed on the urgency to find new ways of evangelisation whereby young people are the protagonists. This speaks to us Living Stones in terms of the different “vocations” according to the different ages which make up our community.

Community: The strongest testimony is the Christian community. The words of the announcement of faith are empty if they are not the expression of a community and if they do not, in turn, build a community. Some synodal Father even cited the “Rule of St Benedict” saying that we once again need

communities which could serve as “schools of the service of God”. Communities of lay people who “learn by teaching” and who “teach by learning” to be Christian. This is a beautiful “distinctive mark” for us Living Stones.

Itinerary: Several synodal Fathers expressed the need to organise more structured itineraries for a new “Christian Initiation”. In a time when the “normal catechism” is in “breakdown” it is urgent to “know more” and to “know better” about our faith. One young lay woman spoke very clearly against the “infantilism” of the explanations of faith we normally receive in our parishes, and that these are responsible for the enormous “haemorrhage” of young people bleeding out of the Church. Young believers need to be formed in a serious biblical and theological study. We will speak about this issue in our next “coordinators meeting” in Ljubljana. But our formation path during the year and our summer camps, are precisely aimed towards this.

Re-member the poor: they are the best teachers. But they are also the source of life, the “Treasure of the Church” (as the Martyr St Lawrence exclaimed), her best “members”. For a lot of synodal Fathers, a Christian community that does not keep in touch with the poorest loses its creativity, its fecundity, its joy. This is an urgent call for us all, living stones! Only if we are near to the “rejected stones” will we become “living stones”.

The reform of the Church: The synodal Fathers urged the Church to listen to the youngest generations because the Spirit is speaking through them to the whole Church.

The renewal of the Church, of its structures, of its mood, of its style, comes only from the youngest generations. Even if this renewal must pass through several refusals and is constantly put to the test. In these ten first years of life, as Living Stones, we often came to realise that we are first of all “rejected stones” in the building of the Church, and only after a long time we are suddenly and proudly put as “corner stones” by a parish, a diocese, or an administrative entity. Being first of all “rejected stones” is like an “identity mark” of the Living Stones. The oldest among you know that the whole network of groups was born after our very first proposal had been denied at the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. We are now 32 groups, thanks to that first denial, that first rejection. And every time we are humiliated and refused, we have the privilege to be in intimate touch with the unique, real Living Stone, our most beloved Lord Jesus from Nazareth. One of the most touching aspects from the “autobiography” of Saint Ignatius, is when he was in the Inquisition prison, arrested by soldiers. There he felt the largest consolation because of the proximity of Jesus. To build again the Church as “living stones” means first of all to be ready to be rejected by the builders. This is our deepest experience of the Truth; this is our union with the “Cornerstone”; this is, as St Francis would say, “*perfetta letizia*”. Every Reform of the Church that does not pass through this Passover is a false one.

Dear friends, during our the last “1st of May” meeting in Venice, we tried to examine “what is the Church”. Now, the Church is telling us “what is Living Stones”. Truly, this is a lovely gift for our 10th birthday!

With loving affection,
Jean-Paul Hernández SJ

STAFF

WORDS BY
BEATRIZ LAGUILLO-SUÁREZ

Più o meno dieci anni fa, ho passato gli ultimi giorni dell'estate a Roma per vivere una esperienza di due settimane che, come posso dire oggi:

“Ha cambiato la mia vita”

Era il campo di formazione e servizio del 2009...

Durante queste due settimane forse non avevo capito bene cosa fosse Pietre Vive e sono certa di non aver capito cosa stesse succedendo dentro di me, cosa ho provato? Come mi sono sentita? Oggi faccio un po' fatica a ricordare tanti dettagli ma per fortuna alcune fotografie e i vecchi quaderni di appunti (che conservo tutt'ora!) mi rinfrescano la memoria: ricordo di aver riso tanto, condiviso, pregato, cantato... È proprio un bel ricordo! Rientrata a casa nella mia città (Siviglia) dopo alcuni mesi, mi rendevo conto che queste emozioni si erano trasformate in sentimenti profondi, permanenti. Questi mi facevano sentire in pace e felice. Mi ritrovavo a pensare in quel vissuto più spesso e mi chiedevo: ma cosa ho vissuto? Non capivo bene, così come non avevo capito cosa fosse Pietre Vive esattamente: una esperienza estiva per giovani? Una forma di volontariato? Un metodo di preghiera? Avevo azzeccato forse solo due aspetti che con il tempo diventerebbero fondamentali per me, e penso anche per Pietre Vive:

Prima l'esperienza, dopo lo studio!

Attraverso questa esperienza ho imparato di più sull'arte barocca andando in giro per la città durante quattro giorni insieme a P. Stefano Titta che al corso frequentato quel stesso anno all'università... Perché nessuno mi aveva fatto apprezzare che potrei anche imparare sull'arte

contemplandolo direttamente? Lì ho capito quanto importante sia mettersi in cammino per stare davanti alle opere, ascoltarle e pregare davanti ad esse in silenzio...

L'annuncio del Vangelo deve coincidere con la tua passione!

Come tanti giovani cristiani ho sempre cercato diversi modi in cui poter mettermi al servizio degli altri ma rispetto alle forme di apostolato e volontariato sperimentate fino ad allora solo Pietre Vive riusciva a mettere insieme la mia fede cristiana e la mia passione per l'arte.

Quell'estate ho scoperto una possibile strada da intraprendere nella mia vita. Purtroppo questa era stata una esperienza estiva, puntuale e non avevo modo di frequentare alcune delle comunità poiché esse era poche si trovavano tutte in Italia (Bologna, Ravenna...). Una nuova occasione di incontro con le PV venne con il week-end organizzatosi nel febbraio di 2010 a Barcellona. Questa breve ma intensissima esperienza di preghiera e formazione dentro la Sagrada Familia di Gaudì mi ha permesso di confermare che molto probabilmente sarei rimasta sempre legata alle Pietre Vive anche se da lontano visto che nascevano nuove comunità sempre però in Italia. Questo forte desiderio di "essere parte" mi ha portato a considerare la possibilità di far

nascere PV proprio nella mia città: Pietre Vive Sevilla, il mio sogno! Quanto si è rivelato difficile però; ancora oggi questo mio sogno non si è avverato ma il desiderio è ancora vivo!

Dopodiché sono passati alcuni anni ed io mi sono concentrata nei miei studi. Ma quando si avvicinava il momento della laurea e ho sentito la pressione di una domanda che mi terrorizzava: *‘e adesso che farai della tua vita? Sto per finire la laurea in Storia dell’Arte ma sento di non sapere proprio niente sull’Arte.’* Ho considerato tante possibilità ma ero completamente persa, non trovavo ne ispirazione ne supporto da qualcuno che sapesse darmi un consiglio. E invece proprio in quel momento ho ricevuto una email che annunciava il primo week-end internazionale di formazione per le pietre vive che si svolgerebbe a giugno del 2013 a Firenze. Questa notizia mi ha fatto riscoprire una strada da intraprendere e così, mi sono detta: *‘ciò che mi manca, lo potrei trovare qui! Allora perché non rischiare?’*. Sono andata al campo di Firenze e lì ho provato una fortissima consolazione; ero felice di sentire che i miei sentimenti erano condivisi con tanti altri giovani ritrovati dai primi appuntamenti e altri appena conosciuti. Questo è anche qualcosa che mi ha proprio scioccata: Pietre Vive era cresciuto tantissimo! C’erano tante nuove comunità disperse per tutta l’Italia e qualche altra anche

all’estero, stava diventando una realtà sempre più apprezzata per tanti giovani. Questo ritrovo mi ha riscaldato il cuore e così sono andata anche a partecipare al campo estivo realizzato a Santiago di Compostela nel 2013.

In quei messi ho fatto un discernimento (forse senza essere consapevole veramente) che mi ha portato a una nuova tappa nella mia vita: ho lasciato Siviglia e sono venuta a Roma per studiare alla Pontificia Università Gregoriana. Questa scelta mi ha permesso di frequentare una comunità ogni settimana per la preghiera e lo studio e una volta al mese per il servizio.

Tornare ad accompagnare ai turisti che entravano nella Chiesa di Sant’Ignazio anni dopo quella primissima esperienza del 2009 è stata un’emozione forte, di nuovo una conferma di essere nella strada giusta. Dall’altra parte avere una comunità alla cui ancora oggi mi sento legata in profonda amicizia e comunione spirituale, è stato il supporto di cui avevo bisogno per adattarmi alla nuova vita lontano da casa. Essere a Roma mi ha permesso di dare quel “di più” che avevo sempre desiderato formando parte di Pietre Vive: più attiva, più disponibile, più impegnata (nel senso di voler acquisire più responsabilità). Così mi sono ritrovata a partecipare all’incontro con tutti i coordinatori e altri responsabili nel ottobre 2014 a Roma, era la prima volta che si faceva un incontro di questo tipo, infatti nasceva dal desiderio di incontrarsi ma soprattutto dalla necessità di condividere tra di noi le diverse realtà e di iniziare a stabilire alcune questioni: *Cosa è pietre vive? Quali sono le caratteristiche che ci definiscono?*. Questa è stata la prima volta forse in cui si

**“
ho capito cosa sia
darsi liberamente agli
altri per amore:**

**‘Gratuitamente avete ricevuto,
gratuitamente date.’ (Mt. 10: 8)**

sono dati i primi passi verso ciò che sono i nostri statuti oggi, è stata la prima volta che insieme **abbiamo sentito che Pietre Vive è una “comunione di comunità”**. Per conservare vivo questo sentimento di comunione si sono nati (in maniera quasi spontanea) i nostri due appuntamenti annuali di carattere internazionale: il weekend di coordinatori e il weekend di formazione.

Grazie a questi appuntamenti sono nate a sua volta nuove figure, come per esempio l'equipe di coordinamento centrale denominato “le colonne”, che cerca di assistere i gesuiti, i coordinatori e le comunità in diversi aspetti e connetterle tra di loro durante il resto dell'anno. Ho avuto la fortuna di dedicare alcuni anni al ruolo di “colonna” per la formazione e nell'elaborazione di questa rivista. Questo è stato per me l'inizio di una nuova tappa molto diversa da quella percorsa finora: da frequentare una comunità personalmente a frequentare una comunità “online”. Dico così perché ogni uno di noi abitava in una città diversa così non potevamo incontrarci personalmente (abbiamo fatto solo un piccolo ritiro nel 2016 durante il weekend di coordinatori a Roma e nel 2017 a Ravenna) allora ogni due settimane ci ritrovavamo su Skype per pregare per le diverse comunità, per ogni singola pietra viva, per le persone che avremo incontrato nelle visite... anche per condividere la nostra vita e cercare di portare avanti l'organizzazione degli appuntamenti annuali. Essere una colonna è stato meraviglioso (anche stancante e faticoso a volte) ma ricoprendo questo ruolo ho capito cosa sia darsi liberamente agli altri per amore: ‘gratuitamente avete ricevuto, gratuitamente date.’ (Mt. 10: 8)

Dieci anni dopo penso di non essere ancora in grado di fornire una risposta alla domanda: ‘che cos'è pietre vive?’ E mi sembra bello e giusto che sia così poiché Pietre Vive è una realtà viva! Dunque è

bello che ci sia una grande flessibilità in ascolto ai tempi che viviamo, alle persone che arrivano e quelle che se ne vanno, di fronte alle difficoltà e alle gioie.

Oggi per me questo percorso è arrivato alla sua fine e sono molto felice di poterlo condividere con il cuore sereno, poiché anche questo si è rivelato con il tempo uno dei punti che costituiscono il senso di Pietre Vive: per alcuni anni sei parte di una “piccola comunità di pietre vive” e così ti riconosci anche come parte di una comunità molto più grande che è la Chiesa Universale. Dopo quasi dieci anni imparando a dare i primi passi con le Pietre Vive, mi sento pronta a “camminare” questa nuova tappa insieme a mio marito, César camminando nella luce di Cristo e sentendo nel profondo del cuore che ‘sono stata, sono e sarò una pietra viva’.

Around ten years ago, I spent the last days of the summer in Rome to live a two-week experience that has, as I can today say, **‘changed my life’**; it was the 2009 formation and service camp.

During those two weeks, I might not have thoroughly understood what Living Stones was, and I'm sure I did not understand what was happening inside me: what did I experience? How did I feel? Today I struggle to remember many of the details, but luckily some photos and old notebooks (which I still have!) refresh my memory: I remember having laughed so much, shared, prayed, sang ... It's a beautiful memory!

Returning home to my city (Seville) after a few months, I realized that these emotions had turned into deep, permanent feelings. These made me feel at peace and happy. I found myself thinking about that experience more often and wondered: what did I live through? I did not understand well, just like I did not understand exactly what Living Stones was: A summer experience for youths? A form of voluntary work? A method of prayer? I had perhaps guessed only two aspects, which with the passage of time would become fundamental for me, and I think also for Living Stones:

First the experience, then the study!

Through this experience I learned more about baroque art whilst touring the city for four days with Fr Stefano Titta SJ, than in a whole year at university. Why had nobody made me appreciate that I could also learn about art by contemplating it directly? There I understood how important it is to journey by being in front of the artworks, listening to them and praying before them in silence.

The announcement of the Gospel must coincide with your passion!

Like so many young Christians, I have always sought different ways in which I could be of service for others, but compared to the forms of apostolate and voluntary service I did, only Living Stones managed to truly combine my Christian faith and my passion for art.

That summer I discovered a possible path to take in my life. Unfortunately, this was a summer experience, and I couldn't join the other communities since there were only a few and they were all in Italy. Another opportunity to spend with Living Stones was the weekend organised in February 2010 in Barcelona. This brief but very intense experience of prayer and formation at Gaudi's Sagrada Familia led me to confirm that I would most likely remain close to the Living Stones even if from a distance, since new communities were still at the time emerging solely in Italy. This strong desire to "be a part" has led me to consider the possibility of starting Living Stones in my city; Living Stones Seville, my dream! It however turned out to be very difficult; to date, my dream has not materialised, but nonetheless this desire lives on!

After that, a few years passed and I had focussed on my studies. But as graduation approached I felt the pressure of a question that terrified me: *'And now what will you do with your life? I'm about to finish my degree in History of Art but I feel I really do not know anything about Art.'* I considered many possibilities but I was completely lost, I did not find inspiration or support from anyone. But at that moment I received an email announcing the first international formation weekend for Living Stones that was due to be held in Florence in June 2013. This news made me rediscover a road to take and thus, I said to myself: *'That which is missing within me, I could find here! So why not take the risk?'* I went to the Florence camp and there I felt

a great consolation; I was happy that many other youths who I had met during my first experience, and even those I was meeting for the first time, shared the same feelings. This is also something that really shocked me; Living Stones had grown so much! There were many new communities scattered throughout Italy and some others abroad, it was becoming an increasingly appreciated reality among youths. This meeting warmed my heart and so I also participated in the 2013 summer camp in Santiago de Compostela.

Those months were a journey of discernment (perhaps without being really aware) that led me to a new stage in my life: I left Seville and went to Rome to study at the Pontifical Gregorian University. This choice allowed me to frequent a community every week for prayer and study and once a month for service. Once more accompanying tourists in the Church of St Ignatius, years after that very first 2009 experience, evoked a very strong emotion - again a confirmation of being on the right track. On the other hand, having a community which to date I still share deep friendship and spiritual communion with, was the support I needed to adapt to my new life away from home.

Being in Rome allowed me to give that 'something more' that I had always longed for in joining Living Stones: more active, more available, more committed. That is how I ended up participating in the Rome meeting with all the coordinators and other key people back in October 2014. It was the first time that we had a meeting of this kind, in fact it came about due to the desire to meet, but above all, the need to share the different realities and tackle some questions: *'What is Living Stones? What are the characteristics that define us?'* These were possibly the first steps towards what our statutes are today, it was the first time that together **we felt that Pietre Vive is a 'communion of communities'**. To sustain this feeling of communion, almost spontaneously, our two annual international events came about: the coordinators' weekend and the formation weekend.

Thanks to these events, new figures came about, such as the central coordination team called 'the columns', which seeks to assist the Jesuits, coordinators and communities in different aspects and sustain the connection between them throughout the rest of the year.

I was fortunate enough to dedicate a few years to the role of the so-called 'column' for formation and preparation of this magazine. This was the beginning of a new chapter, very different from the one I had journeyed with so far: from actually being part of a community where we would meet in person, to meeting a community online! I say so because every one of us lived in a different city, so we could not meet in person (we only did so during a short retreat in 2016, during the coordinators weekend in Rome, and in Ravenna in 2017) then every two weeks we would meet via Skype to pray for the different communities, for each individual living stone, for the people we met during our visits, and also to share our life and try to keep organising annual appointments. Being a column was wonderful (also tiring and exhausting at times) but by serving in this role **I understood what it is to give oneself freely to others out of love: 'Freely you have received; freely give.'** (Mt 10:8)

Ten years later I still fail to answer the basic question: 'What is living stones?' And this seems beautiful and just; Living Stones is a living reality! Thus, it is good that there is great flexibility in listening to signs of our time, to people who arrive and those who leave, between and in front of difficulties and joys.

Now, this path has reached a turn in my life, and I am glad to be able to share this with a serene heart, since this has also proved to be one of the points central to the meaning of Living Stones: for a few years you form part of a 'small community of living stones' and in this way you also recognise yourself as part of a much larger community, the Universal Church. After almost ten years learning to take the first steps with the Living Stones, I feel ready to 'walk' this new path with my husband César, walking in the light of Christ and feeling deep in my heart that 'I have been, I am, and will be, a living stone'. ■



community in

My role as coordinator arrived unexpectedly at the end of the 2017 summer camp in Santiago de Compostela. When I was asked to become coordinator, I was so afraid to pick up this very fragile vase; so great was the temptation to leave the vase where it was. Yet the thought that such a beautiful vase could shatter into a thousand pieces evoked great displeasure, and I would have been one of those pieces. Clearly the last thought prevailed over the others. After a year, I can say that it was a difficult year, but full of surprises. The difficulties we encountered were mainly two: the lack of an in situ spiritual guide to follow us along the way, and the small number of youths in the community, which created difficulties for us, especially for practical reasons (such as church service). We were able, as far as possible, to buffer these limitations by occasionally inviting “external” Jesuits and maintaining constant contact with our reference guides and with the members of the other PV communities, trying, on the other hand, to strengthen the sense of community between us, by praying and spending time together. Without a doubt the current goal is to make ourselves better known in the city and to proceed with more certainty.

