



LIVING STONES

# “follow me”

**Pathways of vocation for living stones**

**(spiritual program 2021/2022)**

## 2019/2020

### “Art, Violence and Religion”

an aid for a pathway of prayer in “Living Stones”



**towards Malta**  
**April 30<sup>th</sup> - May 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
**2020**

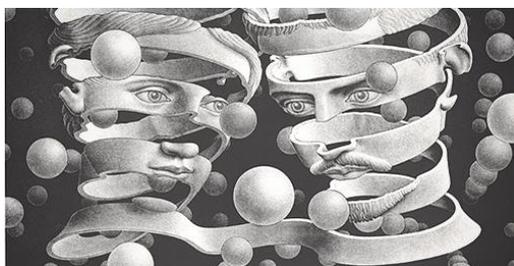


PIETRE VIVE  
LIVING STONES

## 2020/2021

### Who am I? Faith, art and identity

The spiritual pathway for Living Stones in 2020/2021



LIVING STONES

*The theme of the year 2021/22 (“Vocation”) was chosen by the 7 “columns” of the international LS network: Dan (Cluj), Giulia (Malta), Jean-Paul (Naples), Marco (Zurich-Luzern), Maura (Cagliari), Valentina (Rome), and Maripa (Madrid) -now replaced by Almudena (Paris). The decision was taken after sharing and praying on the basis of the many feedbacks given by coordinators and other LS.*

*This booklet was made by the collaboration of: Gudrun Nassauer (Munich – Fribourg), Ricardo Sanjurjo (Santiago), Caterina Bruno (Naples), Maripaz Agudo (Madrid), Valentina Cammarota (Rome), Michael Debono SJ (Malta), Gianfranco Matarazzo SJ (Naples).*

*We thank also Barbara Haefele aux. (Luzern), Andreas Schalbetter SJ (Basel) and Stefano Titta SJ (Pisa).*

## What is “vocation”?

The word “vocation” comes from Latin “vocare”, which means “to call”. It implies a relationship, a meeting between two or more persons. It is possible to speak about “vocation” only in the frame of a profound relationship with God. The vocation is the fulfillment of the encounter with God. Vocation is not a lonely way of self-perfection, nor a lonely exploration in a wide empty space of possibilities, but it’s to take seriously the relationship with God, it’s to celebrate with joy the encounter with Him.

When we speak about “vocation” we sometimes are anxious about the response we think we should give to the call. But the answer is not properly the call. The first part of the process is the call itself, before any answer. To “discern our vocation” demands first of all to take time to listen the many ways God spoke to me in my life. I do not need to give already now an answer. It’s better if my heart is now free of any anxiety of solution. It’s important to deeply enjoy the Words God offered me in my life. It can be through several experiences, or feelings, or inner thoughts, or human words that touched me, or words of the Bible.

It’s important to discover that the life itself is a Word of God. The Bible narrates the Creation as a fruit of the Word, but also as the first “Word” which was given to its inhabitants. The creation already narrates the Love of God for the human being. This narration continues with what our body tells us, our feelings, experiences, our personal history. God is speaking and calling in our life. That’s why doing memory of one’s own life is the best start to discern a vocation.

We will discover in this memory that the Bible contemplates a unique vocation for every human being: to be son/daughter of God. But since the human being was already created as son/daughter of God, the unique vocation is to discover ourselves, to understand who we are: children of God. And understanding it, to be it more and more, with gratitude. The Bible helps us to understand that as sons/daughters of God we are called to take care of our common house, the earth. As sons/daughters of the same God we are called to recognize the others as brothers and sisters. And we are called to be fruitful and “creative”. In other terms: to carry on the process of Creation. We are called to be, as good sons/daughters, the presence of the Creator, in biblical terms: “His image”. All these “calls” are part of the unique call to be “a human being”.

The Bible explains how God called a people, Israel, to let all the peoples understand what does it mean to be called, to have a special relationship with God, to be “saint”, to be “a human being”. Israel has the very specific “vocation” to reveal to the other nations their own identity, to reveal to the other people that they also are children of God, chosen people, beloved children. The choice of Israel makes it a mirror of the whole human kind. Israel receives the promise from God, that at the end of the times every people will celebrate together with Israel. That means: every people will be called in the same vocation of Israel, which is to discover to be son of God. Israel has the vocation to help every people in this long process, but even if Israel doesn’t succeed in that task, God will fulfill this promise at the end of the times.

According to the New Testament, the end of the times happened already. The End of the times is Jesus Christ. In Him, every human being, Jew or pagan, is the most beloved son of God. And the vocation of every human being consists in being part of the Body of Christ. In other terms: to share His destiny, to “remain” in Him, to follow him. That’s why the walking rabbi of Nazareth doesn’t teach a doctrine, a theory, or a rule (as the other rabbis used to do), but just say: “follow me”. The only teaching is Himself.

In Jesus Christ every human being contemplates his/her own vocation. With both sides of the process of vocation: in Christ every human being can listen to the call of God because Jesus Christ is the calling Word of God, and in Christ there is the human answer to the divine call, because Jesus is the “son of man”, that means the man himself, the fulfilled man. There is no other vocation in the Bible, no other goal in the human life. All the other life decisions are just means or ways to reach this goal.

Similar to the Old Testament promise that all the peoples will join Israel at the end of the History, there is the New Testament promise that every human being will join the Body of Christ in the fulfillment. The historical vocation of the Church is then to help the others to join the Body of Christ (we say: to “build” the Body of Christ”). Church is itself “vocation”, since it’s this very call into the Body of Christ. It’s not a case if “EKKLESIA” (Greek for “Church”) means “the assembly of those who are called”, the “con-vocation”.

Every believer “builds” the Church “offering” himself to God, and offering all he is entrusted of. To describe that, the Church speaks about “common priesthood”. We are all “priests” in this deep and biblical sense of offering the world back to the Creator in the unique offering Christ does of His life. In this offering we “edify” the Body of Christ, we “transfigure” the world. But if we do not succeed completely, Christ himself will fill what is missing, becoming “all in all” in the fulfillment.