CRISTINA CARAVELLO

LIVING STONES

FLORENCE

DAVIDE FERRO LIVING STONES PADOVA

“What am I doing here?” This is the question I asked myself several times, especially during the first thrilling guided tours at the Baptistery of Padua, a question to which I replied with a smile born from a certain joy. I, Davide, the one who did not believe, here to tell the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to strangers, feeling in my element, putting all my life into this. It is a challenge to be here, slightly nude, bringing our contradictions, experiencing the faith of those who came before us, that of our current community companions, and that of the tourists who visit. It is thus, difficult to show other people that this place could be the right place even for them, a pair of binoculars from which one can see the sky. Being there gives me hope, welcoming strangers of faiths and convictions that are completely different to mine, and discovering that we can feel good in each other’s presence, that one can speak to the other openly, always looking towards the sky from that same telescope.

LUCÍA SANZ LIVING STONES MADRID

From our fragility as Living Stones Madrid, and among many other minor difficulties, we consider two main issues to be troublesome. Our first struggle is that, despite following our praying schedule, we believe our praying time is still not sufficient. This can be due to the lack of a spiritual guide within the group: a priest, a jesuit, or a nun. To overcome this difficulty, we try to find other praying moments, such as going to Mass together, doing retreats, spiritual exercises, etc. Our second main problem is the lack of young people engaged in the community. Nonetheless, determined in our intuition and hopeful in the growth of the community, this year we had the opportunity to bring the presence of Living Stones to the madrilian college students. In this task, we try not to forget the words of Scripture: ‘The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers to his harvest.’

(Mt 9: 37)

GIUSEPPE SIDOTI LIVING STONES PALERMO

Casa Professa is located inside the historic district of Palermo and in a social periphery with its issues linked above all to the high unemployment rate. I was told that some members of LS had left the group for different reasons. Here, reaching out to others calls for a lot of creativity. Young people are often busy and over the years, the group has organised, with the participation of Fr. Jean Paul Hernandez, some events to publicise LS. Our blog about a spiritual journey at Casa Professa has been successful because a few people signed up to get information. Also, Fr. Walter Bottaccio spiritually guided some of them living here and they are doing the first steps as new LS. They are enthusiastic and I think that the promotion of every member’s talents is meant to enhance the solidity of the group.



MODENA

LIVING STONES

VALENTINA TOTTI

The first...
slightly...
beauty of...
journey wa...
beloved Cat...

Not knowing w...
love to speak a...
In fact, to date v...
to offer our visits...

Of course we were...
appeared to be an...
on! Uphill now, of...
struggle! We disco...
and sharing; a littl...
has encouraged a...
of the whole LS c...
Modena (Chemir...
the whole Mode...
few years ago, v...
that we never c...
LS!

In the mean...
growth of...
marvell!!...
and en...

A Song of Ascents

**¹Come, bless the Lord,
all you servants of the Lord,
who stand by night
in the house of the Lord!**
**²Lift up your hands to the holy place,
and bless the Lord.**
**³May the Lord,
maker of heaven and earth,
bless you from Zion.**

(Psalm 134)

At the end of this stretch of uphill road, the words of this psalm resonate in our heart. These are words of blessing because, with such a grateful heart, we recognize that the Lord has truly done great things for us!

The first steps of the Modena LS adventure followed the sparkling joy and the carefree enthusiasm which comes with every beginning. Immersed in the joy of knowing and discovering ourselves enlightened by the Word, for a year the journey was smooth (as befits us people of the plains!) with both formation and visits at our Cathedral.

Why, we suddenly found ourselves in front of a wall - not the beautiful walls we had about - but a silent wall; the lack of understanding. And true misunderstanding. We still fail to understand why, for two years, we were not given the permission to go on.

We were not ready to face this blockade. This left us confused, but what at first was a period of exile, surprisingly turned into a stage of our community's journey which went on its course, with all the efforts, but in the marvel of getting closer than ever in the presence of our dear friend, brothers and sisters, united, as we did not know we were in prayer at the Cathedral. And it was the Church which, with maternal multi-faceted thought, protected and guarded us in this stretch of road, from the sweet and passionate closeness of our community, to the constant welcome of small religious communities present in Modena (San Neuf and the Suore Adoratrici), to the daily solidity of our Bishop Erio and of the Modena diocese. After all, having also experienced the drama of the earthquake a few years ago, we were so happy that our Cathedral was still standing in all its magnificence. We questioned the prospect of being able to one day come back giving voice as

we have kept close in prayer, in friendship and in the beauty of sharing the life of our small community, which has been embellished with marriages and children, a family. And now it is guarded by a new thoughtful guide, Don Paolo, who has refreshed and enriched us, and together we are ready to continue the journey.

Behold, it is at the end of this stretch of uphill road that we can sing 'Praise the Lord, all you servants of the Lord who minister by night in the house of the Lord'. Because in fact we had the Grace to stay, guarded in the intimacy of the night, which envelopes it and does not fear darkness, not seeing beyond because the 'living' Sanctuary is always reachable, remains and starts again.



“WHO IS THE CHURCH?”

PART I*

THE ROOTS OF THE CHURCH
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

words by Nina S. Heereman S.S.D

The starting point of this essay was the seemingly innocent question: ‘What is the Church?’ But from the very start, I must immediately revise it. The question we ought ask is not ‘What’ but ‘Who is the Church?’ The Church is not a human institution like so many associations of men who gather in a society in order to pursue a shared purpose, as is, for example, an association for ecological preservation, the association of stamp collectors, or your favourite football club. All these are associations in which people gather together on their own account and form a society in order to work together with a common purpose in mind and to reach some common goal. These are merely human institutions.

The Church, however, is something entirely different. She is not instituted by human beings but by God himself. She is not an association but a person. She is nothing other than the Body and Bride of Christ.

The Church is the Goal of All Creation

The Church is God's dream for humanity; His project predating the foundation of the world! The Church is the very reason why God created the universe and it is thus, the final goal of all Creation. This reasoning may be gleaned, albeit in a very condensed manner, from St Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Ephesians 1:4-10 reads:

He [God] chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him. In love He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ,... In him [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he (God) has made known to us the mystery of his will, ... [his] plan for the fullness of time: to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.

What does the Word of God say here? 'God has chosen us in Christ from before the foundation of the world, ... and destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus

Christ.' So, from before the creation of the world, God has known each of us and predestined us to become his children, through his Son, Jesus Christ. But how could such a thing come about? St Paul specifies that God has made known to us the mystery of his will, which he had planned from beforehand, or better, 'his intention'; his plan for the fullness of time, which is: 'to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.' In other words, God's plan from before the foundation of the world has been to gather all things, on heaven and on earth, into Christ whom God has set as 'head over all things'. As St Paul later clarifies in the same letter to the Ephesians:

God ... raised him [Jesus] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things to the church (*τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ*), which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph 1:20-22, NRSV).

Here we have a very explicit definition of the Church: She is his body, the fullness of him – Jesus Christ – who fills all in all, that is, the entire universe. In other words, it is in and through Christ, that God intends to gather the entire universe into one being which the New Testament calls ‘the Church’, in Greek ‘ἐκκλησία’, from which the French word *église* derives, or *iglesia* in Spanish, and *chiesa* in Italian. As a side note, the English word ‘Church’, and the German ‘*Kirche*’ have a different but equally important etymology. Both derive from the Greek word ‘*κυριακή*’, which means ‘the one who belongs to the Lord’.¹ In other words, ‘His bride.’ But we shall address this later. Let us stay for the moment with the word *ecclesia*, *église*, *iglesia*, or *chiesa*, for it brings us right back to the Old Testament and the Church’s roots in the people of Israel.

As St Paul claims, the Church is a ‘mystery’ (‘*μυστήριον*’, Eph 1:9). Not because she has to remain top secret and nor because she is incomprehensible, but because she is a revealed ‘truth that surpasses the powers of natural reason.’² That is, we would not know about the existence and the vocation of the Church had it not been revealed to us by God in the fullness of time. And because it is a divinely revealed truth we can speak about it only by way of analogy, which we do in the names and symbolic images that we apply to the Church. In fact, the entire Bible employs such images to speak about and reveal the mystery of the Church to us.

Some of the major such symbols or images which the Bible employs when speaking about the Church are: the People of God, the Kingdom of God, the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the House of God, the Family of God, the Sheepfold of God. All these images are rooted in the

revelation of the Old Testament and find their fulfilment in the New Testament.

The End Illumines the Beginning

An important hermeneutical principle states that the images of the beginning are illumined at the end. That is, the end of the Bible illuminates its beginning, the *eschaton* illuminates the *archē*. In fact, Revelation 21-22 recapitulates all the different images which the Bible uses to give expression to the mystery of the Church and assembles them into one gigantic painting. According to this apocalyptic book, the Church is: the Bride of the Lamb, the New Jerusalem, the Temple of God, the People of God, and Paradise restored. So, with these ‘end’ images in mind, let us go back to the beginning.

The Church in the Old Testament

The Beginning

From the beginning of creation, it was God’s plan to make His dwelling in its very heart. That is, to unite all of creation to his Son, as a husband unites himself to his wife. That is why Genesis 1 describes the creation of the world as if it were being built into one, huge, gigantic Temple, in which God would take his ‘rest’ on the seventh day, that is, the day when creation would come to its completion.³

Similarly, in Genesis 2 - the story of Adam and Eve - creation is described in temple language;⁴ a place where man was to live in the presence of God. This original plan of God failed because man rejected it, setting his own will over and against that of God and thereby losing this original intimacy with Him. Life outside the garden is describe as a life in exile, far from Paradise, in a desert country where life is no longer leisure but labour. And the story continues; the original unity between man and woman is disrupted, brothers

kill each other, sin multiplies and fills the earth until humanity is fragmented into an uncountable number of peoples and languages who are no longer able to communicate but wage war on each other (Gen 3-11). The story of the Tower of Babel gives us 'the default situation' from which God wants to redeem humanity in and through the Church.

It is here that salvation history begins and the preparation of what would one day would be called the Church. From this wretched state of utter dispersion and disunity, God wants to assemble humanity into one body and lead them back into a divine unity which no human nor any superhuman force can ever again disrupt. How does God go about this? He begins with *one single man*, Abraham, whom he calls to leave his country and kindred in order to go towards the land that God will show him. The Lord promises Abraham to make of him a great 'nation' and a blessing for all the families of the earth (Gen 12:1-3). Abraham obeys and when he reaches the land, God offers to enter into a covenant with him. Abraham accepts, and God promises him that his descendants would inherit 'the land' (Gen 15:18), and that through his offspring 'all the nations of the earth' shall be blessed (Gen 22:18). The sign of this covenant is circumcision, and all who receive circumcision partake in the promise given to Abraham (Gen 17:1-14). The family of Abraham then grows into twelve tribes, the sons of Jacob, and eventually into a 'nation' which God forms through the event of the Exodus - the delivery from Egypt, and the stipulation of the covenant at Mount Horeb-Sinai (cf. Exodus 19).

Ecclesia - Qahal

It is during the Exodus, that is, during the first passover ever celebrated (Ex 12:6) that Israel is for the first time called an 'assembly', *qahal* (קהל) in Hebrew, which the Greek translates into 'synagogue'

(συναγωγή) in the book of Exodus or 'ecclesia' (ἐκκλησία) in Deuteronomy. Those who have been called out of Egypt, those who have been freed from slavery, in order to become God's servants alone are now called to be the *ecclesia dei*, the assembly of God, God's people.⁵

It is helpful to understand the derivation of this word. The Latin word 'ecclesia' derives from the Greek 'ek-kaleō' (ἐκκαλέω) which means to 'call out of.' In the profane Greek context it designated the public assembly of those men of the *polis* who gathered in order to determine and decide what was to be done.⁶ The Greek translation of the Bible (which was the Bible of the early Church) adopted this word to give expression to the fact that Israel assembles as God's public people, but with an important modification in its meaning. It is no longer the men of the *polis* who gather on their own account, but God who gathers men, women, and children - the entire people of Israel; not for them to take any decisions, but in order for them to listen to what God has decided and to agree to His decision.⁷ It is the same Word of God which had called them out of Egypt from the slavery under Pharaoh, that now constitutes them as a people. Through the gift of the Torah, the law of Moses, they are called out as free servants of God. Moreover, the word 'ecclesia' (ἐκκλησία) no longer designates a profane, political assembly but a liturgical one. They have been gathered as a 'kingdom of priests, a holy nation' (Ex 19:6), set free from slavery and constituted as a people in order to render the Lord the service of a divinely ordered worship.

The New Testament precisely adopts the word 'ecclesia' (ἐκκλησία) in order to designate the community of those who have been delivered by Christ, the new Moses, from the slavery of Satan and sin; they are set free to become the 'new people of God who 'worship the Father in spirit and

truth' (John 4:23).⁸ By calling itself 'ecclesia' (ἐκκλησία), the first community of Christian believers thereby recognised itself as an heir to that initial assembly which the God of Israel had assembled at Mount Sinai and with whom He had stipulated the old covenant. The difference is that the new people of God, who have been 'called out' of the nations and assembled by Jesus, are - under the New Covenant - no longer united by the bonds of flesh and blood (like Israel was); they are born of God (cf. John 1:12), generated by the Word incarnate and the gift of his Holy Spirit whom God has poured out onto humanity through the death and resurrection of his son, Jesus. But before delving further into this, we must first return to the 'pact on the mount'; to Mount Sinai.

Covenant as Marriage

At Mount Sinai God entered into a covenant relationship with Israel, which is expressed in a language that is similar to a marriage covenant. Whereas in a marriage the husband would say to his future wife: '*You will be my wife and I will be your husband,*' God sums up the content of the covenant in the so-called covenant formula which reads '*You will be my people and I will be your God.*'⁹ Beginning with the prophet Hosea, all the major Old Testament prophets give witness to the fact that Israel understood its covenant with the Lord as a 'marriage with God' (cf. Hosea 1-3; Is 54:5; 62:1-5; Jeremiah 2-3; Ezekiel 16). In other words, Israel's self-understanding is that of being the bride of God. This is an image of extreme importance, since for a people to be recognised as a bride is far more than it is to be considered a vassal to its sovereign. To be the bride of someone means implicitly that the bride, no matter how humble her origin, is raised to the dignity of her bridegroom. If a king marries a humble servant girl the servant girl becomes the queen. Such was the destiny of Israel, and here are the roots for the

Church's self-understanding as the Bride of Christ. We will come back to this image further on.

Another image connected to the spousal symbol, the canopy, is of eminent importance. A marriage calls for a canopy otherwise it will be null for lack of consummation. The marriage canopy, according to the Jewish understanding, was the Temple of Jerusalem and its cult.¹⁰ God intended to dwell in the midst of Israel as a man 'enters' his wife in the marital embrace.

God's dwelling among his people was an extremely important element which entered the covenant language from Mount Sinai onwards. In fact, (according to the priestly vision) the purpose of the covenant will only be properly achieved when God dwells in the midst of His people. Thus, at the end of the instructions given for the construction of the tabernacle, God announces in Ex 29:45-46:

I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel and I will be God to them, and they will know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.

God has brought the people of Israel out of Egypt in order to dwell in their midst. In other words, He has separated them from the pagan nations in order to sanctify them and thereby render them capable of receiving God in their midst. Or, to put it in even stronger terms, to become the vessel of God's presence in the world, God's Holy Temple. In these words of Exodus 29, God's ultimate desire for humanity is expressed explicitly for the first time: *I want to dwell in your midst.* That is why, the first thing that Israel must do, having become God's *ecclesia* at Mount Horeb, is to build a dwelling tent for God. Thirteen long chapters of the book of Exodus are dedicated solely to the instructions

about the fabrication and erection of the Tabernacle tent so that God would make his dwelling in the heart of Israel. This then happens in the last chapter of the book (Exodus 40): God makes his dwelling in the midst of his freshly sanctified nation. Now they are ready to march together through the desert (a symbolic time of purification through which the people are made fit for life in the Kingdom of God) so that they may then enter together, God and Israel, into the Promised Land – symbol for Paradise restored and destined to become the Kingdom of God where Israel would live on the model of a theocracy.

While God had intended to govern them directly through chosen anointed leaders, Israel rejected God as their king and asked for a human king instead (1 Sam 7). In the rejection of God we have another kind of ‘original’ sin, to which God responds with mercy, answering favourably to Israel’s desire and thereby preparing the way for

His own Son to become this (Davidic) king whom they had asked for in their rebellion. But let us not run ahead of ourselves. First they receive Saul as their first ‘Messiah’ – anointed king – and when Saul fails, David is found as a king according to God’s liking. David will become the paradigmatic king, the model of kingship through whose descendant God promises to inaugurate the Kingdom of God on earth, the Kingdom which will eventually be his Church.¹¹

Almost everything David does - apart from his sinful acts, of course - becomes a prefiguration of what the Messiah would do. That is, he chased the enemies from the country and completed the conquest of the Promised land. However, it was not he but his son Solomon, the paradigmatic son of David and, therefore, prime prefiguration of Jesus, the legendary king of peace, who fulfilled the conditions for the accomplishment of the Exodus’ main purpose. He built a Temple for the Lord so

Piero della Francesca, *Madonna del Parto* (detail), c. 455, Museo del Madonna del Parto, Monterchi, Arezzo, ITA



that God would forever find 'His rest' in the heart of His people, and for Israel herself to find 'her rest' in the Land, which is God's gift to Israel (cf. Deut 12:9-12; Ps 132:8). Mutual rest is a very important concept here. Israel is to find rest in God and God wants to find His rest in Israel, as husband and wife find rest in the mutual marital embrace.

All this is fulfilled the moment Solomon, the son of David, erects the Temple and the presence of God comes to dwell within (1 Kings 8). Now, Paradise is seemingly restored; Israel lives in a land that flows with milk and honey, in the complete absence of any war or enemy, in its maximum extension from the Nile to the Euphrates, which is to say, the Kingdom of God extended over the entire then-known world. Here, in 1 Kings 8, we have the perfect prefiguration of God's project for humanity; Paradise is restored, God dwells with man in paradise, and humanity is governed in justice and righteousness by the son of David who is the visible presence of the invisible God, facilitating everyone to live in peace 'each under his fig tree' (cf. 1 Kings 5:1-5; [E 4:21-25], image for paradise).

But alas, this was only a prefiguration. Unless we mistake Solomon for the true Messiah, the Bible makes it very clear that he is not only a prefiguration of the New Adam, but also the perfect anti-type of the Old Adam. Like Adam, Solomon is seduced to the most grievous of all sins, that is idolatry, by the foreign wives to whom his heart clung with more love than to God's commandment, and so, Solomon sins first and, after him, almost all the kings that will come forth from his loins (cf. 1 Kings 11:1-13).¹² With the invasion of the Babylonians in 587 BC, at the latest, it will be absolutely clear that the whole history of Israel was only a prefiguration, a foreshadowing, of a much more perfect and effective

plan of salvation for humanity. This will nonetheless, be realised through the people of Israel, precisely through a daughter of Israel, Mary of Nazareth and her son, the son of David, Jesus of Nazareth.

It was *only* a prefiguration but, by the same token, it was nonetheless a figuration. That is, it gives us the perfect figure of what the Church will one day be and thus, helps us understand the spiritual reality of what the Church is in these very concrete images from the Old Testament. Jesus will be the new Moses who gives a new law on the 'new Mount Sinai' - the Mountain of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5-7) - and he will be the Son of David who constructs the only possible Temple in which God could ever dwell. For, as the Acts of the Apostles say very clearly in Acts 7: 'The most high does not dwell in houses made by human hands.' (Acts 7:47). Rather, the Temple which the son of David - Jesus - will construct, is the Temple of his own risen and glorified body of which all of us are living members (cf. John 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5). The kingdom which Jesus has come to proclaim is, in fact, the fulfilment of all the promises given to David, a kingdom to which Jesus inherits the throne of his father David, the throne of God, according to Chronicles. It is within this kingdom that the twelve apostles function as his ministers, sitting on twelve thrones and judging the tribes of Israel (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30). As prefigured by the reign of King Solomon and promised previously to King David, this is a kingdom that extends to the ends of the earth (cf. 1 Kings 5:1 [E 4:21]; Ps 72:8; 89:27-29) and which has its centre on Mount Zion (cf. Psalms 2:6; 48:2) - now Mount Calvary to which all the nations of the world come up in pilgrimage bringing their riches for the glory of God into the new Jerusalem (cf. Is 2:1-4). But here, once again, I anticipate what ought be given further due in light of the Church as depicted in the New Testament. ■

Part II of “Who is the Church?” will be published in the next issue of this journal, in May 2019.

*The following article was first delivered as a lecture during the Living Stones Formation Camp on the topic What is the Church? in Venice, 27 April - 01 May, 2018. This accounts for the oral style of the following pages, which have only been slightly altered. Due to the length of the conference, it will be published in two parts: the first part will cover the origins of the Church in God’s design in creating the world and its roots in the salvation history of the Jewish people; the second part, which will appear in the next issue of this journal, will treat the foundation of the Church by Jesus and the formation of the apostolic ministry as revealed in the New Testament.

¹cf. CCC 751.

²“Mystery [...] in its strict theological sense is not synonymous with the incomprehensible, since all that we know is incomprehensible, i.e., not adequately comprehensible as to its inner being; nor with the unknowable, since many things merely natural are accidentally unknowable, on account of their inaccessibility, e.g., things that are future, remote, or hidden. In its strict sense a mystery is a supernatural truth, one that of its very nature lies above the finite intelligence. Theologians distinguish two classes of supernatural mysteries: the absolute (or theological) and the relative. An absolute mystery is a truth whose existence or possibility could not be discovered by a creature, and whose essence (inner substantial being) can be expressed by the finite mind only in terms of analogy, e.g., the Trinity. A relative mystery is a truth whose innermost nature alone (e.g., many of the Divine attributes), or whose existence alone (e.g., the positive ceremonial precepts of the Old Law), exceeds the natural knowing power of the creature.” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Mystery”, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10662a.htm>.

³See, J. H. Walton, “Creation,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, (ed. T. D. Alexander and D. W. Baker) (Downers Grove, IL 2003), 16, and *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL 2009), 72-86. J. R. Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids 2005), 81; R. P. Gordon, “The Week That Made the World: Reflections on the First Page of the Bible,” *Reading the Law: Studies in Honor of Gordon Wenham* (ed. J. G. McConville and K. Möller, (LHB/OTS 461; Edinburgh 2007), 234-237.

⁴See L. Alonso-Schökel, “Motivos sapienciales y de alianza en Gn 2-3”, *Bib* 43 (1962) 295-316 (Alonso-Schökel, L., “Sapiential and Covenant Themes in Genesis 2-3”, *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* (ed. Crenshaw, J. L.) (Hoboken, NJ 1976), 468-80). G. J., Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story”, *Cult and Cosmos. Tilting toward a Temple-Centered Theology* (ed. Morales, M. L.) (BiTS 18; 2014) 161-66.

⁵See, for example for the Hebrew: Ex 12:6; 16:3; for the Greek: Dtn 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 32:2; 23:9; 31:30; Acts 19:3.

⁶See J. Ratzinger, *Called to Communion* (San Francisco 1996) 31.

⁷„Von der antiken Volksversammlung (=ἐκκλησία) ist die israelitische bei aller strukturellen Entsprechung konkret vor allem dadurch unterschieden, dass sie in Israel auch Frauen und Kinder, nicht nur wie im griechischen Bereich die stimmberechtigten Männer umgreift. Dahinter steht der tiefere Unterschied, dass bei den Griechen die Männer zusammenkommen, um zu beschließen, was zu geschehen hat, und dazu ja zu sagen (Linton, Art. Ekklesia). So wird die Sinaiversammlung zum Urbild der alttestamentlichen Volksversammlung überhaupt.“ J. Ratzinger, „Die Kirche – Systematisch“, *Kirche – Zeichen unter den Völkern*, Gesammelte Schriften 8/1 (Freiburg 2010), 208.

⁸For the NT use of ἐκκλησία cf., e.g., Mt 16:18; Acts 5:11; Eph 1:10; Acts (111x in the NT)

⁹The expression *Bundesformel* was first coined by R. Smend, *Die Bundesformel* (ThSt 68; Zürich 1963). The most important monograph that serves as a reference here is R. Rendtorff, *Die Bundesformel* (SBS 160; Stuttgart 1995); for the English translation see R. Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula. An Exegetical and Theological Investigation = Die Bundesformel* (OTS; Edinburgh 1998). The full formula is found in Ex 6:7; Lev 26:12; Deut 26:17, 19; 29:12; 2 Sam 7:24; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1; 31:33; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; Ez 36:28; 37:23; 27; Sach 8:8 Variations of the formula with either only the first or the second part of its members, i.e., (a) “I will be your God,” or, (b) “You shall be my people,” are also subsumed under the category. For (a) cf. Gen 17:7b, 8b; Ex 29:45; Lev 11:45; 22:33; 25:38; 26:45; Num 15:41; Ezek 34:24; for (b) cf. Deut 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; 27:9; 28:9. In fact the three variations of the formula are so intimately connected that they cannot be treated as three different entities. All three of them serve to explicate the content and purpose of the covenant.

¹⁰This is first hinted at in Hos 3:1–5 where Hosea’s renunciation of the marital act with Gomer is compared to God’s absence from the Temple in Jerusalem. See, e.g., A. Villeneuve, *Nuptial Symbolism in Second Temple Writings, the New Testament and Rabbinic Literature. Divine Marriage at Key Moments of Salvation History* (AGJU 92; Leiden 2016).

¹¹One of the strongest images which the New Testament uses in order to describe the Church is the metaphor of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is understood as the realization of the kingdom of David particularly as described in the book of Chronicles where the son of David, King Solomon, sits on the throne of the Lord himself. In the New Testament Jesus is thus depicted as the son of David who has inherited the throne of his father which is equally the throne of the heavenly father (cf. Luke 1:32).

¹²On the subject of Solomon as an Adamic figure, see J.-P. Sonnet, “Côté Cour, Côté Jardin. Salomon, L’Adam Royal”, *Le Roi Salomon. Un héritage en question* (ed. C. Lichert – D. Nocquet) (LivRou 33; Bruxelles 2008) 247–60.

Of ANCIENT STORIES

The visitors of Eleusis, looking from the terrace that leads into the museum, can enjoy an astonishing view, not only because of the beautiful scenery provided by the coastline of Attica, the Aegean Sea, and some picturesque ruins but also because of the immense historical significance of this landscape.

The island which dominates the horizon is Salamis and, following its silhouette on the left side, you can observe the very straits where Athens and her allies defeated the Persian fleet in 480 BC, in a battle that shaped the destiny of the Greeks and, consequently, of every European civilization that followed.

Yet, a valuable but humble testimony of Athenian history is preserved on the very ground beside the visitors. On the courtyard floor near the museum entrance, you can notice some refined items that look like marble vases. Indeed, they are tombstones shaped like amphoras. This peculiar style of funerary art, developed during the Classical Age, somehow celebrates the greatest source of wealth for the city. We know, indeed, as the Athenians knew, that what had first driven the city into a position of prominence among hundreds of other Greek *poleis* was

& MODERN TRUTHS

WORDS
BY

ALESSANDRO PARISE

the success of its pottery. The high-quality Attic ceramics made them ubiquitous in the Mediterranean. Indeed, the very name of ceramics comes from that of a district of Athens, the *kerameikos*. Athens used to be the city of fine vases long before being the city of philosophy, of theatre, of democracy or even the defender of Greece against the Persian Empire. One may wonder if any of these achievements would have ever been possible without the boost that the city received by such commerce. Moreover, as a side effect, the figurative vases played a role in the spreading of Greek mythology among the Mediterranean peoples. Indeed, mythology is strongly connected with the cult that made Eleusis much more prominent than the westernmost of many towns composing the Athenian State.

Frontier spaces bear a special meaning in the culture of the community to which they belong. It was in this frontier town that a

tradition was preserved from the early history of Greece, possibly dating back as far as the Mycenaean past.

We know of a procession that each year reached Eleusis from Athens, through what was called the 'Sacred Way'. That reveals the symbolic importance of this cult within the civic space of the great *polis*. And yet it had something private, reserved to some selected initiates who were forbidden, under threat of death, to reveal any of the rites taking place at the arrival, inside the temple called '*Telesterion*'. The initiation ceremonies were called then the 'Mysteries', which meant 'the secret things'.

But quite paradoxically, in time the Eleusinian Mysteries became one of the most famous cults in Antiquity, growing first to attract pilgrims from the whole of the Greek mainland, and later receiving

many Roman travellers, such as Cicero, and emperors of the likes of Adrian and Marcus Aurelius. One may wonder about the reasons behind the long-lasting allure of this site. What was the secret of the secrets? Some hints are to be found in the myth that is underlying these rites.

The tale of the abduction of Persephone by Hades, the pilgrimage of Demeter around the earth in search of her daughter, and her return, although temporary, is among the most famous in Greek mythology. It can be read as a primitive explanation of what happened to the countryside throughout the seasons, and surely the mysteries used to be a festival of the fields, but this is only the first level of meaning. Indeed, there is something here that addresses humanity in its most profound level. The story of a beautiful maiden (Persephone is also named Kore, meaning simply 'Maiden') in the flower of youth and who is abducted into the underworld, is something that really pierces the human heart because it tells us about the brevity and frailty of beautiful things; it ultimately speaks to us about mortality, about our lives.

The unbearable gulf between the desire for eternity and the bonds of mortality takes centre stage for practically the entire myth. We find Hades offering a pomegranate to Persephone-Kore just before her returning to the world of the living, which binds her forever to a cycle of ascensions and descents. The double value of food is another aspect that resonates with the human condition and often features symbolically in all cultures: the food is the source of our living, but it is also what binds us to the cycle of nature. Eating exposes us to be eaten, reveals our destiny of being consumed, sooner or later.

In the narration provided by the Homeric Hymn of Demeter (in truth, about a century more recent than the *Iliad* and the

Odyssey), that unfolds in an episode which seems to take a detour from the main story, we can find the same theme wherein the space of God is transported to the space of mortals. It is the part of the tale that is actually played in Eleusis, becoming the basis of the 'Mysteries'.

It is told that Demeter, while wandering in disguise in search of Persephone-Kore, is brought to a charitable woman, Metanira, queen of Eleusis, who entrusts her to give nourishment to her late-born child, Demophon. And she indeed, nourishes the child in a very peculiar way. She does not feed him any food, but anoints him with ambrosia, as the gods use to do. Also:

*She would breathe down her sweet
breath on him as she held him to her
bosom.*

*At nights she would conceal him
within strength of fire, as if he were a
smoldering log.*

These acts are better understood as 'mithemes', a concept used in anthropological studies to describe the minimal narrative units, such as images, events or characters, from which myths are constructed. The union of 'mithemes' in a system creates a myth which is also a discourse, a reflection about human existence. Then, the idea of receiving nurture by anointment, something that enters through the skin and becomes part of the individual, is the idea of bypassing the natural cycle of feeding, and so recalls then the dream of an untainted life. The same meaning resonates in the image of the breath of a deity, creating life, and in that of fire that doesn't burn. What is represented in the scene is a preparation for immortality.

Unfortunately, as in many similar myths, the gift of immortality is lost forever. It can be by accident, like in the story of Gilgamesh, or by temptation, as in the Genesis, or

by a misunderstanding, like in our case: Queen Metanira finally witnesses the actions of her nourisher, and prevents Demeter from putting the child into the fire for the last session.

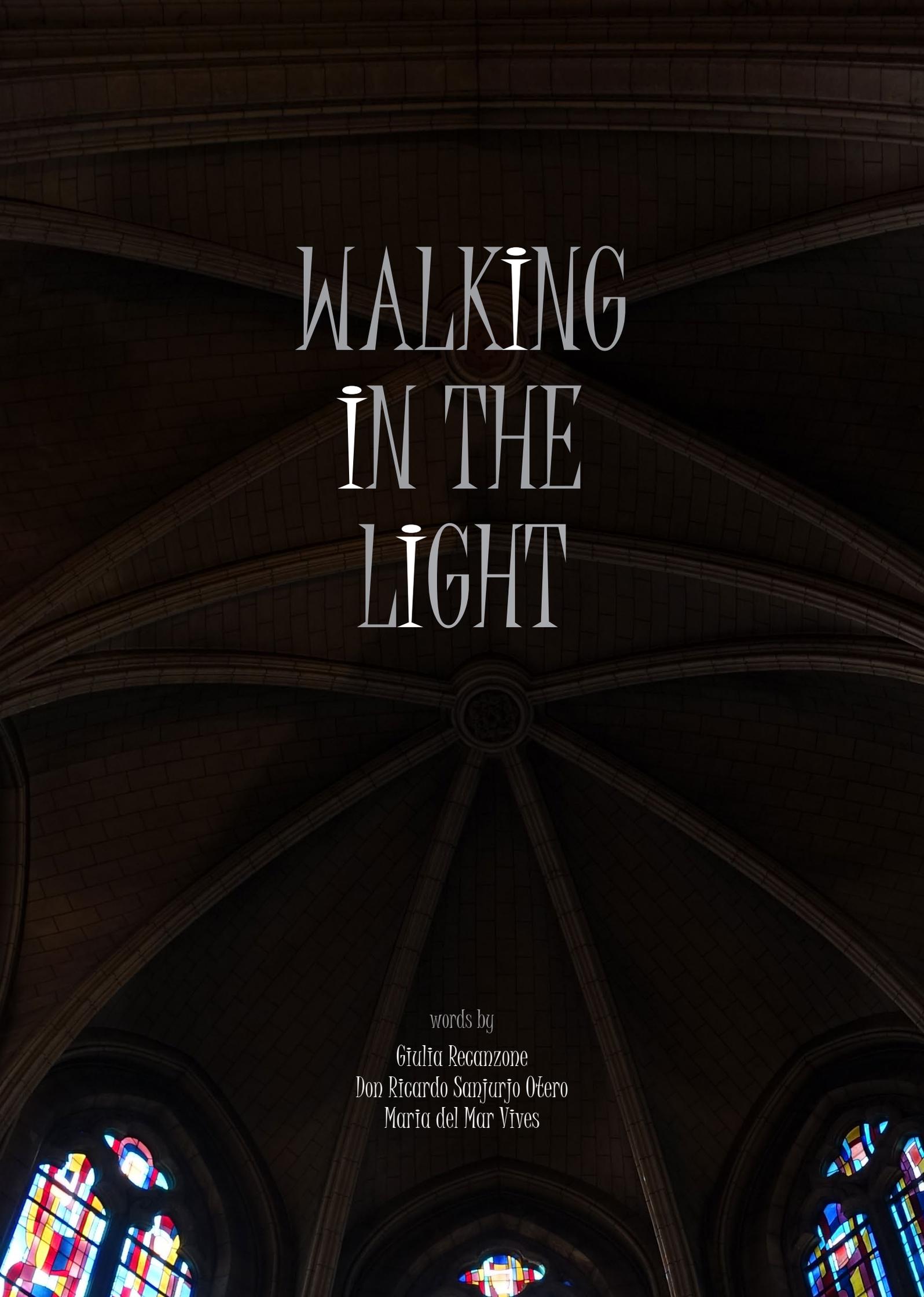
Nevertheless, the initiates of the Eleusinian Mysteries were in want of entering the myth, empathising both with the two goddesses and the primitive royal family of Eleusis, in the hope of gaining eternity in the afterlife. We know, in fact, from surviving depictions on pottery or in sculpture, that the cult involved some sacred items: staffs, like that used by Demeter in her pilgrimage in search of the daughter; torches, as those that guided Persephone-Kore out from the underworld; fire, as the one that was supposed to empower the little Demophon.

Modern people may smile at such rites, forgetting or perhaps, unaware of how much they resonate with deepest desires. The initiates could join Cicero and claim:

nothing is higher than these mysteries [...] they have not only shown us how to live joyfully but they have taught us how to die with a better hope.

This answers the question about the enduring life of the cult. Because of its deeper, universal theme, it transcends its origins as a civic cult, limited to the social space of a Greek *polis*, and enters instead into the boundless, immeasurable space of the human heart. ■





WALKING IN THE LIGHT

words by

Giulia Recanzone
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la luce dell'arte gotica

Giulia Recanzone

Per chi si appresta per la prima volta a vivere l'esperienza del campo di Pietre Vive in Francia certo rimarrà colpito da ciò che lo aspetta... e non si tratta solamente delle cattedrali gotiche, che sicuramente vi faranno rimanere a bocca aperta e con il naso all'insù. Sebbene questa esperienza si presenti come un percorso di formazione storico-artistico sullo stile francese più conosciuto (il gotico), in realtà essa ci offre molto di più! Anzi, possiamo dire che sotto un certo punto di vista è addirittura "illuminante".