We shall then be very prudent when we use the term “vocation”. To become a sister, a priest, or to get married, is not strictly speaking a “vocation”, but it’s just a way to better enjoy the only vocation: to follow Christ, to give one’s best, to give all, to love. Life is like having a day free to be spent with your best friend. You chat with him and after a couple of WhatsApp messages, you decide together where to go together and what to do together. Where could be have a deeper experience together? where could we communicate in a more intimate way? At the seaside? On the mountains? In a museum? The most important thing is not the museum, the mountains or the beach, but the most important thing of the day is that you are together with Him. The rest is an instrument to be better with Him. And no instrument is perfect. On the mountains after a while, you will perhaps think that a better choice was the museum or the mountains. But do not change going suddenly to the beach or to the museum! Otherwise, you will miss the top and, in any case, you will be late on the beach or you will find the museum closed! In every life choice God will be with you. Do not be afraid of being wrong. The fear blocks you and makes it difficult to make a choice. Our life is only one day. One day with the Lord, our best friend. The only mistake could be to lose the whole day on the WhatsApp chat discussing where to go, and “leaving open all the possibilities” you never enter in the live.

To “decide” has the Latin root “caedere”, which means “to cut”. Every decision means to cut away which you didn’t choose. Every choice is the death of all the other possibilities you had. Every choice has the terrible appearance of wasting yourself. That’s why every choice has the structure of Passion and Resurrection. Every process of vocation passes through a death and a Resurrection. You will dye to your past life and to the large spectrum of possibilities, but precisely “dying” like that you give the life, you give the best of yourself, you love, you are yourself. It’s true that the only goal is to follow Jesus and the other levels are just means, but if you do not choose a precise mean you will never follow Jesus, because you will never give your life. The decision in a vocational process is the final seal that makes true the whole process. And what you do not choose, will come back to you in terms of fecundity of your choice, in terms of colorful characteristics of the main way you chose.

In a vocational process, or better speaking, in the process where we will choose the instrument to follow Jesus, we have two poles in dialogue: inner pole and external pole. The inner pole corresponds to the process of our whole life. Remembering “where my heart was burning in the way” I can have a feeling of which option will facilitate the most the expression of my love for Christ. Which option will

lead me to give the best of myself. In which life perspective do I feel the higher “consolation”, the strongest adherence to my deepest desire, the nicest unification process of my different parts.

On the other hand, I cannot ignore the objective needs of the Church and of the world: that’s the “external pole”. In a Christian perspective every vocation has the goal of “building the Body of Christ”. Even more: for Saint Paul, no personal gift (or “charism”) comes from God if it doesn’t contribute to “edify” the Church. The vocation is not an individualistic process, but a personal process which has the whole community in front of the eyes. The Lord is calling through the needs, the lacks and the wounds of the Church. Far beyond what you consider your own self-realization. Do not feel so important for yourself! Ask for the grace to love the faith of others and the fulfillment of the Church more than your own fulfillment. You will discover that your own fulfillment is much greater than you thought. You will discover that God himself will lead you to a fulfillment which is yours and at the same time is a surprise given by Him.

The inner freedom is to be available to go there where the need is more urgent. The vocational question is then: what need strikes (or even shocks) me the most? What Saint Ignatius asks to the Jesuits being available to go everywhere according to the needs, do say something about the vocational process of every believer: be the answer to the problems you are complaining!

Living Stones was born to attempt an answer to a problem which is today more and more dramatic in the Western World: lack of faith, lack of knowledge about Christ, misuse of churches. What is missing today in your LS community? What is missing today in your Church and around yourself? Listen.



Fresco in San Climent de Taull,  
Catalonia, Spain (XII cent.)

“Living Stones” is a pathway of formation in faith. The community meetings alternate between intellectual and spiritual formation.

INTELLECTUAL FORMATION consists in moments of common study according to a pathway which is articulated in three years: 1. basic theology, 2. basic symbolism, 3. the study of the own church. Every year includes about 15 units and every unit has its own podcast and bibliography. In the “seminar method”, each member of the group studies and reports to the other members important basic works for the comprehension of the faith and of its expression in sacred art. The experience is that of a “community studying together” so as to be more and more able to “help the souls” (this was the motivation of Saint Ignatius for his study and for the long years of study undertaken by the Jesuits).

SPIRITUAL FORMATION consists of a common meditation of the Word of God, using the Ignatian method outlined below. The group gathers in an atmosphere of prayer. One member of the group comments on the biblical text. And then the group disperses in silence for personal meditation for 30 to 60 minutes. Following personal reflection, the group gathers again to share the fruit of the prayer; a time also to share what’s going on in our life and the indications given by the Spirit before, during and after the “Living Stones” service. The intimacy of sharing our personal faith builds up the communion of the group.

#### How to use this booklet

This booklet contains 30 commented biblical texts. They are selected to form a precise spiritual pathway around the topic “vocation”. This is the theme “Living Stones” international network chose for the year 2021/22. It will be the theme of the international Living Stones formation meeting in Lisbon (April 29<sup>th</sup> – May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022).

Each text can be used for a prayer meeting of Living Stones. The commentary is not to be given as such to the whole group, but is aimed to help during the personal preparation of the one who will give the points of meditation to the group. The points cannot be these commentaries but the fruit of the prayer and reflection of the one who will lead the common meditation.

The order of the texts is to be respected. But since most of the groups will not be able to have 30 prayer meetings in the year, the coordinator or the spiritual assistant chooses which texts have to be considered and which texts can be skipped.

### The Ignatian method of biblical meditation

Each text is meant to be meditated according to the method of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, which can be summarised in the following steps:

0. Choose a precise time (30? 45? 60 minutes?) and a precise place.
1. **PRESENCE.** Come in the presence of the Lord, thinking about His gaze – with how much love He is looking at you in this very moment, and asking for the gift of concentration. Then, ask for the proposed “grace” with your own words (in a short sentence which you can repeat during the meditation), according to each different text (for instance: “Lord, give me light on my vocation”, or “Lord, give me to be grateful of how I am”).
2. **MEDITATION.** Read the text several times and stop where some word moves you. Put this “living word” in touch with your memory, with your understanding, with your desires.
3. **CONVERSATION.** Speak with the Lord “like a friend speaks with his own friend”.

**NB:** do not write during the time of prayer. But afterwards, it helps to take 5 more minutes to remember what happened during the prayer and to write down some important words that touched me, or some new feelings or thoughts.

### What does “Ignatian” mean?

Living Stones is an Ignatian network and it is part in several countries of the apostolate of the Society of Jesus. The spiritual source of the Living Stones are the Ignatian “Spiritual Exercises”. Their presence is evident in every aspect of the “style” of the Living Stones.

The spiritual assistant of the group can belong to another spirituality, but it is important that the group get invited to do regularly the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.

Here a short sketch of some characteristics of the Ignatian approach:

- Personal love and fascination for Jesus Christ (not as an idea, nor as a list of values, but as a person). In each thing to have as goal the “defense and propagation of faith”.
- Love for boldness and radicality. Desire to go where nobody else wants to go. Attraction for the most difficult missions.
- Preference to encounter those who are the most far away from Gospel and Church, to announce them Jesus Christ.
- Positive vision of the humanity. Capacity to recognize the Spirit already at work in each human being in each culture. Preference for the “heart of the city”.
- Capacity to “listen to the events and to the experience”. Habit to reflect and make memory to listen the “voice of God” in the own history.
- Capacity to distinguish the things and thoughts coming from God and those coming from evil: “discernment”.

- **Courage to confess one’s own limitations and to consider oneself as a “pilgrim” who is not yet “arrived” and who will never have understood all things. Pope Francis speaks of the Ignatian “uncomplete thought”.**
- **Importance of the intellectual work, to be able to put together “head and heart” and to better help other people to encounter the Lord.**
- **Capacity of listening and consoling people.**
- **Love to put in touch the richest and the poorest. Love for the poorest as “best friends of the Eternal King”.**
- **Love for the Church with the desire to renew it constantly, in the light of the Gospel and of the experience of the first communities.**



**Decoration with the Name of Jesus (IHS) in “Il Gesù” church, Rome (XVII**

1. Called to Life... and to so much more (Genesis 1,26-2,3)

Grace: *To discover that I was created for so much more than “just living”.*

Points for meditation

- i. The Word of God is performative, that is, it has the capacity to accomplish what it says. This is an invitation to an active and trusting listening to the Word, which shows me the way to achieve God's dream for me. It is not about what I want or think I am, but about letting myself be shaped by the word. Do I show resistance to letting myself be shaped by Him?
- ii. Unlike other creatures, human beings are called to do much more than exist: they are called to grow, to multiply and to dominate creation. In other words, they are called and gifted to continue God's creative work and to care for it. To be God's "image and likeness" means not to overlook this responsibility. Do I?
- iii. I often feel small and unworthy. Throughout the Creation story the words "God saw that it was good" are repeated like a refrain. After creating the human being, the refrain is modified: "God saw that it was VERY good" (v. 31). Humanity is the icing on the cake of creation. The goodness and beauty of creation are summed up in them and subdued for them. Do I live my life as this great gift that God has given me?

Tapestry of the Creation,  
Girona, Spain  
(XII cent.)



## 2. You are not alone (Genesis 2,15-25)

**Grace:** *To discover that the calling is not an individual one but collective.*

### Points for meditation

- i. Loneliness is one of the great dramas of our time. We try to fight it in many ways, as if to anaesthetize this emptiness, but we are only able to overcome it when we meet someone who is like me. “Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones.” Where do I seek refuge from my loneliness?
- ii. In the story, the woman is created from the man. This is an image that we are called to complete each other. Only in relationship are we able to complete our call to be like God, to create new life. Am I able to put my gifts at the service of this collective response to God's call?
- iii. The last sentence of the story presents us with the man and woman naked and unashamed. It is a sign of the harmony of the perfect relationship, where there is nothing to hide. When they sin, they will cover those parts that say the most about the relationship. What barriers do I put up to relationships with others?

**WILIGELMO,**  
Reliefs on the  
façade of the  
cathedral of  
Modena – Italy



**3. Go away from your land (Gn 12,1-8)**

The Pilgrim's Grace: *to know how to nourish myself with the fruits of the earth on a never-ending journey*

Points:

1) Our relationship with the earth is vital. Our journey is marked by relationships with particular places. Which ones are the most significant? Are they geographical or existential spaces? How would I describe them?

2) How do I reread the various "lands" I came out of? How do I understand this today? Why is it decisive to "go out" towards a promised land, an overwhelming line of descendants, being a blessing? What was the inner experience that inspired and accompanied me in these transitions? Was it a mysterious call to "go out" that made use of the events of life? Who addressed this call to me?

3) Which is the earth I live on today? What is my relationship with it? Do I feel that I have acquired that depth of faith and that freedom which makes me enjoy it deeply and that will help me understand when to go beyond it? Which is the ultimate goal of this "going out"?