E sì è proprio questo il termine più azzeccato perché la Luce è la sola ed unica protagonista: *'le fredde pareti di pietra si sono innalzate protendendosi verso il cielo e lasciando che la luce penetrasse all'interno diventandone il cuore pulsante, così anche noi siamo portati a guardare verso... l'Altissimo, facendoci inondare e attraversare dalla Sua luce'*. La conoscenza e l'ingegno hanno portato secoli fa all'erezione di questi "Vangeli di pietra", tuttavia non sarebbe stato sufficiente se lo scopo perseguito non fosse quello di volersi avvicinare almeno un po' a nostro Signore. Nel medioevo le cattedrali erano dei grandi scrigni splendidi nei quali la gente (come anche noi oggi) entrava per arricchirsi, un arricchimento non materiale ma bensì spirituale che ancora adesso può donarci molto se siamo disposti ad aprirci e se qualcuno ci aiuta a decifrarlo... A quel punto è possibile acquisire una visione completamente nuova del mondo che ci circonda e sotto quella nuova Luce - la Sua luce - ogni cosa acquista un senso che prima di allora ci sembrava impossibile.

Pertanto non c'è da sorprendersi se l'intera settimana la si dedica alle visite delle varie chiese e allo studio personale, senza quel caratteristico servizio che viene generalmente offerto dalle Pietre Vive. In questo campo ciò che si vive porta a riflettere e a crescere spiritualmente, questo tocca in maniera estremamente personale le corde di ognuno di noi e ci vorrebbe molto più tempo per riuscire ad elaborarlo ed esporlo agli altri. Tuttavia

ciò che si apprende alla fine del proprio percorso non ha bisogno delle splendide vetrate policrome, delle finissime volte a crociera, dei candidi archi ogivali o dei slanciati archi rampanti per essere condiviso con gli altri, si acquisisce una realtà - la Sua realtà - che è universale.

La bellezza ammagliante di questi "Vangeli di pietra" ha lasciato una traccia indelebile nel nostro animo - la Sua traccia - e questa nuova Luce nello sguardo ci permette di vedere le cose, le situazioni e le persone con un po' più di amore, caritatevolezza e speranza. In fondo le chiese gotiche altro non erano che dei modelli della Gerusalemme Celeste, quella "vera" che non si trova sulla nostra dimensione ma che apre le sue porte per noi e per le nostre anime al fine di dargli gioia e pace.

Pertanto qualsiasi possa essere il vostro desiderio: o di venir "scossi" fin dalle fondamenta o di lasciarsi "travolgere" da questa Luce prorompente oppure semplicemente di ammirare l'operato dell'uomo al servizio di una volontà Superiore, ritengo che il campo di formazione di teologia medievale e arte gotica in Francia possa essere qualcosa di inaspettato che vi possa rapire e "illuminare".

Those awaiting to embark on their first Pietre Vive camp in France will surely be impressed by what awaits them...but the jaw-dropping Gothic cathedrals are not the sole elements of this trip which will leave you speechless. Although this experience is presented as a path of art-historical formation on the most famous French style (Gothic), in reality it offers us much more! Indeed, we can say that from a certain point of view it is even "enlightening". And yes, this is the most apt term, because the Light is the one and only protagonist: "the cold stone walls have risen upwards, reaching out to the sky and letting the light penetrate inside, becoming its beating heart, so that we too are also called to look towards...the Most High, flooding us with His light, and allowing such beams to radiate through us".

light in gothic art

Therefore, it is not surprising that the entire week is dedicated to visits to the various churches and to personal study, without the characteristic service that is generally offered by Living Stones. In this camp, what we live brings us to reflect and grow spiritually, touching every participant's soul in a unique way - it would take much longer to process this and transmit it to others. However, what one carries on at the end of their journey does not require the beautiful multi-coloured stained glass windows, the very fine ribbed vaults, the ogival arches or the slender flying buttresses to be shared with others, you acquire a reality - His reality - which is universal.

The amazing beauty of these "Stone Gospels" has left an indelible mark on our soul - His mark - and this new Light in our outlook allows us to see things, situations and people with a little more love, charity and hope. After all, the Gothic churches were nothing other than models of the Celestial Jerusalem, the "true" one that is not in our dimension, but which opens its doors for us and our souls in order to fill them with joy and peace.

Whatever your desire: whether to be "shaken" thoroughly, to be "overwhelmed" by this penetrating Light, or to simply admire the work of man at the service of a superior will, I believe that the formation camp on medieval theology and gothic art in France could be something unexpected that could both grasp and "enlighten" you.



from omega to alpha

Don Ricardo Sanjurjo Otero

Desde los inicios de la peregrinación a Santiago, la experiencia del seguir el camino marcado por la luz de las estrellas ha sido una constante: Pelayo re-descubrió el sepulcro siguiendo unas extrañas luces en el cielo; Carlomagno tuvo la gran visión del camino de las estrellas hacia occidente...

Es algo que nos recuerda claramente a la experiencia de los Magos en la Sagrada Escritura (Mt 2:1-12).

Al igual que ellos, siguiendo la luz de la estrella, se encontraron con la Luz que es Cristo, también nosotros, peregrinos, siguiendo la luz de las estrellas llegamos hasta Santiago, uno de los 12, y, gracias a él, podemos encontrarnos con el Señor resucitado.

Esta es la experiencia que, desde siempre, ha querido transmitírsele al peregrino que se acercaba a Santiago. Por eso, tras recordar su bautismo y purificarse en la Plaza llamada del Paraíso, al norte, en la gran fachada principal, la occidental, la Catedral les invitaba, y nos sigue invitando a nosotros, a encontrarse con la Luz.

Originalmente, en la fachada occidental, situada en lo que hoy conocemos como Plaza del Obradoiro,



se encontraba un gran pórtico que representaba la Transfiguración del Señor, mostrando su gloria a Santiago, Pedro y Juan. Hoy, en su lugar, se alza el imponente y majestuoso Pórtico de la Gloria, recientemente restaurado en su policromía.

Esta verdadera joya del románico, creación del Maestro Mateo, resume perfectamente la experiencia. Leyéndolo en el conjunto de los tres niveles del Pórtico – cripta, pórtico y tribuna – entendemos perfectamente la historia de nuestra peregrinación, de nuestra vida, de la gloria que nos espera.

La cripta es el mundo, sometido a los afanes del hombre. Cuando nos encerramos en nosotros mismos, convertimos nuestro espacio vital en algo estéril, de ahí que apenas haya decoración en la estancia. En palabras del profeta Isaías somos ese ‘pueblo que caminaba en tinieblas (...), los que habitan una tierra de sombras de muerte’ (Is 9:2). Pocas luces son capaces de poner algo de claridad en la realidad del hombre: el sol y la luna representadas en las claves de la bóveda en manos de los ángeles son esas pequeñas semillas que traen la esperanza de Dios al mundo sombrío del hombre.

Porque el mundo que aspiramos es el mundo sin sombras de la Jerusalén celestial, representado en la tribuna. Allí, ‘la ciudad no tiene necesidad de que la alumbren el sol ni la luna: la ilumina la gloria de Dios y su lámpara es el Cordero’ (Ap 21:23). Por eso, en la clave de bóveda, rodeado por los cuatro ángeles turiferarios de las columnas, el cordero preside el gran chorro de luz que entraba originalmente por el gran rosetón que coronaba la fachada occidental, generando ese efecto de antorcha tan propio del románico, iluminando y sacralizando todo el espacio.

La vida del hombre está llamada a ser esa peregrinación desde las sombras de la cripta a la gran luz de la tribuna. Pero cuando el hombre lo intenta por sus propios medios no es más que un esfuerzo vano, como el de las figuras de la parte inferior del Pórtico, que se ven aplastadas por las columnas, incapaces de levantar el vuelo.

Afortunadamente para nosotros, la cita de Isaías no se queda en que el pueblo caminara en tinieblas. Sino que, ‘el pueblo que caminaba en tinieblas vio una gran luz; a los que habitaban en tierra de sombras de muerte, les ha brillado una luz’ (Is 9:2). Esa Luz es Cristo Jesús que sale al encuentro del hombre y al que podemos llegar siguiendo las pequeñas estrellas que va sembrando en nuestra historia: los profetas, los apóstoles... que van reclamando que nuestra vista se centre en Cristo, el Cordero sentado en el trono, que nos muestra sus heridas, porque ha sido degollado, pero que alumbró el mundo con la luz de su gloria, una experiencia que hoy podemos revivir gracias a la recuperación de parte de la policromía.

Cristo, herido como tú y como yo, que se sienta en majestad sobre las tentaciones y sobre el tronco de Jesús. Dos signos de que en nuestra historia personal tenemos la posibilidad de, a pesar de nuestras sombras y nuestra debilidad, encontrarnos con Dios. De este modo, podemos comprender que una vez terminada nuestra peregrinación aquí en Santiago podemos encontrar esa misma luz de Cristo en nuestra vida cotidiana. O, como los propios peregrinos grababan en la piedra, una vez llegado al Omega de nuestra peregrinación, comienza el Alfa de nuestra nueva vida en Cristo.

The route towards Santiago de Compostela has, since its origins as a pilgrimage, been traced out along a path marked by the light of the stars. The monk Pelayo rediscovered the Apostle's tomb following strange lights in the sky; Charlemagne had a great vision of the way of the stars pointing towards the west ...

It is something which immediately recalls the experience of the Magi as recounted in the Gospels (Mt 2,1-12). Like them, in following the light of the star, they instead encountered the Light that is Christ. We too, as pilgrims following the light of the stars, arrive before Santiago - St James the Major - one of the twelve, and through him, we may ultimately meet with the Risen Lord.

This is, and has always been, the intended climax of the pilgrimage. It is the reason why prior to entering the Cathedral, the pilgrim would remember the Baptismal rite of purification and symbolically renew it in the so-called Plaza del Paraíso, to the North of the cathedral. The pilgrim would then proceed to the great main façade - the western façade - that invited them in, and continues to do so today - inviting us, to meet the Light.

Originally, on the western façade, located in what is now known as Plaza del Obradoiro, there was a large portico that represented the Transfiguration of the Lord, in complete glory before James, Peter and John. Today, in its place, stands the imposing and majestic '*Portico de la Gloria*', recently restored in its polychrome form. This true jewel of the Romanesque tradition, the creation of Maestro Mateo, perfectly sums up the experience. On reading it together and within the whole context of the three levels of the Portico - crypt, portico and tribune - we are faced with the entire

history of our pilgrimage: the pilgrimage of our life, and of the glory that awaits us.

The crypt is the world subjected to the cares of man. When we lock ourselves in, we turn our living space into something sterile; there is hardly any decoration within the space of the crypt. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, we are that 'people who walked in darkness (...), those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness' (Is 9:2). Few lights are able to reveal with clarity the reality of man: the sun and the moon in the hands of angels, represented on the keystones of the vault, are those small seeds that bring the hope of God to the dark world of man.

The world we aspire to is the shadowless world of the heavenly Jerusalem, and is thus, represented on the rostrum. There, 'the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the Glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb' (Rev 21:23). That is why, on the keystone of the vault, which is surrounded by four winged creatures, the lamb presides over the great jet of light that originally entered through the large rosette crowning the western facade, generating a torch-like effect so typical of the Romanesque, illuminating and sanctifying all the space.

The life of man is called to be like that of a pilgrim who, from the shadows of the crypt, steps into the great light of the rostrum. But when man attempts to reach that light on his own terms and by his own means - though with great effort - it is all in vain. Taken to its extreme, it meets the fate of the figures in the lower part of the Portico who, beneath the crushing weight of the columns, are unable to proceed, to be free.

Fortunately for us, the quote from Isaiah does not stop with the people walking in

from omega to alpha

darkness, but: 'the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined' (Is 9:2). That Light is Christ Jesus who goes out to meet man, and whom we can reach by following the stars - the little signs - sown throughout our history: the prophets, the apostles; they demand that our sight be centred on Christ, the Lamb sitting on the throne, showing us his wounds because he has been slaughtered. And yet, these are the wouds through which light passes, a light of glory that illuminates the world. And this experience, as intended by the visual genius of the artist, may be relived today in its fullness due to the recovery of part of the polychromy.

Christ wounded,
like you and
me, sits

in majesty over the temptations, and atop the tree of Jesse - two signs that in our personal history we have the possibility to meet God, in spite of our shadows and weaknesses or rather, because of them. In this way, it becomes clear that once we finish our pilgrimage here in Santiago, we may find that same light of Christ in our daily life. Or, as the pilgrims themselves recorded on the stone: on arriving at the Omega of our pilgrimage, then begins the Alpha of our new life in Christ.



the path of light

Maria del Mar Vives

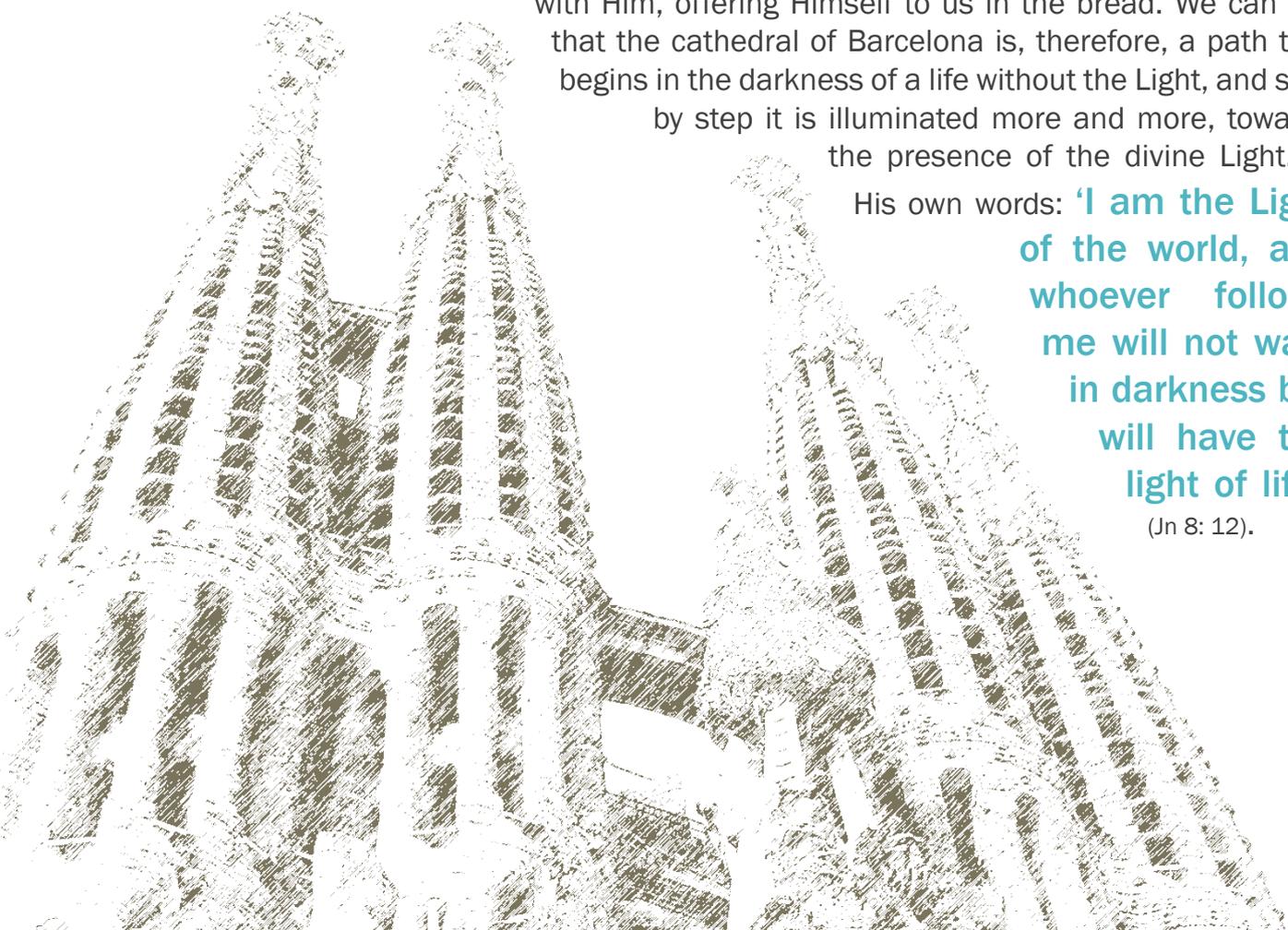
In the cathedral of Barcelona (13th-15th cen.), a small community of Living Stones gathers to admire the phenomenon of light which occurs within this architectural jewel. If there was any one particular innovative and groundbreaking element in the passage from Romanesque to Gothic, both architecturally and theologically, it must have been the use of light. Like the structure of a tree, which allows light to filter through the leaves, so too does Gothic architecture as it allows light through the colourful stained glass windows. This is how light penetrates into the interior and floods the nave of the cathedral, transforming the space into a new mystic space that distances us from the everyday life; it transfigures and elevates us.

This magnificent construction could also be understood as a path, a physical and spiritual one. The beginning of our journey begins with the sacrament of Baptism, which is why, just as we cross the entrance door and in the first chapel, we find a Carrara-marble carving (15th cen.), the Baptistery. As we continue forward along the central aisle, we inevitably come across a flamboyant choir (15th cen.) that invites us to prayer, since this is where the Canons used to meet - and continue to meet - to raise their liturgical chants to Heaven, a prayer continued in the centre of the space as it were a beating heart. And this prayer leads us to the head of the building, the culmination of our journey, where the altar is located.

There, Jesus makes Himself present in the Eucharist and invites us to unite with Him, offering Himself to us in the bread. We can say that the cathedral of Barcelona is, therefore, a path that begins in the darkness of a life without the Light, and step by step it is illuminated more and more, towards the presence of the divine Light. In

His own words: **'I am the Light of the world, and whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'**

(Jn 8: 12).



As the main exponent of European Gothic, Abbot Suger of Saint Denis, would say: 'The lethargic mind rises to the truth passing through the material' - the divine truth, whose "first radiance" is Christ. Not only the homilies, the altarpieces, the doors etc., are the only elements useful for catechism. The architectural space and its stained windows are also playing an important role when it comes to enhance the spiritual experience. They work as filters that transform the incoming simple natural light into the True Light.

This light thus, penetrates the interior of the Cathedral in its greatest intensity through the stained glass windows (14th cen.) of the ambulatory chapels which surround the main altar. Though early, it is an idea which was retained and adopted throughout the centuries and into the modern period. In the Revelation we find the most beautiful metaphors related to Christ as Light: the Word, the Logos, was the true Light that enlightens every man who comes to this world (Jn 1, 9). This was the favourite book of the Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926). Often, he would spend his evenings in prayer at the cathedral, sitting on the stone bench that is just in front of the precious choir, lost in long moments of meditation, wrapped in the mystical atmosphere created by the colourful light generated by the stained glass, reading the worn pages of small gospel books that he always carried in his pocket. Surely he experienced and meditated in our cathedral all these things that would lead him to later design the new and modern cathedral, the Sagrada Familia - a beautiful and renewed song

to the Light. For him, the physical light as experience through architecture should be a reflection of spiritual light. That is why he laboured so much to hollow out the stone in the temple of the Sagrada Familia. In his own words:

The sustenance of the luminous cross that hovers above and that in the dark night of the world will appear radiant like a sun among the stars of the sky and will remember in a plastic and wonderful way the soft voice of Jesus Christ who says to the Men: 'I am the Light`.