**4. Beyond your wildest dreams (Gn 15,1-21)**

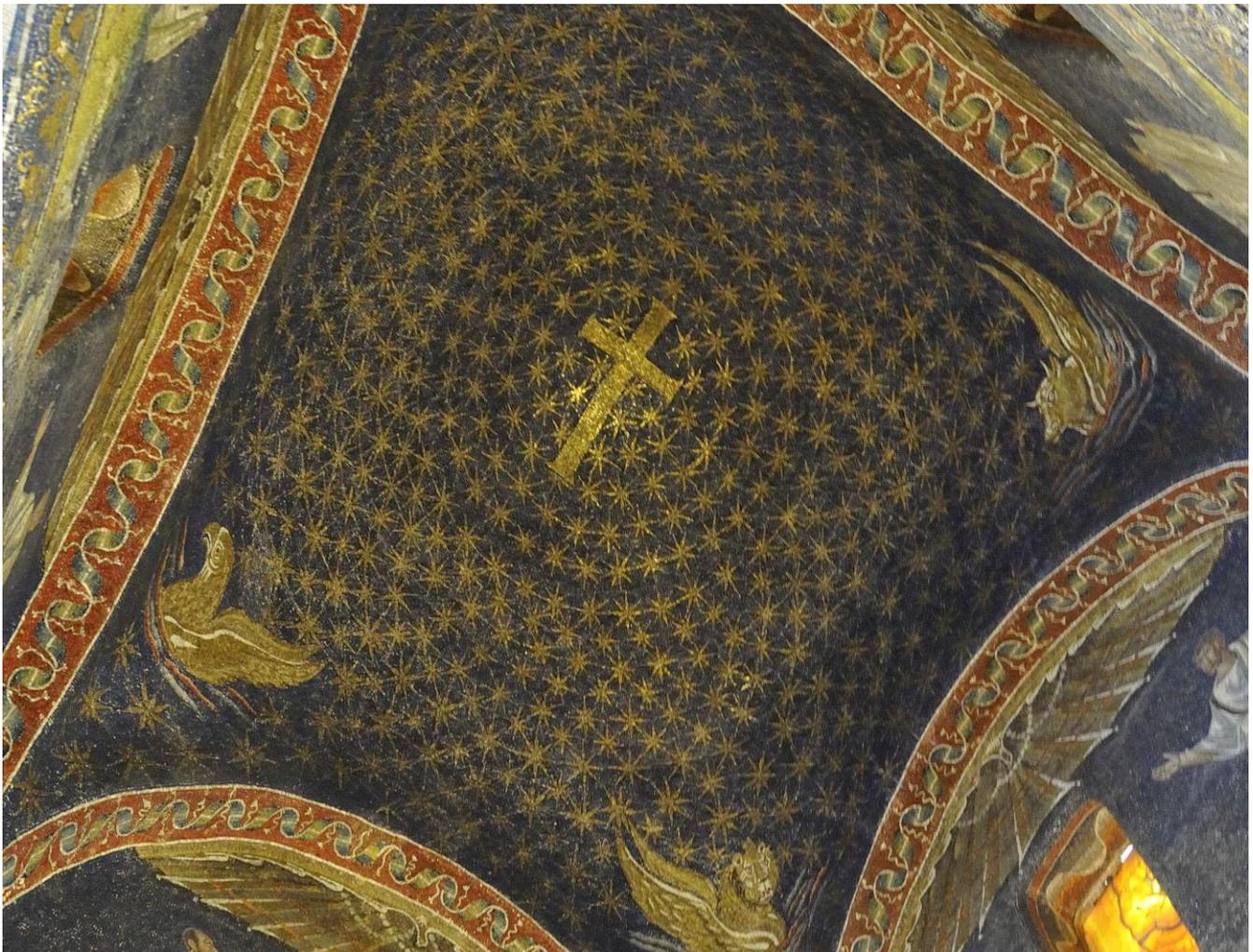
Grace: *To dare to dream the dreams of God*

Points for meditation

- i. One of the possible etymologies of desire comes from "sidus, sideris", Latin for star. Since the dawn of time, contemplating the stars has fuelled our imagination, our fantasy... our projects. There too, God reveals himself to us. What are the deepest desires of your heart?
- ii. However, our dreams often seem impossible and we despair. We set projects "at ground level" because we are afraid of disappointing our own expectations. We distrust anything that sounds "too big" for us. But the Lord wants something for us that's even bigger than our wildest dreams. Abram does not distrust the Lord. Even though everything seemed

otherwise, “hoping against hope” (Rom 4,18) he put his trust in God. How do I deal with my limits? Do I let them frustrate my ability to dream big? To dream the dreams of God?

iii. The Lord's promises are not automatic. They do not come by magic. Even though the Lord makes a promise to Abram, he still has a long way to go for it to come true: four hundred years of slavery. But the people will possess the promised land. Am I able to maintain hope despite the obstacles in my way?



Dome mosaic of the mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna – Italy (end of IVth cent.)

5. Speak, for your servant is listening (1Sam 3,1-10)

Grace: *to get to know God personally, without fearing Him (even if I may need other's help!)*

Points

- The text commences by presenting us a dire situation: the word of the Lord was rare, visions were infrequent, and the priest Eli, is almost blind. Sometimes we too may find ourselves in situations where everything seems to be lost. But there is a symbol of hope: the lamp of the Lord is not yet extinguished, and there is a young Samuel who serves God and is close to his ark (which was considered to be a visible sign of God's presence).
- And yet, Samuel does not recognise that it is God who is calling him..not just once or twice but three times! The text informs us readers that Samuel had not yet known God, nor his word. Maybe even I feel that I have not yet known God. Do I wish to know Him? St. Ignatius suggests us to get to know the Word incarnate, Jesus, to be able to serve Him and follow Him more closely (Spiritual Exercises, n. 130)
- But this sometimes can only be achieved with the help of others. The old Eli, although he does not hear the voice, recognises that it must have been God calling Samuel and suggests to him what he should say. Who or what can help me recognise God's presence in my life and to meet Him?
- God now comes, stands there, and calls Samuel again. Samuel finally answers, but not with the exact words that Eli had suggested. How come? Did he maybe not trust his guide fully? Or maybe he was afraid to call God by his name. What would have I said had I been in Samuel's place? God invites me to not fear Him and enter into a personal relationship with Him, where I can call Him by name and listen to Him.

6. Nothing is impossible for God (Lk 1,26-35)

Grace: *to give “flesh” to the Word of God*

Points:

- The “vocation” of Mary is the best model of our vocation, because it is the vocation of the whole Church: to give flesh to the Word. That means: to “translate” the Word we hear in concrete decisions, which allow this Word to be “given to the world”.

- This “short history of Mary’s vocation” is not so easy as it seems. Mary experiences fear, incomprehension, astonishment. But she expresses her resistances and begins in this way a dialogue with the Angel.
- The dialogue with the Angel is the best image of our (sometimes difficult) dialogue with the Word of God and its messengers. That’s why the Christian iconography represents sometimes the Annunciation with Mary “reading the Scriptures”.
- The Angel is taking in account with patience her fears and doubts and transmits a “consolation” (do not be afraid, the Lord is with you, nothing is impossible with God). Part of this consolation is the memory of what God already did in Mary’s family (concretely in Elisabeth). The best way to obtain trust for a decision is to remember what God already made in our history. Our vocation begins with our memory.



“Anuntiation”, Fresco of the Priscilla catacomb, Rome (first half of the III rd cent.)

## 7. My beloved son (Mt 3,13-17)

Grace: *to discover how God calls us “beloved son”*

Points:

- Being immersed in the Jordan, Jesus fulfills the history of Israel which came back from exile and passed through the Jordan to join again the promised Land. Jesus fulfills even first the whole history of Exodus, since Moses couldn't go through the Jordan and died just before the people entered in the promised land. That's why Jesus “begins” where Moses “ended”. He “continues” the task of Moses and fulfills it. Jesus is the new “Joshua” (in Hebrew the same name). Going through the Jordan he fulfills Israel, but he fulfills also every human being. In Jesus we see the “vocation” of every human being. Each one of us was created to become like Jesus, to share the “destiny” of Jesus. Jesus inaugurates his public life “passing the Jordan”, that means: bringing each one of us to the promised land. He “is” our entrance in the promised land, our “entrance” into “being ourselves”, our fulfillment, in other words: our “vocation”.
- The first Christians recognized in that episode of the Baptism of Jesus their own baptism. Like Jesus, they are “entering in the promised Land” when they are baptized, that means: they rediscover their own land as a “promised land”, as the main gift of God, as “sacrament” of His presence. And that is possible because they recognize themselves as “beloved sons”, they recognize themselves as those who are “a pleasure for God”. And this awareness is possible because they receive the Holy Spirit, as Jesus receives it in this episode. The same relationship which links the Father to Christ, links now the baptized to God. Vocation means then: awareness to be called by God “beloved son”, and awareness to live in a space (a “land”) which is a gift of God. Vocation means to be called to live like a beloved child on a given earth. There is only one vocation in the Bible: to be more and more “son/daughter of God”, to be “like Jesus”.



The baptism (of Christ? of a Christian?) between Moses getting water in the desert and the healing in the pool of Betesda (all baptismal scenes), Catacombs of San Callisto, Rome (III rd cent.)

8. It was 4 pm (Jh 1 ,35-39)

Grace to ask for : *Lord, give me a heart that seeks you with sincerity.*

Points to reflect on:

- 1.- “Rabbi!” - just a call, just a word that expresses everything: a desire, a need, a search... And as soon as Jesus hears that word, he turns and asks straight to the heart: “What are you looking for?” Remain in this scene, listening to you calling him, listening to him asking you “what are you looking for?”
- 2.- “Rabbi, where do you dwell?” It’s not simply curiosity but the deep desire to remain with him, to stay with him, to encounter him, to live with him. “Come and see” it’s the personal invitation that Jesus makes to us every day. The "place" where Jesus is, where God comes into our lives, cannot be known by mere information, but by personal experience.
- 3.- “It was about the tenth hour” The experience was so powerful for the disciples, that they left a record of the hour. From that moment their lives changed completely. Remember the moments and people who have been decisive in your following of the Lord.

9. Immediately they left their nets (Mk 1,16-20)

Grace: *to listen the call of Jesus and to leave all for Him*

Points:

- Jesus doesn’t call in the synagogue or in the Temple but midst in the work.
- He calls also using the human relationships and natural bounds, like the relatives. But he calls then to be able to relativize these relationships and our work. Only one has to be followed: Jesus. The only vocation in the Bible is to follow Jesus. Afterwards, in a second step each one will understand the mean he/she will choose in order to better follow Jesus (marriage or consecrated life? which profession or way of life?).
- “Fishers of men” means being able to “save people from water”. It’s an old Jewish image used by the prophets to indicate the work of those who helped Isarel to come back out of the exile. Jesus is the return from exile and allows us to “do His job”

with Him, to “collaborate to His mission of salvation”. This is the unique vocation: in our context, to be part of the mission of Jesus.



The call of the first apostles, Altar relief, Museu Marès, Barcelona (XIIth cent.)

10. He rose and followed him (Mk 2,13-14)

Grace: *to stand up and follow Him*

Points:

- Levi (Matthew) was a tax collector, which means the most hated category among the population of Israel. They are Jews that oppress other Jews. So, they are betrayers. They can have a lot of power, but they are absolutely isolated, totally alone. Every meeting he has, is a meeting with a debt, a number, not with a person. This loneliness became probably unbearable. This man didn't know how to get off his own train of life. He could think at this point to be “condemned” to continue til his death this violent and lonely life. That's why he immediately answered as soon as Jesus gave him the occasion. It is the quickest call of the whole Bible.
- The context of the landscape recalls the Creation (the shore is the separation between dry and water). The vocation is a new creation. That's why we have in v. 14 a sequence of words that recalls the narrative of the Creation. A verb in imperative form (follow me) is followed by the same verb in the indicative form (he followed him), like “let there be light and there was light” (Gn 1,3).
- But in the call of Levi, between the two forms of the verb “to follow”, Mark introduces the verb “to rise”, which is the verb of the Resurrection. This is to be linked to the first verb of the same verse: “he passed by”. It's the verb of the “Passion”. That means: this episode is also a history of Passion and Resurrection. The Passion of Jesus allows the Resurrection of Levi. The vocation is to be taken in the process of death and Resurrection of Jesus. To answer to the call of Christ is to be risen again, together with the one who died (passed) for us.



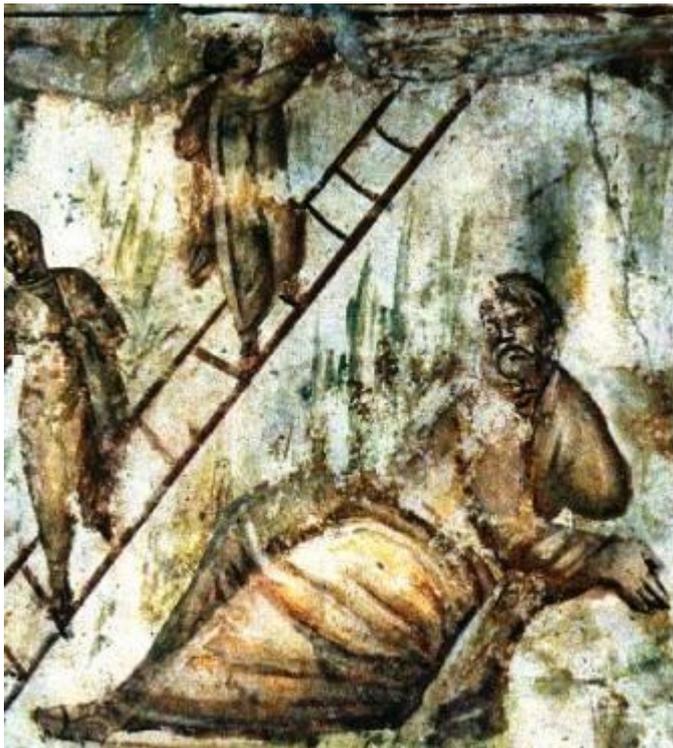
CARAVAGGIO, Draft for Cappella Contarelli, The call of Matthew (1599)