Even today, while contemplating the stained glass widows of our Cathedral, more words from the Book of Revelation come to mind: 'And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it. For the Glory of God hath enlightened it' (Rev. 21: 21-23).

It is true that the light symbolizes the presence of Jesus for all who enter his house and invites you to stay in it. To see it, one must enter; *Come and see!* (Jn 1:38). The invitation still stands, to see and dwell in the radiant light and all its colours. ■

chiamando CALLING i suoi HIS DISCIPLES discepoli words by Letizia Torelli

A colpirmi maggiormente in questa scena sono stati subito gli sguardi, le espressioni dei volti. Quelli di Gesù e del discepolo che sta con lui sulla riva sono diretti, sicuri, hanno l'espressione di chi sa dove si sta posando il suo sguardo.

Differenti le espressioni di Simone e Andrea: il primo ha lo sguardo di chi vede ma non riesce esattamente a mettere a fuoco ciò che ha davanti agli occhi; il secondo sembra essere stupito, ammirato, sorpreso. Simone e Andrea sono pescatori, i vangeli di Matteo e Marco non ci dicono altro. Luca aggiunge che sono pescatori stanchi: sono scesi dalle loro barche dopo una notte di lavoro andata molto male. Stanchi e delusi stanno lavando le reti alle spalle di Gesù che ammaestra la folla. È su una di quelle due barche, luogo del fallimento, di ore di fatiche vane, che Gesù sceglie di salire per meglio parlare alla folla che sta sulla riva. La primissima chiamata alla conversione è quella di un luogo, uno spazio della vita ordinaria, uno strumento di lavoro e di un lavoro duro diventa il pulpito da cui Gesù può essere meglio capito e ascoltato da chi ha davanti.

Una volta finito di insegnare agli altri Gesù chiede a Simone di andare al largo e gettare ancora una volta le reti. Qui si colloca il gioco di sguardi del mosaico: sono la reazione alla richiesta di Gesù. Pur nel non capire pienamente c'è qualcosa che fa dire "ok nonostante tutto gettiamo ancora una volta le reti". Le reti, ci dicono i vangeli, si riempiono così tanto che non è possibile affrontare da soli questa abbondanza: è necessario dividerla e nonostante le due barche la pesca è così generosa che entrambe rischiano di affondare; è troppo. Simone insieme alla barca vacilla e riconoscendo la extra-ordinarietà di quanto sta accadendo e intuendo la extra-ordinarietà della persona che ha davanti, non può che dichiarare ad alta voce la propria inadeguatezza.

'Non temere; d'ora in poi sarai pescatore di uomini'. Il lavoro ha le stesse caratteristiche. Si svolge nel mare, non il mare di acqua ma il mare della gente; si svolge prevalentemente di notte, non una notte atmosferica quanto una notte dell'anima, un ambiente di buio, una notte dei cuori; un lavoro che si svolge nel silenzio, non per

non spaventare i pesci ma un silenzio che è ascolto e attesa di *'colui che viene nel nome del Signore'*; un lavoro che lascia esposti alle intemperie alla volatilità del clima, ancora una volta non qualcosa che ha a che fare con le condizioni climatiche quanto con le situazioni sociali, storiche, politiche. Il cielo nel quale si compone questa immagine è un cielo dorato, un contesto ambientale che parla di Dio e della sua fedeltà. Una attività che cambia contesto; si converte.

Nel vangelo di Giovanni non ci sono barche, non ci sono folle, non ci sono reti. C'è la vicenda di due ai quali è stato indicato Gesù come colui da seguire; l'incontro è talmente radicato nella realtà da potersi fissare nelle quattro del pomeriggio. Gli sguardi dei due calamitati su Gesù sembrano affermare: *erano le quattro del pomeriggio.* È quell'attimo in cui intuisce che "che è per te", per la tua vita: è l'inizio di una storia d'amore. È l'inizio di questa bellissima storia d'amore che è Pietre Vive. Storia di persone che si sono lasciate incontrare nella propria ordinarietà dallo sguardo deciso di Gesù e hanno lasciato che questo incontro cambiasse di segno a tutto il resto intorno, comprese le fatiche. Storia di persone che intuita l'abbondanza che questo incontro portava con sé non hanno potuto fare a meno di invitare altri per dividerla. Storia di storie convertite, di spazi, di doni, di sguardi, di incontri convertiti. Dieci anni di Pietre Vive: storia di "un incontro" dentro un cielo dorato.

The aspects which immediately struck me in this scene were the looks, the facial expressions. Those of Jesus and the disciple on the shore are direct, sure, they express the certainty of he who knows in which direction he is looking.

The expressions of Simon and Andrew are different: the first has the look of someone who sees but struggles to focus on what is before him; the second seems to be amazed, in awe, surprised. Simon and Andrew are fishermen, the Gospels of Matthew and Mark do not tell us more. Luke adds that they are tired fishermen: they got off their boats after a night of work which didn't go well. Tired and disappointed they wash



Miraculous Draught of the Fishes, early 6th century, The MET, New York (prov: Ravenna Mosaic Co. St Louis)

the nets whilst Jesus preaches to the crowd. It is on one of those two boats, a place of failure, of hours of work in vain, that Jesus chooses to go to better speak to the crowd on the shore. The very first call to conversion is that of a place, a space of ordinary life, an instrument of work and hard work becomes the pulpit from which Jesus can be better understood and listened to by those in front of him.

Once finished preaching to the others, Jesus asks Simon to go to the deep and throw the nets once again. This is where the play on looks fits in to the mosaic: they are the reaction to Jesus' request. Albeit not fully understanding, there is something which causes one to say "okay, despite everything, we will throw the nets once again". The gospels tell us that the nets are filled so much that it is not possible to face this abundance alone: it is necessary to share it, and despite being two boats, the catch is so generous that both risk sinking; it is too much. Simon falters together with the boat and recognising the extraordinary nature of what is happening, and sensing the extraordinary nature of the person in front of him, he feels he simply has to declare his own inadequacy in a loud voice.

'Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men'. The work has the same characteristics. It takes place in the sea, not the sea of water but the sea of the people; it takes place mainly at night, not an atmospheric night but a night of the soul,

an environment of darkness, a night of hearts; a work that takes place in silence, not to not frighten the fish, but a silence that is listening and waiting for *'the one who comes in the name of the Lord'*; a job that leaves exposed to the elements and the volatility of the climate, once again it is not something related to the conditions of the climate, but with social, historical and political situations. The sky in which this image is composed is a golden sky, an environmental context which speaks of God and his fidelity. An activity that changes context, and is converted.

In the Gospel of John there are no boats, there are no crowds, there are no nets. There is the story of two disciples to whom Jesus was indicated as the one to follow. The looks of the two disciples fixed on Jesus seem to affirm: *it was 4pm*. It is that moment when you perceive that "which is for you", for your life: it is the beginning of a love story. It is the beginning of this beautiful love story which is Living Stones. A story of people who allowed themselves to be met in their ordinary daily life by the decisive gaze of Jesus, and let this encounter leave its mark on everything else, including the struggles. A story of people who, in understanding the abundance that this meeting brought with it, could not help but invite others to share in it too. A story of converted histories, of spaces, of gifts, of looks, of converted encounters. Ten years of Living Stones: a story of "a meeting" in a golden sky. ■

THE LIVING STONES SONG

PRAYING WITH MUSIC

(Capo: 4)

Intro: Em D C9 (x4)

Em D C9
Take off your shoes

Em D C9
from your feet

Em D
cause the place

C9
where you are

Em D C9
is holy. (x2)

C9 G
Living guide
you have called us
C9 G
to give your call a voice.

C9
You bring life
G
to our stones

D
through your word
G
which is love.

C9
With your love
G D
we are your living stones. (x2)

Em D C9
Blessed who comes
Em D C9
in the name of the Lord. (x2)

Chorus

Em D C9
Here we are
to be for you.
Em D C9
Here we are
to be guided by you.

Em D C9
Here we are
to love.
Em D C9
Here we are. (x2)

Chorus



music, lyrics & words
Sofia Gómez Robisco

lyrics based on a prayer by Friederike Quack

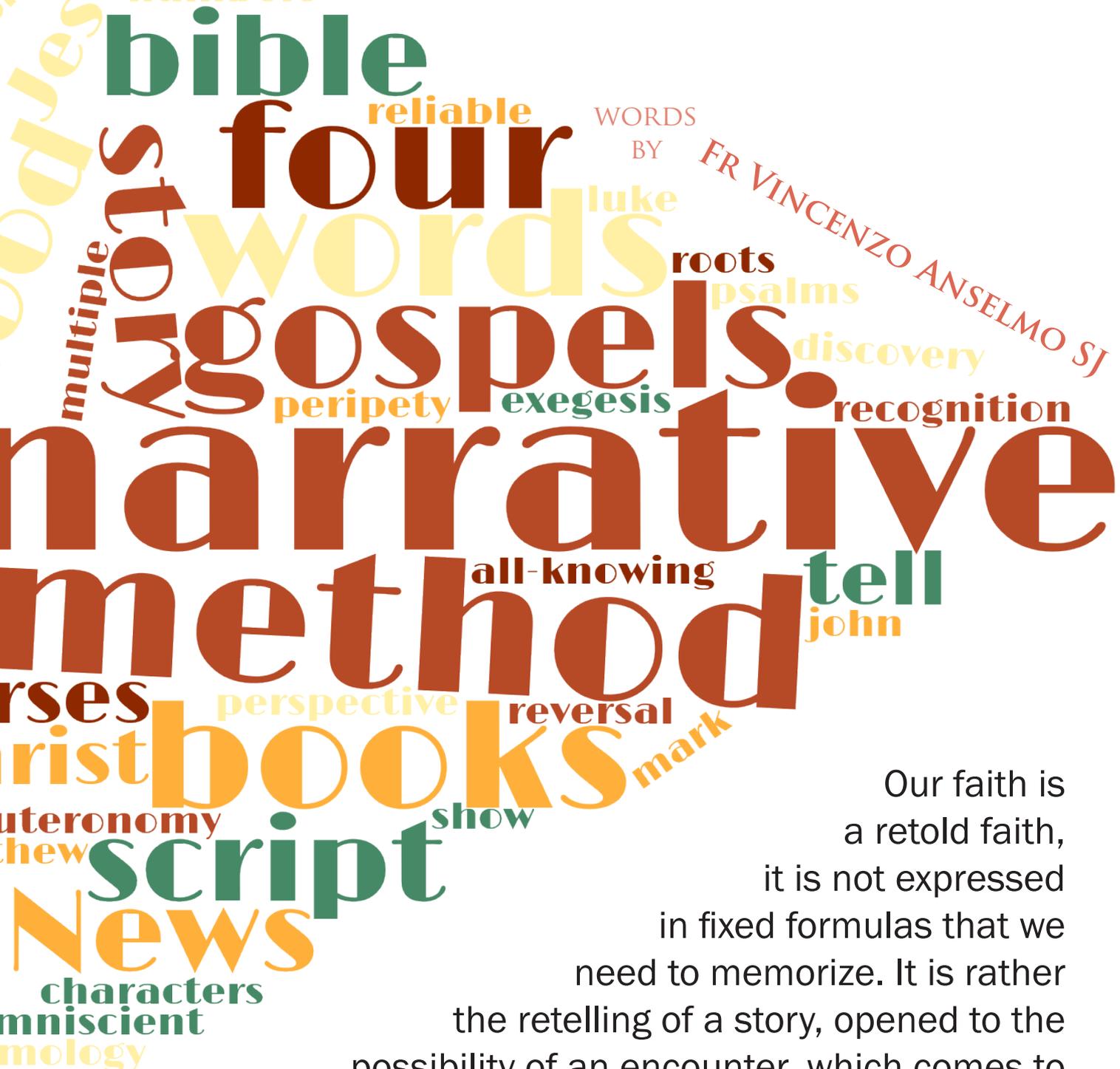
In order to talk about the importance of music in Living Stones, it is necessary to first have a clear picture of what music is, and also, of Living Stones. I do not quite have the space to give any precise definitions, so in the case of music, I will simply limit my explanation to certain references along the course of history. In myth of Orpheus we read that *'Music soothes the savage beast.'* Meanwhile, St Augustine claims *'who sings, twice prays'* and that *'only the lover sings.'* *'Music is based on harmony between Heaven and earth'*, tells us Herman Hesse, and Beethoven understood music as "Revelation". Not to mention the several references in the Bible wherein music is seen as a way of worshipping God.

Music can bring different cultures together, and that is why it is often considered as a universal language. Once, during a Living Stones meeting in Rome, I proposed to contemplate music in the same way as we contemplate paintings or sculpture, in the same way as we do with visual works of art. In Living Stones we evangelise through art, and we do so by giving clues on how to understand the symbols, the iconography. Those key points help us and the tourists to decipher and understand what they are looking at. Sometimes, lack of interest comes from an inability to understand the language of that which we are looking at. And the same happens with music. I don't mean to say that we should all start studying music now, but even awakening some degree of sensibility towards music is a great step. In the same way that we may learn how to look at a painting, we may likewise learn how to listen to music. And music has its own iconography too; it hides images among its notes.

The history of the Church and the history of music are deeply linked; both have been part of each other's history. Music is important for the Church, especially when we think about the liturgy. Now, we have to think about Living Stones as a reflection of the Church since we are part of it. In the same way that the Church is one and plural at the same time, it is a community of communities, so too is our experience of Living Stones.

Music can transform a space, deeply linked to architecture. If we are aware of our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, music can transform us. And as temples, we are also Living Stones. Thus, music is important to Living Stones because: it assists in prayer (and sometimes is indeed, the prayer itself); it helps us to listen (to listen to the music but also to those around us, to God and His silence); music strengthens communities. Perhaps some of you have played in an orchestra, or sung in a choir, perhaps most of you haven't. But I think you would all agree that it is not the same to listen from the outside than it is to listen from the inside, when you are part of it. When you sing with someone else, there is a sense of complicity being built which is similar to that built during spiritual exercises. You understand each other with just a simple look.

If you think that you cannot sing or play an instrument, do not worry, because music is not just that. You can always clap, or sing in silence with your heart and offer that as a prayer. But do so while being part of that orchestra, of that choir. And do not be afraid of silence, which is also music. Some would even argue that all that music is, is ordered silence. ■



Our faith is a retold faith, it is not expressed in fixed formulas that we need to memorize. It is rather the retelling of a story, opened to the possibility of an encounter, which comes to us through the generations. This great retelling is not expressed through a single text and thought but through a four-fold Gospel, a story that does not have a single point of view, thus enabling to know Jesus from four different points of view: Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. The four Gospels present the core of their message, Jesus of Nazareth, with a plural approach in their awareness, perspective and theology, even if they are centred on the same subject: Jesus' Good News.

Reading and Retelling Mark's Gospel

Bible scholars consider Mark's Gospel as the oldest one. In order to start reading this story it is important to understand how to read a novel.

The Narrator is reliable, omniscient and anonymous.

Within the novel there is someone who tells the story: it is the Narrator. Mark's Gospel begins with these words: *'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ (the Son of God)'*. It is the storyteller who is speaking here. He generally remains anonymous; he presents the story on tiptoe and the reader is almost unaware of his discreet presence. Another feature of the Narrator is his reliability. He tells the reader the true version of the story. When in Gn 3 the serpent asks the woman the following provocative question: *'Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?'*, the reader is well aware that the serpent is lying and distorting the story because the storyteller had presented its real version in Gn 2:6. The Narrator is also all-knowing; he has access to everything, he even knows God's inner being, what God Himself thinks: *'God saw how good the light was'* (Gn 1:4).

Telling and showing.

The Narrator introduces the story and the characters by using two methods: storytelling and drama. In the first one, it is the Narrator who uses summaries, he

describes the characters and he refers his judgments. In the latter he leaves the stage to the characters who are placed at the foreground of the story. An example of telling and showing can be found in Markk 1:14-15: After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: *'This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.'*

Point of view.

The story can be told from different points of views. The Narrator can offer us his own point of view or make us see things from the point of view of the other characters of the story:

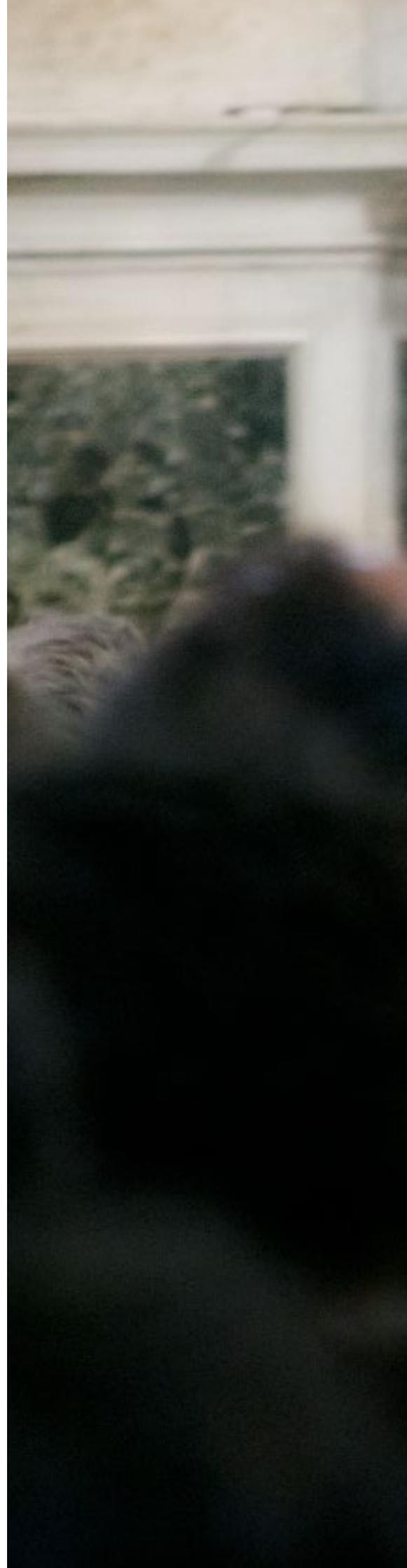
'It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."' (Mk 1:9-11).