11. I will be with you (Genesis 28,10-22)

**Grace:** *To discover the presence of the Lord in the way that I walk*

**Points for meditation**

- i. Jacob is leaving the house of his father (Isaac) in order to be married and start “his adult life”. He is the heir of the promise and the land but first he has to leave his home. To progress into our adult lives, we too have to leave our parents’ side, our places of comfort and growth. Does that scare me?
- ii. In his dream, he receives the same oracle as his grandfather Abraham once did. But first, he is invited to remember the presence of the Lord in his family history. The future of Jacob and the people takes root in his past, in his history, but it’s always oriented to the future like a springboard. Do I let my past entrap me? Am I running from my own past?
- iii. The stair of Jacob’s dream connects Heaven and Earth. It’s a symbol of the presence of God that walks with the humans. But also of the blessings that come from Heaven to help in his mission. I am never alone in my path to follow God’s calling, a path that may scare me. Do I feel his presence along the way?
- iv. The ladder is also the sign of where God dwells. Bethel means literally the House of God in Hebrew. Jesus will take up this prophecy (Jn 1,50-51) and say that he is the place where God dwells. By extension, we too, as members of the Body of Christ, are that place. That means that also my path through life must/should be a sign of the path of God through the life of others. Does it?



Jacobs ladder, Fresco of the Catacombs of Via Latina, Rome (IIIrd cent.)

12. to gain the whole world? (Mk 8,34-38)

Grace: *to put the center of gravity of my heart in Jesus*

Points:

- To take up one's cross doesn't mean to take up the cross of Jesus but one's own cross. That means: the aspect of our life which we refuse, which we are ashamed of, which bleeds, which we would like not to take with us. But Jesus says precisely the opposite: to take with you your limits, your wounds, your sins: your cross. The cross is to be taken up with us in our encounter with Jesus.
- "Save his life". There are two possible mentalities in life: 1. To be worried about one self and to use the world out of fear for one's own defense; 2. To be free from this fear and to give all.
- V. 36 is the verse Ignatius of Loyola used to repeat to Francis Xavier when they were studying together in Paris. After several years the "inner fortress" of Xavier collapsed. He became later one of the boldest missionaries of the Church history.
- The highest freedom and the highest "freedom providing" activity is not to be ashamed of Him "in front of this generation".

13. He went away sorrowful (Mt 19,16-22)

Grace: *to learn from our sadness and dissatisfaction*

Points:

- The question of this rich man is the question we have all of us, the question about the deepest sense of our life. "What shall I do in order to have eternal life" means "what shall I do to have a full life", a life which do merit to be lived.
- In his question the rich man things that he has to "do things" in order to "buy" eternal life. But the Greek text uses the verb "to inherit", which suggests implicitly that we receive eternal life as inheritance, that means, as sons and daughters. We receive it not because of what we do but because of what we are.
- That's why Jesus quotes the commandments which were for Israel signs of being "sons of God". But the answer of the rich man shows that he understood these commandments as "things to do" (like in a n exam) and not as a filial relationship. That's why Jesus calls him to leave all, and to follow him. It's the strongest sign of

relationship we could imagine. The only “vocation” in the Bible is not about “things to do”, but is this very relationship.

- The rich man withdrew because he had a lot of goods. He was afraid of putting the relationship over the ownership. In the relationship you don't possess even yourself, but precisely in that moment you “are” yourself. That is the unique vocation. The rich man didn't take this decision, and the inner feed-back was sadness. This sadness is not a “curse” but a help of God to “come back” on that decision. The “desolations” are part of the language of God in our heart and have to be listen carefully. What leaves us empty? Unsatisfied? Why do we have sometimes the sensation to “have all”, and at the same time to miss a deepest sense of the things, a more profound life. There the Lord is calling. We can imagine that years after this episode, this rich man couldn't bear this sadness any more and came back to the disciples of Jesus. He then narrated them this encounter with Jesus, and that's why we have it now in our text.

14. Eat this scroll and go (Ez 2,8 – 3,7)
---

**Grace:** *to be nourished by the Word God will pronounce through myself*

**Points:**

- God calls a prophet not for his subjective self-fulfillment but because of an objective crisis in the people, an unfaithfulness, a missing of the Word of God among the Israelites. Vocation is always a dialogue between inner desire and external need of the community (Church, context,...).
- “Take the scroll and eat”. Vocation is the fruit of a long familiarity with the Word of God. To be called to announce the Word means first of all to leave the Word nourish and shape the heart, in other words: to “become Word”.
- The Word give words to our sorrows and fears (“lamentation, mourning and woe”). The Word creates an intimate space where the expression of our sufferings is possible and this sharing is “sweet like honey”. Only if the Word touches our wounds, our wounds become “Announcement” for others, hope for the wounded.