In this example, we are offered Jesus' point of view. It is He who sees the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending upon Him. What takes place after the baptism is a deep experience whose protagonist is Jesus Himself. This experience will confirm Him in His relationship to the Father and thus, be able to proclaim the advent of the Kingdom.

Peripety or Reversal of the Situation and Discovery or Recognition are two propellers of storytelling. Aristotle describes them in *Poetics*: A Peripety or Reversal of the Situation is a change by which the action veers round to its opposite: a person passes from happiness to unhappiness (or vice-versa), a person who is guilty is excused, a victim is spared, etc. A Discovery or Recognition is a change from ignorance to knowledge in one or more persons (just like in a detective story in which at the end the guilty is recognized!).

A storytelling key in Mark's Gospel:

As the reader is told from the very first verse of Mark's Gospel, Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God (*'The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (the Son of God)'*), but the reader needs to know the whole story in order to understand how Jesus is both, that is, both the son of Man and the suffering servant. The biblical story distrusts premature recognitions. This is the reason why Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit that proclaims from the first chapter: *'I know who you are - the Holy One of God!'* (Mk 1:24). What the evil spirit proclaims is not false, but his revelation is untimely. It arrives prematurely, before than expected and Mark's Jesus, therefore, cuts it short on such disclosures: access to His identity is only possible for those who follow Him on His path – a path which, for the reader, is shaped just like the turning points of the narrated story. The reader will be able, with Peter in chapter 8, to make an important step towards recognition: *"But who do you say that I am?" Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Messiah."* (Mk 8: 29). The reader will also see Peter and his companions soon receiving the messianic secret by Jesus: *'Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him'* (Mk 8:30). The problem is that they have not yet received all the keys for interpretation. The next step will be made by the centurion in the penultimate chapter of the story. When the centurion, who stood facing Him, saw how he took his last breath, he said, *'Truly this man was the Son of God!'* (Mk 15:39). Thus, the two initial titles - Christ and Son of God - have been revised and reconfigured from within the course of the plot, especially in the Easter passage. (J.-P. Sonnet, *Generare è narrare*, Milano 2014, 29-30) ■





Nell'arte riposa una dimensione che possiamo definire religiosa. Partiamo dal significato etimologico del termine 'religioso'. Deriva dal latino 'relegere', cioè raccogliere. Forse sorge la necessità di domandarci: nel cogliere il senso profondo dell'arte vi scopriamo una dimensione religiosa? L'arte che cosa raccoglie? Noi che cosa raccogliamo in essa? Sono domande di grossa portata, ma che non appartengono solo agli studiosi, bensì a chiunque è fruitore di un'opera d'arte oppure è l'artista che la crea. In fondo sono domande che pur nella loro complessità anelano a significati semplici. Mi sovviene la figurazione tratta dal libro del profeta Geremia. Nel capitolo 18 del libro troviamo scritto:

«Questa parola fu rivolta a Geremia da parte del Signore: «Prendi e scendi nella bottega del vasaio; là ti farò udire la mia parola». Io sono sceso nella bottega del vasaio ed ecco, egli stava lavorando al tornio. Ora, se si guastava il vaso che egli stava modellando, come capita con la creta in mano al vasaio, egli rifaceva con essa un altro vaso, come ai suoi occhi pareva giusto. Allora mi fu rivolta la parola del Signore: «Forse non potrei agire con voi, casa di Israele, come questo vasaio?» Oracolo del Signore. «Ecco, come l'argilla è nelle mani del vasaio, così voi siete nelle mie mani, casa di Israele.»

Nell'esperienza della creazione artistica è presente un'esperienza dialogica

fecondatrice così forte da trasformare l'immagine del vissuto dell'uomo. In tal senso il bello è ciò in cui noi vediamo il soffio della vita, così come noi la intendiamo e la desideriamo, come essa ci rallegra. Grande è ciò che supera gli oggetti con cui noi paragoniamo il bello. Il bello non è una mera questione della fantasia che è capace di eliminare i difetti e rendere così esteticamente accettabile e presentabile. Questo tipo di bellezza non regge la critica della realtà. La bellezza è ciò che ricorda all'uomo la vita, il suo essere al fondo delle realtà. Spesso l'arte interpreta la vita; dà anche spesso un giudizio sui fenomeni della vita. L'arte è il confessionale dell'uomo, il più delle volte il suo grido profondo. In tal senso il workshop con la lavorazione dell'argilla, durante l'incontro internazionale a Roma a fine aprile del 2017, desiderava offrire la consapevolizzazione di quest'esperienza dialogica tra il singolo esercitante e le dimensioni più profonde del vissuto - dove spira l'Alito, la Brezza vivificante - da trasformare l'immagine del vissuto nell'oggetto creato da ciascun partecipante.

Comprendendo che in qualche misura il simbolo artistico può essere il volto materiale dell'anima viva della creazione di Dio. In fondo come è vero che non tutti sono artisti, in qualche misura è vero che anche lo si è. Durante il workshop l'argilla da informe ha iniziato a prendere espressione dando vita a

moulded in CLAY

words by

Fr Federico Pelicon SJ

ciò che ognuno - lasciandosi ispirare – percepiva nei colori dell'intuizione e usando la tecnica della sua manualità. Il silenzioso ascolto di un canto spirituale accompagnava 'l'atto creativo' di ciascuno. Al termine del lavoro ci si è chiesti, che cosa significasse creare. Ognuno condividendo anche il proprio sentimento perlopiù di consolazione, pace, serenità, contentezza, evidenziava in qualche modo che quando si è presi o 'rapiti da' per fare o creare qualcosa si sconfinava un po' dal proprio individualismo e si compenetra con un mondo che attualizza la comunione.

In art lies a dimension that we can define as religious. Let's start from the etymological meaning of the term 'religious'. It is derived from the Latin "relegere", i.e. to gather. Perhaps there is the need to ask ourselves: in grasping the profound meaning of art, do we discover a religious dimension? What does art gather? What do we gather through it? These are questions of great importance, that don't solely appertain to scholars, but to anyone who has the opportunity to enjoy a work of art, or to the artist who creates it. They are questions that, despite their complexity, yearn for simple meanings. The figuration taken from the book of the prophet Jeremiah comes to mind. In chapter 18 of the book we find:

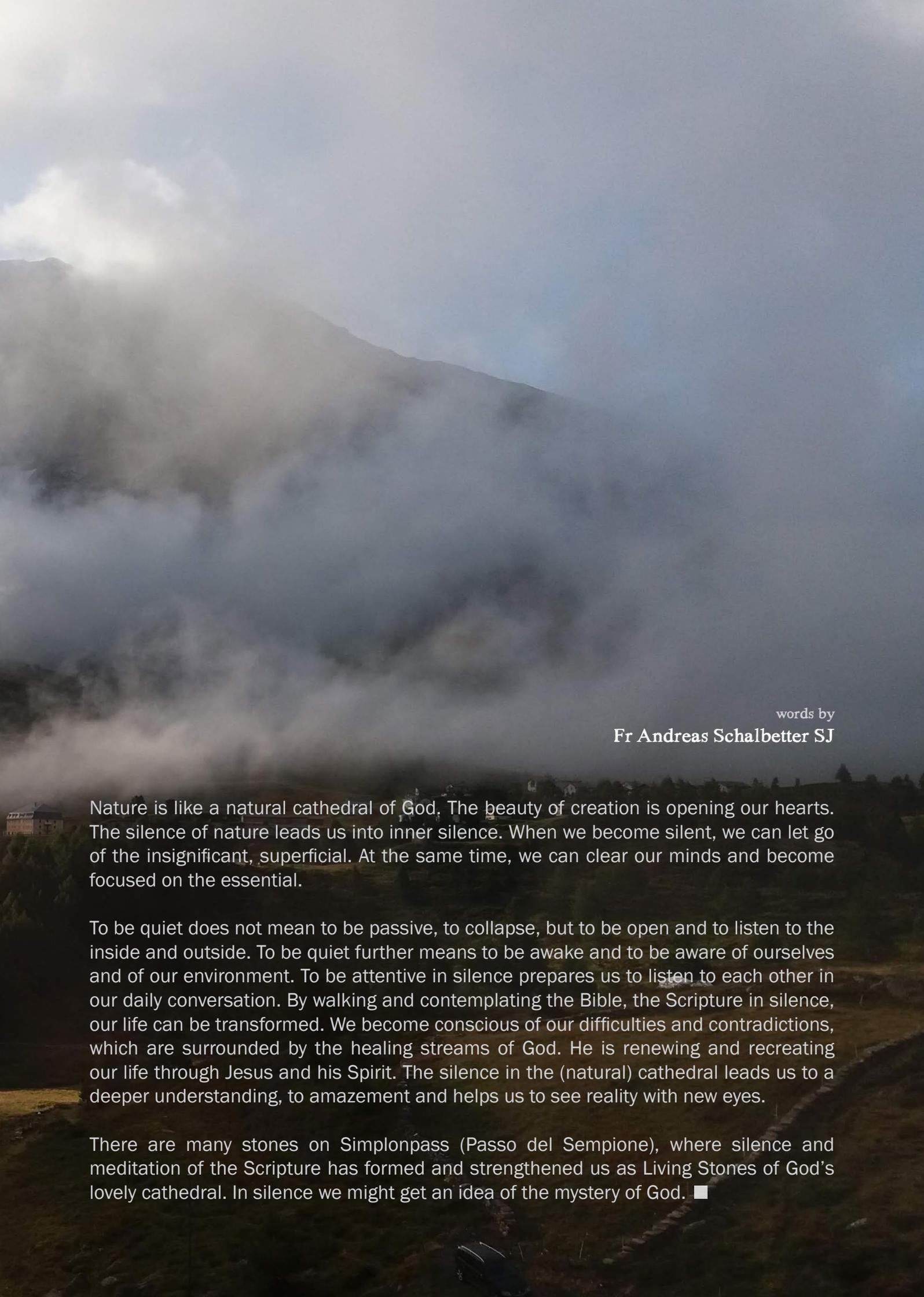
This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: «Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message.» So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me. He said, «Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?» declares the Lord. «Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.»

In artistic creation, one experiences profound dialogue capable of capturing the image of one's life. Thus, beauty is that in which we see in the breath of life, as we understand it and desire it, as it makes us happy. Great is that which surpasses the objects to which we compare beauty. Beauty is not a mere question of fantasy that is capable of eliminating defects and makes things aesthetically acceptable and presentable. This type of beauty does not stand the critique of reality. Beauty is what reminds man of life, his being immersed in reality. Art often interprets life; it also often gives judgment on the phenomena of life.

Art is the confessional of man, most often, his deep cry. Thus, the workshop on clay moulding, held during the international meeting in Rome at the end of April 2017, sought to offer the awareness of this dialogic experience between the maker and the deeper dimensions of one's life - where Breath is given, the breeze which gives life - to transform the image of one's life into the object created by each participant. Understanding that to a certain extent the artistic symbol may be the material face of the living soul which God creates. Just like it is true that we aren't all artists, in some way it is also true that one is. During the workshop, the shapeless clay began to take shape, giving life to what everyone - letting themselves be inspired - perceived in the colors of intuition and using the technique of his dexterity. The silent listening to a spiritual song accompanied 'the creative act' of each one. Afterwards, we asked ourselves what creating meant. Whilst everyone shared their feelings, mostly of consolation, peace, serenity, contentment, they all showed that in some way, when you are captivated or 'kidnapped by' having to do or create something, you are somewhat overcome by your individualism and it merges with a world which contributes to communion. ■

A dramatic landscape photograph featuring a sunburst effect where bright light breaks through a layer of dark, heavy clouds. Below the clouds, a lush green valley is visible, filled with dense evergreen forests. The foreground shows a grassy, slightly hilly slope. The overall mood is serene and powerful, with the text 'SILENCE TRANSFORMS US' overlaid in a white, hand-drawn, sketchy font.

SILENCE
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US



words by
Fr Andreas Schalbetter SJ

Nature is like a natural cathedral of God. The beauty of creation is opening our hearts. The silence of nature leads us into inner silence. When we become silent, we can let go of the insignificant, superficial. At the same time, we can clear our minds and become focused on the essential.

To be quiet does not mean to be passive, to collapse, but to be open and to listen to the inside and outside. To be quiet further means to be awake and to be aware of ourselves and of our environment. To be attentive in silence prepares us to listen to each other in our daily conversation. By walking and contemplating the Bible, the Scripture in silence, our life can be transformed. We become conscious of our difficulties and contradictions, which are surrounded by the healing streams of God. He is renewing and recreating our life through Jesus and his Spirit. The silence in the (natural) cathedral leads us to a deeper understanding, to amazement and helps us to see reality with new eyes.

There are many stones on Simplonpass (Passo del Sempione), where silence and meditation of the Scripture has formed and strengthened us as Living Stones of God's lovely cathedral. In silence we might get an idea of the mystery of God. ■

RETRAIT + RECOVER RISK

WORDS BY
AGNESE
GIANNINI

The spiritual exercises held in Lecce at the rehabilitation community of 'Le Sorgenti' crystallises the meaning behind the activities of Living Stones. In fact, during these days, apart from the several spiritual meditations we were guided through, we also had the opportunity to meet some of the women who were undergoing a period of recovery from various addictions (primarily from drugs and alcohol), thus allowing us to "touch" the real suffering person before us, as well as some of the existing peripheries (not necessarily economic) of our society.

Often, great traumas cause a person to turn to these sort of addictions (for example, the loss of a loved one). These are traumas which lead to a deep sense of solitude; a solitude which renders the person unable to express the depth of this suffering, and who unfortunately, as a result, at times compensates for this need to be loved through the use of drugs

and alcohol. For us Living Stones, this is a crucial point since it is precisely from this need to feel loved that we observed how, by reversing the course of life, one may re-depart. To encounter someone who is undertaking this journey of recovery, as we have done through this experience, is also to encounter a message of hope; it is a way that opens up to the great mercy of God who comes to save us in our misery, in the darkest hours of our life.

To allow ourselves to be embraced by Grace is also a message of hope when it comes to the service, particularly of welcome, which we offer to those who visit our churches because every one of our encounters - be it with a tourist, with a friend or with a stranger - is essentially aimed to be an encounter with the Lord. This liberates both us and the people we would have met from any kind of inner addictions we might have, addictions which obscure and limit our lives and our relationship with God.



Gli esercizi spirituali vissuti a Lecce presso la comunità di recupero 'Le sorgenti' racchiudono il senso della attività di Pietre Vive. Durante quei giorni, infatti, oltre alle varie meditazioni spirituali proposte, abbiamo avuto l'occasione di poter incontrare delle ragazze che stanno vivendo un percorso di guarigione da differenti dipendenze (essenzialmente dalla droga e dall'alcol) permettendoci di toccare con mano la vera sofferenza della persona e alcune delle periferie esistenziali, non prettamente economiche, della nostra società.

Spesso il motivo che porta le persone a questo genere di dipendenza è causato da grandi traumi (per esempio la morte di un parente stretto) che comportano una grande solitudine della persona incapace di esprimere la propria sofferenza che cerca, di conseguenza, di compensare il suo bisogno di essere amata, purtroppo, anche con scelte estreme come la droga e l'alcol. Per noi ragazzi di Pietre Vive questo

punto è fondamentale perché è proprio da questo bisogno di sentirsi amati che abbiamo visto che, invertendo la rotta della vita, si può ripartire. Incontrare, come abbiamo fatto, qualcuno sta facendo un percorso di recupero è stato un messaggio di grande speranza perché abbiamo potuto sperimentare la grandezza della misericordia di Dio che viene a salvare proprio nella sofferenza, nelle situazioni più scure della vita.

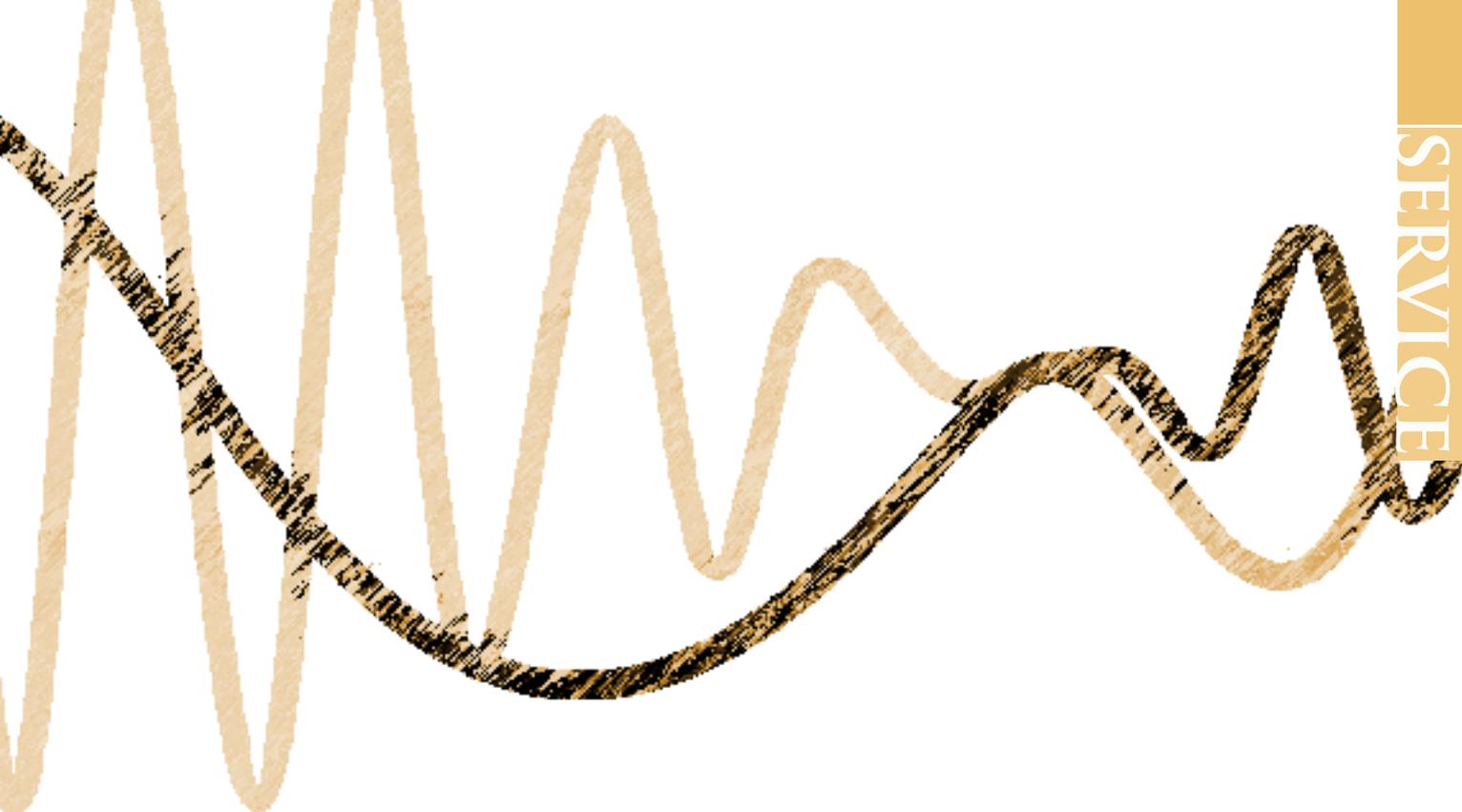
Lasciarsi abbracciare dalla Grazia è stato un grande messaggio di speranza anche per la nostra attività di servizio e di accoglienza nelle chiese perché ogni nostro incontro con un turista, con un amico o con una persona appena conosciuta ha come "obiettivo" proprio quello di essere un incontro con il Signore, liberando così sia noi stessi sia le persone incontrate da ogni forma di dipendenza interiore che offuscano e limitano la nostra vita e il nostro rapporto con Dio.



words by **Fr Jean-Paul Hernández SJ**

TRANSMITTING VIEW

Christian faith is an original experience, a not-yet-categorized experience of an encounter with a wandering rabbi who is condemned to death and about whom some say was found alive after his crucifixion. The initial community is formed around this dialectic between those who saw him resurrected and those who, even if they did not see him, accept the “eyewitness account” or the *“martyria”* made by those who claim to have seen him. The element which coagulates the new community is therefore a speech about seeing. Or better yet, the transmission of a view to someone who did not see it. But how does one transmit an unrepeatable “view”?