Marc CHAGALL, Ezechiele's calling, in  
"Etchings for the Bible", 1956

15. I send you to Pharaoh (Ex 3,1-12)

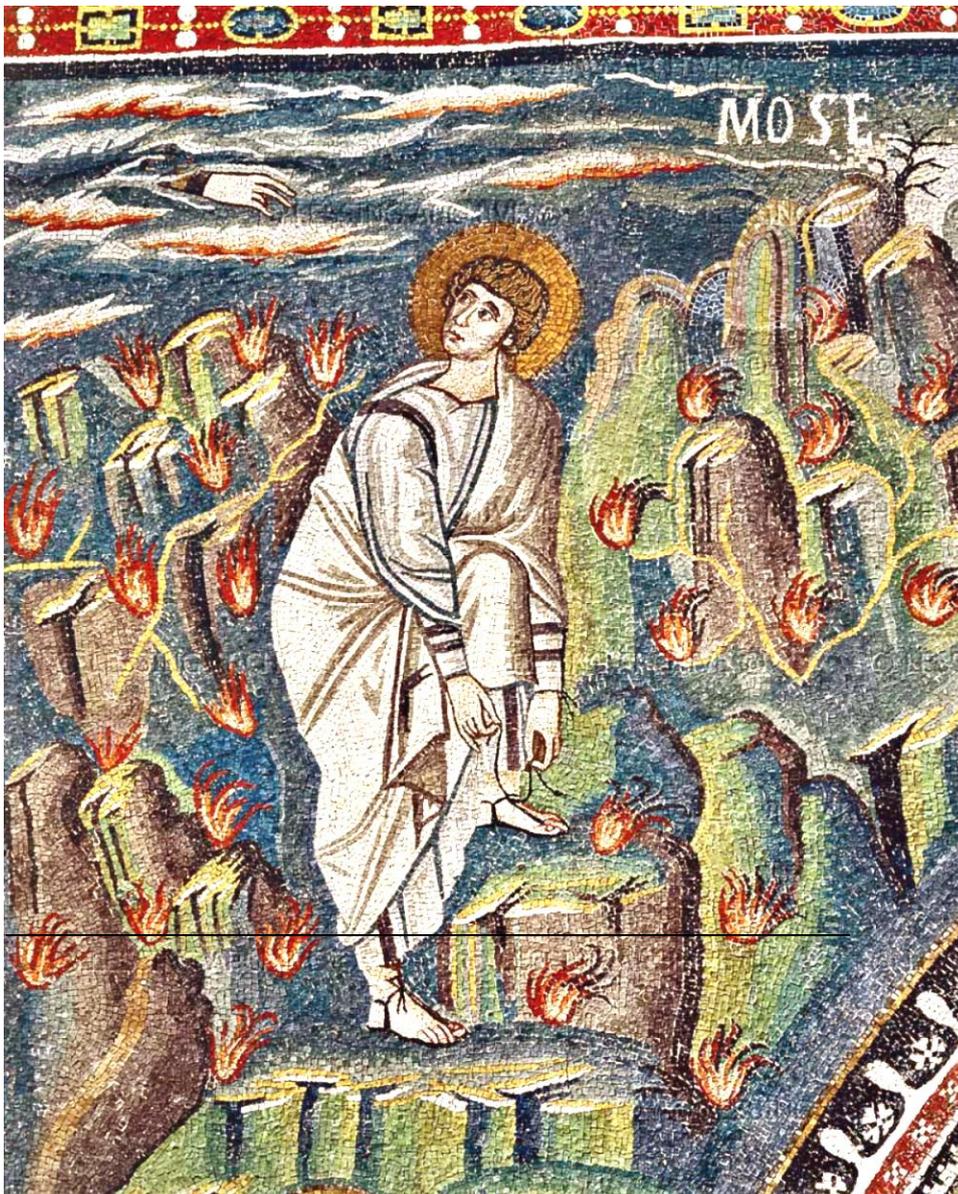
***Grace:*** *Inwardly feel God's invitation to go beyond the boundaries of my normal life to meet him. Contemplate Him as He looks at His people and shares in its suffering. To share with Him this regard and His commitment to His chosen people.*

**Points:**

- After having escaped from Egypt, Moses finds a temporary home in Midian. He settles into the temporary far from the people whose cause he had fought in Egypt. The temporary becomes the normal state over time. He finds himself a wife, a task, integrates himself into the new environment. He comes to terms with his situation - far from his original intention. The mysterious encounter with God in the burning bush comes to meet him in the midst of everyday life - and at the same time shatters everything temporary he had resigned himself to. Do I know moments, encounters, events in my daily life in which I could sense that something is happening that goes beyond my normal way of perceiving my reality? An encounter that invites me to take a step beyond my actual frame? That recalls something in me which I had already buried and invites me to give this original call in me new space?
- Moses experienced that following his inner call to "see the need of his people" would put him in mortal danger. His irascible nature had led him to slay an Egyptian. However, by this solitary action he was unable to end the suffering of his people. Worse still, he must flee Egypt to avoid suffering the same fate himself. In the encounter with Moses, God reveals himself as the one who is deeply suffering from the distress of his

people. But it is a gaze that is more, that goes deeper, than the gaze and reaction of Moses himself. In the encounter with the mystery of God - Moses is ordered to take off his sandals! - Moses is at first invited to look with God's gaze at the suffering of his people and to let him be transformed by sharing God's gaze. Uniting with this gaze cleanses Moses' own gaze, which is conditioned by its human limitations: the flaws of his character, his existential anxiety, his coming to terms with the harmlessness of the temporary.

- The promise that God will walk the path back to Egypt together with Moses and free his people is at the end of the encounter. It is the great promise of his presence into my fear, my despair in the face of my limitations and my pain about how much I still want to solve the suffering of my people in my own way even after the encounter with Him. God's promise is above all that - more than that, it is realized precisely in my limitations and fears, not elsewhere - God meets Moses in Midian, precisely where Moses had been taken by his own plans....



Moses and the  
“everywhere present”  
burning bush.

Mosaic in the basilica of  
San Vitale, Ravenna (VI  
cent.)

16. Gedeon's vocation (Jud 6,11-24)

**Grace:** *To perceive the crises, the blocks and fears, in my life, in society, in the Church,... as situations through which God is calling me.*

**Points:**

- When Gideon meets the angel of God, Israel is in a desperate situation: it is impoverished and in the grip of Midian. For Gideon, the suffering of the people calls God's attention into question. The experience of the liberation from Egypt is still remembered, but it is no longer present - the reality of the present overrides the trust in God's faithfulness and love for his people. Gideon places himself before the angel with his questions. He hides nothing of his doubts, his fear. This becomes the starting point of his calling.
- The call of the angel: Exactly YOU I send. triggers further questions in Gideon: My tribe is the poorest in Israel, and I am the youngest of my family. He points out his lack of skills. The angel's answer assures Gideon of God's presence: Because God is with him, he will triumph over Midian with ease. God turns the destiny of his people - by calling specific individuals....
- Gideon asks the angel for a visible sign, and the angel grants it to him. A contact occurs between Gideon and God that exceeds Gideon's capacity. He is afraid that he must die because the experience of God's presence overwhelms him. He sets up a monument to the experience he has had; a place where he and the whole people can remember that God is with them. Do I have the audacious courage to ask God for such an experience?