At a spiritual dynamic level, it can be said that the vision of the risen Christ has, in early Christianity, a role analogous to the revelation of the Name of God in the Old Testament. The Name was revealed to a few chosen ones and it could not be pronounced. But because it was unpronounceable, all the liturgy of Israel and, ultimately, of the entire Scripture is developed to say the Name without saying it.

The lack of availability of this Name causes an extraordinary fecundity in terms of stories, laws, and poetry which yearn for this Name and try to express it or to interpret it in some way or another. It can be said that the whole Jewish Bible is an interpretation of that unpronounceable Name. In the same way, the Risen Jesus appeared to few people and his visibility is not available. In the same Gospel stories about the apparitions, the Risen Jesus “appears to disappear”; he doesn’t let himself be grasped. In spite of this inability to grasp the centre of the Christian faith, it nonetheless creates a fantastic fecundity. The Christian liturgy, the texts in the New

Testament and everything else produced by faith are an interpretation of that unrepeatable vision. They are an attempt to express and transmit that vision. They are a possibility to see without seeing. This interpretation is what forms the community. The members of the Christian community are not those who saw but those who accept that interpretation of the visual event. Thanks to this interpretation, even they who did not see have access to a type of particular “view” derived from the original elusive vision. As Saint Ambrose would say, believing is receiving an image of God.

In the first stage of this transmission of the Easter event, vision is handed over to speech. The first container of the Easter event was probably a simple exclamation: ‘*oftè*’ (‘he has been seen’ or ‘one has seen him’), which is often translated by ‘he appeared’. It is an interesting term which contains all the tension of our issue. Its meaning has to do with seeing, whereas its significance is actually rooted in the word ‘to listen’. The first announcement of the Christian faith is thus, “listening

to a view". But this word is also a very precise and codified word which will be transmitted as such and thus, it soon becomes a "formula". The entire Easter event, which is the centre of the story and the sense of life for Christians, is handed over to a humble human word. And this "container", already interpretative in itself from the ungraspable event, is the one which causes the encounter between the listener and the ungraspable event.

Very soon this interpretation-transmission develops with other words well-known to us: 'he woke up', 'he is awake'. These too are interpretations to say the unsayable, to say what could not be contained in a word. They were words from the common vocabulary which, however, become "technical words" and "pregnant", "life-bringing words" in this context. A little later there will be other expressions: 'he was glorified', 'he received the Name which is above all other Names'. This connection between the Resurrection and the Name in *Phil. 2* is no coincidence, as we have said before. Interpreting and transmitting the Risen Jesus is like interpreting and transmitting the Name. The Name and the Risen Christ are available only within their interpretation, which is their authentic Revelation for us.

In *1Cor. 15* we already have a very well-articulated wording of this interpretation-transmission. There are four verbs with an obvious parallelism: 'dead', 'buried', 'raised', 'seen'. The codification process of the announcement of faith in the first decades of Christianity, allowed the exegete Heinrich Schlier to show how much the "dogma" (understood as verbal codification of the announcement of faith) is the original seed of every Christian Scripture. The stories of the Gospel are the translation of the original "kerygma-dogma" of Christ's death and resurrection in a narrative language. Said crudely: we first have the dogma and then the

Scripture. There is, in fact, a continuity of purpose between the original formulas of the announcement of faith and the stories of the Gospel. One always has to interpret the unavailable data (Jesus's Easter) as it were the "eye of the cyclone", which unleashes an overwhelming and creative energy simply because it is not available.

The narrative style allows us to get into a relationship with the unavailable event by presenting different figures (the Gospel characters) who got into a relationship with the Risen Christ. The purpose of the Gospels is to create, in this way, a "resonating chamber", a kind of "palace of mirrors" so that the spare "kerygma-dogma" can be assimilated, listened to in depth, recognised in different areas of life. Listening to the Gospel is listening to a view that enables you to see. The 'come and see' said to the disciples at the beginning of the Gospel of John is a simple invitation to the reading of the same Gospel. Listening to the Gospel means listening to others who see and, thus, to receive their own view. Listening enables you to see.

The historical-critical exegesis has shown how many of the characters and of the episodes in the Gospel are taken from typologies that already existed and from stories which form part of the vast human legacy of healings, miracles, etc. But in this context, these "mythemes" interpret and contain the unsayable strength of the Easter of Christ. The same exegesis also shows that the different Gospel stories are born from precise life contexts of the communities. Therefore, each Gospel is, above all, the proof of faith of the community which produced it. It is the interpretation of the Elusive, which a certain community hands over to us. And this is thus, the Revelation of the Elusive. In other words, it is "paradosis", the *Traditio*.

The Christian liturgy is a part of this *Traditio*, of this revealing interpretation of the unavailable event. This time, it is not only a “listening” that enables you to see but it is an action that enables you to see and touch. The rite interprets and transmits Jesus’s Easter but, above all, it allows the believer to physically find Easter. As the entire Easter event and all its effectiveness used to be consigned to the fragility of a few human words, it is now consigned to the fragility of few human gestures.

Liturgy does not come second compared to the stories in the Gospel but has the same nature as they do. Liturgy includes the narrative Word, which it then interprets. Yet, at the same time, it is for us the privileged and often, the original space. The Word is brought at its peak when it is proclaimed in the liturgy. But more and more often, the exegesis of the last decades show us how much the New Testament texts presuppose a liturgical background, and they are actually the fruit of this background. There are numerous examples of this: the book of the Apocalypse can be interpreted completely as a liturgy, innumerable Johannine and synoptic texts have a clear liturgical structure, etc. Actually, the *corpus paulinum* that still does not know the “storification” of the “kerygma-dogma” is full of liturgical allusions and uses the technical and solemn language of the “paradosis” only two times (‘I hand over to you what I received’): for the dogma (1Cor 15) and for the breaking of bread (1Cor 11). This is as if to say that the dogma and the liturgy have the same original importance for the first Christians.

The liturgical action as interpretation and transmission of the unavailable event is articulated in words and signs. These signs are a combination of elements from the nature and gestures of the human body. All these speak of a new dimension:

space. If, with the stories from the Gospel, the “kerygma-dogma” enters in time, with the liturgy it enters in space, while at the same time keeping its rhythm given by a time. Liturgy is that time which needs a space so that the encounter with Easter is in time and space. In other words, in the body. With liturgy, the Revelation is a space as well.

As happened with the stories from the Gospel, the objects and the gestures of the liturgy are borrowed from the vast natural and human repertory. But in this context they “contain Christ’s Easter” or rather, in Cabasilas’s words, they are the ‘windows of the sky’. In other words, they make us see the Unavailable. At the same time, and like the Gospels, liturgy expresses the vital context of a community and is fundamentally the proof of faith of a community.

If the liturgy is the “transignification” of space in viewing the Unavailable, then it is normal that, as soon as it was possible, the Christian community realised a “transignification” of the spatial frame in which the liturgy takes place. The architectonic space, one of the many that culture makes available to us, becomes a precise space which interprets and transmits that “view”. It is yet another development of that germinal ‘*oftè*’. At the same time, this liturgical space becomes – as the Scripture and as liturgy – the proof of faith of the community. The materiality of the liturgical space is used this way in the process of transmission-interpretation of that original unavailable view.

Already well before the edict of Milan, the *domus ecclesiae* are characterised both in their structure and, most importantly, in the decoration. The figures represented are the natural prosecution of that entrance in the space that the liturgy offers to the Easter. Among the most famous are the frescoes at Dura Europos. which shed light

on the baptism of that community, active in the third century. The space and the image are not only stage directions but are part of the liturgical action. They are part of the “paradosis”.

It can be said that the same historic transition, which occurred at the end of the second century, between “graffiti” and Christian figurative art has precisely, and as its own unique motif, the “paradosis” - interpreting and transmitting faith. And everything that has been said about the dogma, the Scripture and the liturgy, can also be said for Christian art. It is a “transignification” of elements that already exist in nature and in culture (consider the topic of pagan art as re-used and re-contextualised in Christian art). It is a way of interpreting and of transmitting the unavailable Easter event; it is a way of showing, using thousands of mirrors, the vision of what there was at the origin of faith. It is a way to receive the proof of faith of the community. Ultimately, it is a way to edify the ecclesiastical communion. It can be said that the purpose of the edification of a church is the edification of the Church. The church made out of stones is practically a proof, a “*martyria*”. It is not for vainglory (or not only for it) that church builders are sometimes represented on the same level as martyrs (as in San Vitale, Ravenna).

In other words, Christian art is the interpretative transmission of a view, this time not through words, not through signs and gestures, but through the architectural image and forms. Christian sacred art wants to transmit a view through another view. In trying to do this, it always risks a “short circuit”. To make us get into a relationship with ‘That who allowed us to see him’, Christian art proposes another experience of sight. We soon understand the danger, but we also soon understand the extraordinary scope. As the Word had

transmitted a view, now the view has to transmit “another view”.

The advent of Christian art is an event of the “paradosis” analogous to the invention of the literary genre “Gospel” or to the formation of the Christian rites. Art assumes the Word and the liturgy, and it is for us an organic development which interprets them, transmits them and interacts with them. Christian art was born from the prayer of the community and for the prayer of the community. This becomes part of that prayer. The “paradosis” of Easter takes place in a revealing triangle between Word, liturgy and art, where all three poles are interpreting each other.

In sacred images, the faithful finds the interpretation of the liturgical action, of the Word and ultimately, of the Unavailable Easter vision. The sacred images receive their full significance from this hermeneutical circle. Therefore, many Biblical texts and many liturgical elements, placed in a relationship with Christian art and literature, (and vice-versa) gain an ulterior and surprising depth.

Christian art is the projection on the “maxiscreen” of the space of that encounter with the unavailable. This is what allowed Florenskij to comment on the icon as the ‘frame of an encounter’. By receiving these visual interpretations of the ‘*oftè*’, the faithful also receive the view of the artist or of the community which ordered it. The artist is like a “martyr” because he sees and transmits his view. The Christian work of art is the prayer of the artist or of the community rendered visible, shared. The image thus “builds the Church” and is an instrument for communion, synchronic and diachronic.

Manifested in a more visible way when compared to the liturgy, the image uses elements of the human story and of nature, and thus widely opens the interpretation



of Easter to history and to the entirety of creation. In this case, the “paradosis” is called “enculturation”, but it is the same revelatory process of the only original event. The image, therefore, becomes a visual memory and, at the same time, an illumination which enables us to see

history and creation. To “see” Easter widens then to the entire history and to the entire creation. That “unavailable view” is now everything. And thus, we may join the psalmist in awe: ‘How glorious is your Name in all the earth’. ■

in verità io vi dico: tutto quello che avete fatto a uno solo di questi miei fratelli più piccoli, l'avete fatto a me". (Mt 25,40)

"Ma che impressione! Ha gli occhi cavi! Stefania, non vedente dalla nascita, commenta così quando la sua mano, sorretta dalla mia, giunge a toccare il volto reclinato di Isacco. Senza saperlo va al centro. Siamo nella Parrocchia del Corpus Domini di Bologna e Pietre Vive Fiat Lux accompagna un gruppo di non vedenti a conoscere il mosaico absidale dell'artista, teologo, sacerdote gesuita P. Marko Ivan Rupnik, SJ. Forse Stefania su quella parete si è riconosciuta. Nelle cavità di Isacco ha visto, come in uno specchio, la sua storia. Questa è la potenza del luogo sacro che parla di te. Così ha inizio la visita: da Isacco, diventato l'incontro di due abissi, due paure, la sua e la mia, fino al centro del mosaico, dove è posta la Deësis. Cristo risorto, rivestito di bianco e oro, ha le braccia e gli occhi aperti, mentre la croce è totalmente nera. Il nero rappresenta la distanza che separa - appunto, l'abisso - la creatura dal suo Creatore. Cristo, con la sua nascita, morte e risurrezione, ha annullato definitivamente la distanza e ha reso possibile anche a noi di accorciare le distanze con l'altro.



Per le Pietre Vive
da Maria Chiara Beccari

Bologna Fiat Lux
Parrocchia del Corpus Domini
Bolog...

xx



Dear Living Stones
(English-speaking!)

from Maria Chiara Beccari
Bologna Fiat Lux
Parrocchia del Corpus Domini
Bologna, Italy

"But what a surprise! His eyes are hollow!" Thus says Stefania, blind from birth, when her hand, sustained by mine, comes to touch the inclined face of Isaac. Oblivious, Stefania reaches towards the centre. We are in the Parish of Corpus Domini in Bologna, where the Living Stones community of Fiat Lux accompanies a group of blind people as they discover the apse mosaic of the artist, theologian, and Jesuit priest Fr Marko Ivan Rupnik SJ. Perhaps, Stefania could relate to that image in a mirror, her story. This is the power of the sacred place; it speaks directly to you, and about you. So begins the visit: from Isaac - the meeting of two abysses, two fears, hers and mine - and into the centre of the mosaic, where a Deësis is represented. The Risen Christ, with his arms and eyes wide open, is clad in white and gold, while the cross is completely black. The black colour represents the distance of separation - the abyss - the creature from its creator. Christ, through his birth, death and resurrection, has nulled this distance and made it possible for us too, to shorten that distance between one another.

xx x

29 August, 2018

*"And the king will say to them in reply,
 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of
 these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'"*
 (Mt. 25:40)

Al rientro dal coordinamento di ottobre 2016 ci siamo interrogati su "ciò che dice la chiesa" e tutto il gruppo ha deciso di dare seguito a ciò che Papa Francesco ci dice nell' "Ev. Gaudium cap. 24 "La chiesa in uscita e la comunità di discepoli missionari che prendono l'iniziativa, che coinvolgono, che accompagnano...". Tutti insieme abbiamo fortemente cercato un cammino che ci consentisse di condividere la "Bellezza" con gli ultimi (detenuti). L'obiettivo è stato portare a chi è nel dolore e privato della libertà la visione attraverso filmati, foto, percorsi spirituali, la Chiesa barocca di San Michele, e creare un dialogo attraverso il dipinto "La conversione di Sant' Ignazio".

Il 14/6/2017 è stato il giorno fissato per il n/s incontro, ancora oggi sto elaborando e sono in ascolto di cosa il Signore mi ha voluto dire tramite i detenuti. Uscendo dal carcere non capivo, mi sentivo vuoto, avevo la sensazione di aver riversato sui detenuti tutto me stesso, i miei sentimenti e solo all'indomani (che non finisce mai) ho iniziato a capire ciò che stava emergendo.

Intanto l'Accoglienza, ci stavano aspettando come aspettano un amico sulla porta di casa, mi sono sentito accolto come un dono per loro e in quel momento ho capito quanto il Signore stava operando nei loro cuori e nel mio. Paradossalmente posso dire di essermi sentito a casa in "carcere" e quando si saluta un amico quando si va via è nato il desiderio di abbracciarli: uno per uno e sentirsi dire di tornare a trovarli. A conclusione abbiamo chiesto se liberamente volevano unirsi a noi per la preghiera finale e, loro si sono messi in piedi in segno di rispetto e abbiamo pregato tutti assieme.

vi abbraccio tutti



*Per le Pietre Vive
 da Giuseppe Corona
 Pietre Vive Cagliari
 Chiesa di San Michele
 Cagliari, Sardegna, Italia*

Returning from the coordinators' meeting held in October 2016, we asked ourselves about "what the church says" and the whole group decided to follow what Pope Francis tells us in "Ev. Gaudium Ch. 24 "The Church which "goes forth" is a community of missionary disciples who take initiative, involve, accompany, ...".

All together we have strongly sought a journey that would allow us to share the "beauty" with the last (inmates). The objective was to bring sight to those who are in pain and deprived of their freedom, through videos, photos, spiritual journeys, the baroque Church of St. Michael, and start a dialogue through the painting "The conversion of St. Ignatius".

The 14/6/2017 was the day set for our meeting, and to date I am still processing and listening to what the Lord wanted to tell me through the inmates. Leaving the prison I did not understand, I felt empty, I felt as though I had given all I had within me to the inmates, my feelings, and only the next day (which never ends) did I start to understand what was emerging.

Their welcome was as though they were waiting for a friend by the door, I felt welcomed like a gift to them, and at that moment I understood how the Lord was working in their hearts and in mine. Paradoxically, I can say that I felt at home "prison" and similarly to when you say goodbye to a friend, I felt the desire to hug them and hear them ask us to go back and visit them. At the end we freely asked them whether they wanted to join us for the final prayer, and they stood up as a sign of respect and we all prayed together.

Hugs to all



*To all Living Stones
 from Giuseppe Corona
 Pietre Vive Cagliari
 Chiesa di San Michele
 Cagliari, Sardegna, Italy*

04.07.2018

PIEDRAS VIVAS EN EL

words by **Maripaz Agudo**

Hacia mucho tiempo que soñábamos con poder acoger a los peregrinos del Camino de Santiago como Piedras Vivas. Y hace seis años, el sueño se hizo realidad, no sin grandes dificultades al inicio. El verano del año 2013 llegamos a la casa que nos ofrecía don Segundo, el dean de la catedral, en la Rúa das Rodas para alojarnos a lo largo del mes que duró la experiencia. ¡Y allí comenzó nuestra aventura como Piedras Vivas en el Camino!

Un camino que hemos recorrido estos seis años muy bien acompañados:

Abraham, nos enseñó a salir de nuestra tierra al encuentro de peregrinos venidos de todo el mundo: Francia, Alemania, Corea, Italia, Portugal, Japón, Hungría, USA, España, Irán... Con él aprendimos a mirar las estrellas y a descubrir en ellas los deseos profundos del corazón del hombre, compartidos con tantos peregrinos a lo largo de estos años en la capilla de san Andrés, san Frutuoso, o más recientemente en las capillas de Crucifijo y Santiago, en Puente la Reina, un pueblecito navarro cerca de los Pirineos donde, desde hace dos años, acogemos también a peregrinos. ¡Cuántas conversaciones, cuánta escucha, cuántos sueños compartidos, cuántos cruces de miradas, cuántas *'¡Enhorabuena, ya habéis llegado!'*, cuántas lágrimas recogidas, cuántas oraciones y silencios!

Jacob nos enseñó que el Camino está también lleno de luchas y dificultades, tantas como peregrinos, tantas como Piedras Vivas. Luchas físicas, emocionales, de superación, de conversión... algunas heridas también que necesitan ser curadas, otras ya cicatrizadas, ausencias con las que aprender a vivir. Jacob nos enseñó a ser valientes, a no tener miedo de nuestros límites, de nuestras fragilidades, a no tener miedo de bajar hasta nuestro Finisterrae, a lo más bajo de nosotros mismos. Porque es allí donde nos espera desde la eternidad, ese Cristo resucitado que nos acoge en el Pórtico de la Gloria y nos muestra sus-nuestras heridas, ya asumidas por Él.

El Cristo de la Iglesia del Crucifijo de Puente la Reina nos lo repite también. *'La vida siempre es más fuerte que la muerte, ¿o es que no lo veis?'* Y solo si te fijas bien, si miras con los ojos del peregrino del siglo XII, te das cuenta de que la cruz-árbol que sostiene al Cristo de

Puente, está llena de brotes como un almendro en primavera, preñado de vida.

El Maestro Mateo nos enseñó la humildad del artista que se arrodilla escondido detrás de su obra. Y sentimos que la belleza del Pórtico de la Gloria era el fruto de la oración de la comunidad cristiana de aquel hombre que se escondía.

Pero si por alguien nos hemos sentido acompañados, sostenidos y bendecidos estos seis años de Camino, más allá de cansancios y dificultades, ha sido por el Señor. Nos ha acompañado a través de la alegría profunda que nos produce el encuentro diario con los peregrinos, aquellos que *'vienen en el nombre del Señor.'* Nos ha sostenido a través de cada una de las piedras vivas que forman cada verano esa comunidad internacional en la que compartimos de un modo muy sencillo el día a día y de un manera muy especial la oración y la eucaristía.

Nos ha cuidado a través de las personas que nos acogían cada verano: la comunidad de jesuitas y el colegio de san Agustín, don José y su comunidad de la Colegiata do Sar, las hermanas de la Compañía de María, Javier, Ricardo y la Pastoral Universitaria de Santiago, Antonio y su comunidad de padres dehonianos de Puente la Reina con la que nos sentimos realmente en casa. Y tantos otros que los primeros años fueron bastones que nos apoyaron y sostuvieron con su cercanía en la catedral de Santiago: César, Juan, José Luis, Sara, Celsa, Julio... Nos ha acompañado de la mano de sor Ester y las Hijas de la Caridad, que nos abrieron las puertas de la cocina económica de Santiago para que aprendiéramos a ser piedras vivas sirviendo la comida a los transeúntes... o de la mano de "Body to Grace" que con su teatro de calle, nos ayudaron a comprender mejor el significado de la peregrinación, o de la mano de Ascen que nos enseñó a ser piedras vivas acogiendo y sirviendo a los peregrinos a través de un masaje en los pies y un vaso de té.

Sí, miramos hacia atrás, y solo cabe la gratitud. Miramos hacia adelante... ¡y queremos seguir soñando con ser Piedras Vivas peregrinas!

Gracias a todos los que a lo largo de estos años lo habéis hecho posible: con vuestra dedicación, vuestra generosidad, vuestro tiempo, dando lo mejor de vosotros mismos. Gracias a los que en el futuro lo seguiréis haciendo posible.

LIVING STONES ON THE

CAMINO DE SANTIAGO

For a long time our dream was to be able to welcome pilgrims along the Way of St James. Six years ago, that dream came true! Not without great difficulties, of course, especially at the beginning. In the summer of 2013 we gathered at the house in Rúa das Rodasto which Don Segundo, the Dean of the Cathedral, had kindly offered us to stay in during the month-long experience of the first Living Stones service camp in Santiago de Compostela. Our adventure and presence as Living Stones along the Camino was finally about to begin!

Over these past six years, we too have been well guided, contemplating the steps of:

Abraham, taught us to leave our land to meet pilgrims from all over the world: France, Germany, Korea, Italy, Portugal, Japan, Hungary, USA, Spain, Iran ... With him we learnt how to look at the stars, to observe them and discover those deep desires embedded in the heart of man; desires which are shared with so many pilgrims with whom we met throughout these years in the chapel of St Andrew, St Frutuoso, or more recently in the chapels of the Crucifix and Santiago, in Puente la Reina, a small village in Navarre near the Pyrenees where we have also been welcoming pilgrims over the past two years. Countless conversations, and listeners, countless exchanged looks, shared dreams, and words of encouragement, countless *'Congratulations, you have arrived!'*, and moments of joy, countless tears collected, and prayers and silence.

Jacob taught us that the Way is also full of struggles and difficulties, be it as pilgrims, and be it as Living Stones; they are in essence the same thing. Physical and emotional struggles, those burdens which are carried in hope of conversion; wounds which still need to be healed, others which have already been; a void that needs to be filled, a sense of loss that is yet to be accepted. Jacob taught us to be brave, to not to be afraid of our limits, of our vulnerabilities, to not to be afraid to head to our own Finisterrae, to the lowest point within ourselves. Because that is where we await the encounter with the Risen Christ who welcomes us at the Pórtico de la Gloria and shows us His wounds, our wounds that have already been assumed by Him.

The Christ of the Church of the Crucifix in Puente la Reina repeats, or rather anticipated this: *'Life is always stronger than death, or do you not see it?'* Only if you look closely, if you look with the eyes of the twelfth-century pilgrim, you will come to see that the cross-shaped tree which holds Christ is full of buds, like an almond tree in spring, pregnant with life.

Master Mateo taught us the humility of an artist who kneels hidden behind his work. We feel that the beauty of the Pórtico della Gloria was the fruit of the prayer of the Christian community, of that person in hiding.

But if there was anyone who has truly accompanied us, sustained and blessed us these past six years of the Way, through weariness and difficulties, it has been our Lord. He has accompanied us through that profound joy which the daily encounter with the pilgrims brings, that special and unique encounter with those who *'come in the name of the Lord'*. He has sustained us through each of the Living Stones who, every summer, form an international community in which we share our time in service, prayer and the Eucharist, every single day, in a very simple way and in a very special way.

He has taken care of us through the people who have welcomed us every summer: the Jesuit community and the school of St Augustine, Don José and his community of the Collegiate of Maria del Sar, the sisters of the Company of Mary, Javier, Ricardo and the Pastoral University of Santiago, Antonio and his community at Puente la Reina with whom we really feel at home. And so many others who were like walking sticks, supporting us during our first years, who walked with us and with their closeness made it possible to serve at the Cathedral of Santiago: César, Juan, José Luis, Sara, Celsa, Julio ... He has accompanied us with the hand of Sister Ester and the Daughters of Charity, who opened the doors of the economic kitchen in Santiago so that we may learn to be living stones by serving food to passersby; He has accompanied us through *'Body to Grace'* who, with their street theatre, have helped us to better understand the meaning of the pilgrimage; or by the hand of Ascen who taught us to be living stones welcoming and serving the pilgrims through a simple foot massage and a comforting glass of tea.

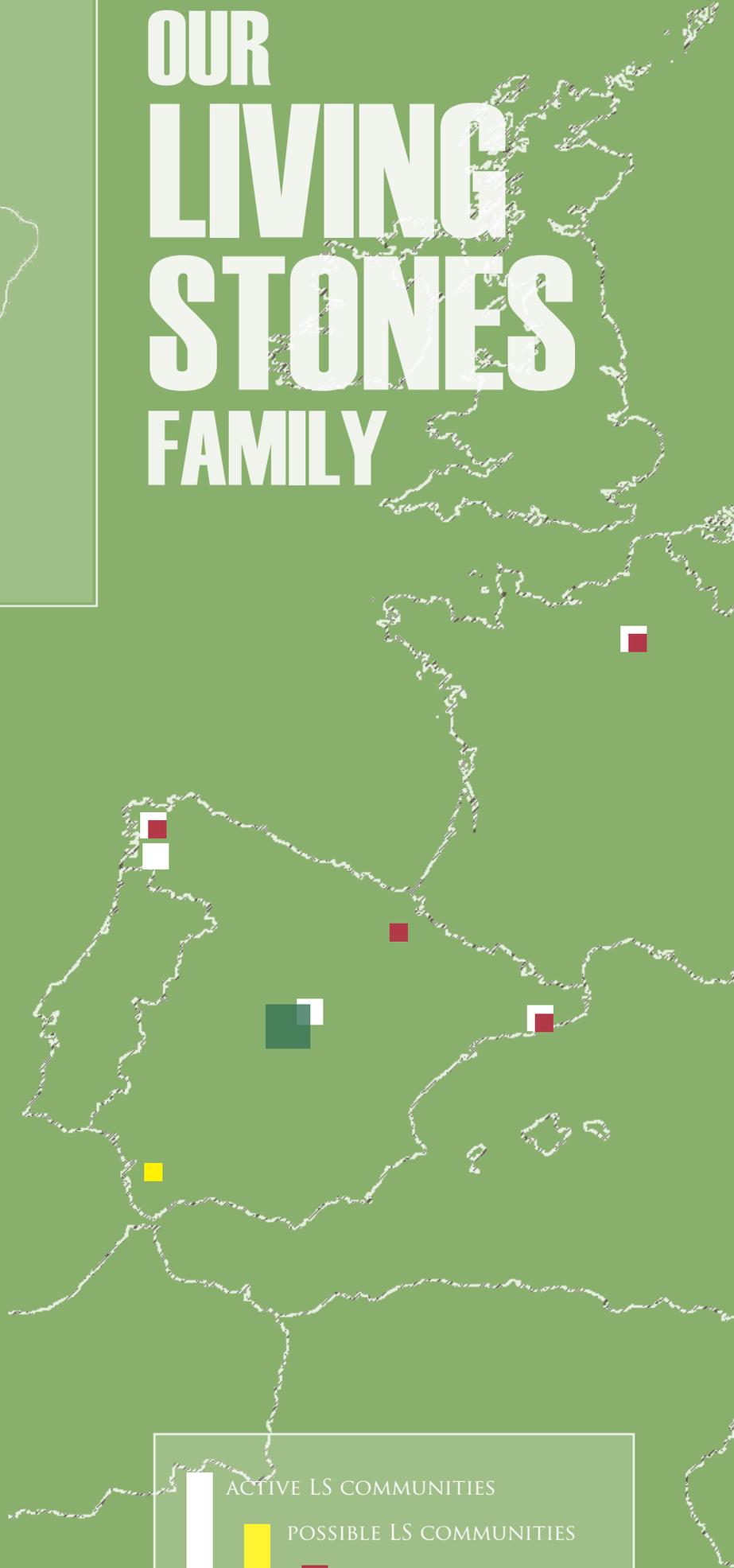
Yes, we look back, and only gratitude is befitting of the way. We look forward, and all we can do is to continue dreaming of being Pilgrim Living Stones!

Thanks to all those who over the years have made it possible: with your dedication, your generosity, your time, and by giving the best of yourselves. And thanks to those who in the future will continue to make it possible. ■

**¡Buen camino,
querida
Piedras Vivas!**

THE ROAD TO SANTIAGO

OUR LIVING STONES FAMILY



SPIRITUAL RETREAT

ANGHIARI, 2014
CAGLIARI, 2016
LECCE, 2017-2018
SIMPLON PASS, 2018

FORMATION WEEKEND

FLORENCE, 2013
ROME, 2014-2017
VENICE, 2018

BIBLICAL FORMATION CAMP

MUNICH, 2018

COORDINATORS' WEEKEND

ROME, 2015-2016
NAPLES, 2017
LJUBLJANA, 2018

QUICK CAMP (AUGUST)

ROME, 2015-2016

FORMATION CAMP (SUMMER)

PARIS, 2017-2018
GREECE, 2017-2018

SERVICE CAMP (SUMMER)

NAPLES, 2013
SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, 2013-2018
MUNICH, 2014
VENICE, 2014
MALTA, 2015
BARCELONA, 2015-2016
PUENTE LA REINA, 2017-2018

MAGIS (SUMMER)

BRATISLAVA, 2014
PRAGUE, 2016

TAIZÉ NEW YEAR

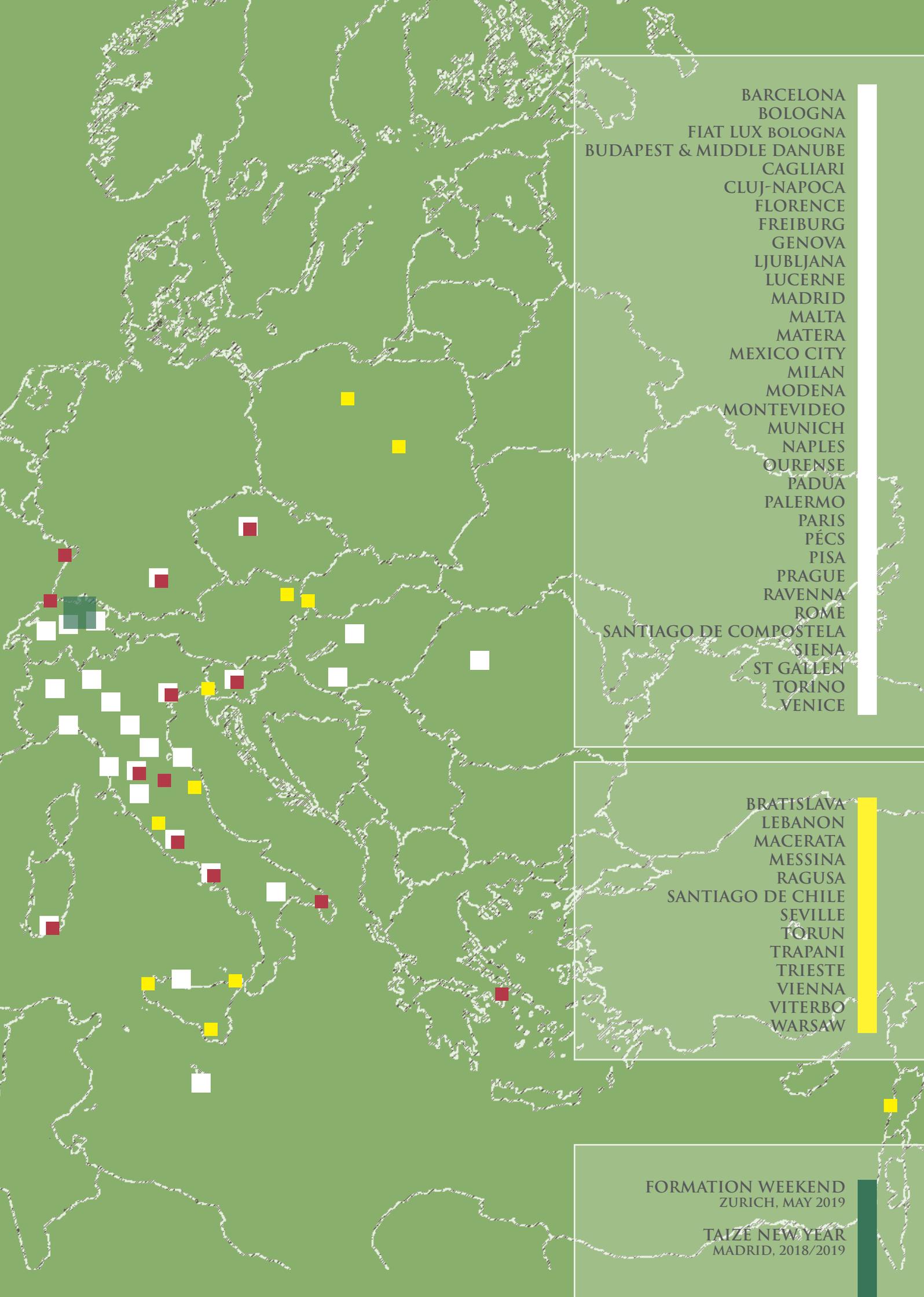
ROME, 2012/2013
STRASBOURG, 2013/2014
PRAGUE, 2014/2015
BASEL, 2017/2018

ACTIVE LS COMMUNITIES

POSSIBLE LS COMMUNITIES

LS CAMPS AND RETREATS

UPCOMING



BARCELONA
BOLOGNA
FIAT LUX BOLOGNA
BUDAPEST & MIDDLE DANUBE
CAGLIARI
CLUJ-NAPOCA
FLORENCE
FREIBURG
GENOVA
LJUBLJANA
LUCERNE
MADRID
MALTA
MATERA
MEXICO CITY
MILAN
MODENA
MONTEVIDEO
MUNICH
NAPLES
OURENSE
PADUA
PALERMO
PARIS
PÉCS
PISA
PRAGUE
RAVENNA
ROME
SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA
SIENA
ST GALLEN
TORINO
VENICE

BRATISLAVA
LEBANON
MACERATA
MESSINA
RAGUSA
SANTIAGO DE CHILE
SEVILLE
TORUN
TRAPANI
TRIESTE
VIENNA
VITERBO
WARSAW

FORMATION WEEKEND
ZURICH, MAY 2019
TAIZE NEW YEAR
MADRID, 2018/2019



PIETRE VIVE
LIVING STONES

“

If a pagan were to come and tell you:
‘Show me your faith’, take him inside the church
and show him the decorations which adorn it,
and explain to him the series of paintings.

ST JOHN OF DAMASCUS
(8TH CENTURY)

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