17. 'Why do you persecute me?' (Ac 9,1-19)

**Grace:** *through the obstacles and fear, makes me able, like Ananias, to go toward Saul.*

**Points:**

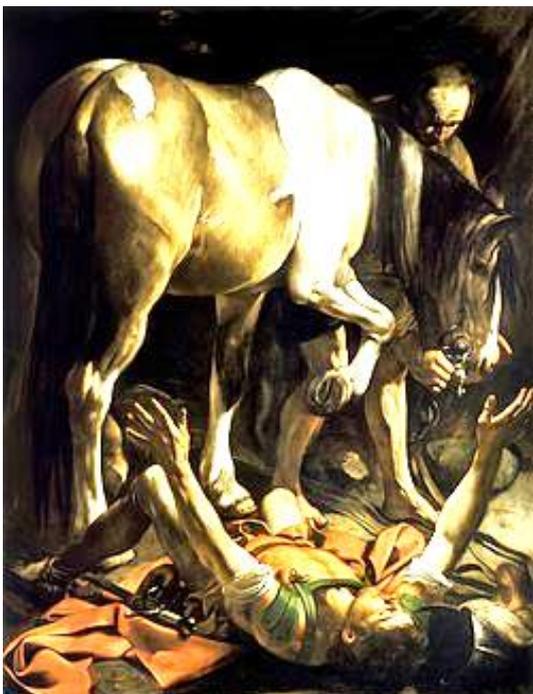
+ Saul's conversion is narrated three times in Acts: 9,1-19a; 22,5-16 (when Paul is going to Jerusalem); 26,9-18 (when Paolo is leaving for Rome), and told again in Gal. 1,12-17. It is Paul's fundamental memory and in Acts it is the place of understanding of Christianity.

+ Paul is the fruit of Stephen's martyrdom; he inherits Stephen's evangelizing force. In Acts 7 Paul is present at, and approves, the killing of Stephen. In Acts 8,3 it is written that Paul begins his work to destroy the Church. In the Greek text 'breathing out murderous threats' is actually expressed by the verb *empnéō* 'ἐμπνέω' = 'to inhale', Paul was living on murderous threats, out of zeal, to protect the religion of his fathers. He studied in the best schools and has been a disciple of Gamaliel, the founder of Judaism. Paul was living on his irreproachable observance of the law.

+ Christianity was called 'the Way' since it is not a doctrine, a moralism or a law, it is a journey, a way of life.

+ Acts 9,3-9 tells of the 'death and burial' of the 'old' Paul, for three days he did not see, ate, and drank. In this death Paul sees that Jesus is alive, he is not dead, the Crucified is not the one cursed by God, but the revelation of God's love for all. Paul sees that he does not see, the true light is knowing that he is blind.

+ In Acts 9,10-19 there is the birth of the new Paul, the Greek verb *anablépō* 'ἀναβλέπω' = 'to recover sight' also means 'to look up', it is the same verb used in Lk 7,22 'the blind receive sight' and in Lk 18,42-43 for the blind from Jericho. And there is the encounter with Ananias, the name Ananias means 'God is mercy'. Paul was the persecutor of the community and Ananias represents the community. As in the martyrdom of Stephen, the only one who can heal the persecutor is his victim. Paul sees how much he must suffer, now the work of Paul will be, like Jesus, the Passion for lost humanity.



CARAVAGGIO, The calling of St. Paul,  
Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome (1601)

**18. On Your word (Luke 5, 1-11)**

Grace to ask for: *Lord, may I hear your call and answer in the confidence that you are with me.*

Points to reflect on:

1.- The way in which this passage begins and ends is striking. It begins with Jesus, surrounded by a listening crowd, and ends with Jesus, but this time, accompanied by a few fishermen. Before the crowd in need, Jesus decides to call a small group of men to be his disciples, his companions on the road and on mission, collaborating with him in announcing the Good News of Salvation. Do I feel that Jesus is calling me to walk and share with Him the proclamation of the Gospel? What needs of the world in which I live, call me to set out?

2.- Imagine Jesus seeing the fishermen on the shore. He approaches them, takes the initiative to get into their boats and encourages them to row out to sea, to the deep, where the bottom cannot be seen, where it is scary to go. To what deep sea does the Lord invite me to sail? What are the fears that paralyze me? Do I feel that He is with me, that He is by my side, in the same boat that takes me out to sea?

3.- “Master, we have worked hard all night and we have not caught anything. But as you say, I will let go of the nets. ”Peter, gives us this confession of faith in Jesus that allows him to trust again, to try again, to overcome failure, his own experience .. In the moments when I have to take one decision, where do I put my trust?

**19. Come down! (Lk19, 1-10)**

Grace to ask for: *Lord, increase my desire to encounter you.*

Points to reflect on

1- What was inside Zacchaeus’ heart? Was it the desire to encounter Jesus, or simple curiosity to know this rabbi everyone was talking about? Whatever the reason, the crowd prevented Zacchaeus from seeing Him. What is my desire? What in my life is making it difficult to encounter the Lord?

2- Once again, Jesus takes the initiative. And calls Zacchaeus by his name. “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” Imagine the surprise, the perplexity, the hope of a man who knows he is on the sideline of his own people: Why,

among all others, he has chosen me? Am I not the most despicable among my people?  
Before the mistrust and suspicion of others, a reality imposes itself, sometimes uncomfortable: It's the Lord who calls and chooses. Also those who are out of our frames.  
Do I feel called to a personal encounter with Jesus, beyond my limits and shortcomings?  
3- Jesus and Zacchaeus met in the privacy of the house, away of the sight of others. What they talked about is not important; the key is that encountering Jesus changed the life of Zacchaeus, just as it has changed the life of so many men and women throughout History.  
How is my life changed by the encounter with Jesus?

20. A gentle whisper (1Kgs 19,9-18)
-------------------------------------

Grace: *to be able to recognize the gentle whisper that invites me out*

Points:

- God transforms Elijah's escape into a pilgrimage that brings him back across the desert to Mount Horeb, at the origin of the story of God's covenant with Israel, and therefore at his wound, at his deepest motivations now lost.
- "What am I doing here?" is the question that we are called to ask ourselves in the night, when discouragement inhabits us and we hide, we take refuge in the depths of this cave which is an image of the wound itself, and loophole, womb of the earth, a tomb from which to be reborn. The Lord invites us to go out and stop, it seems a contradiction, but it is only by going out of ourselves that it is possible to find ourselves again, standing by His presence.
- The wind, the earthquake, the fire, are powerful symbols, images of strength, of the God that Elijah thought he knew: on Mount Carmel He showed in fire. But it is in vulnerability that God reveals himself, in a gentle whisper in which Elijah recognizes his own fragility. Only after having learned to listen to the difference, to distinguish His voice, Elijah can surrender and trust, covering his face with that cloak which is God's tenderness. Like Moses, he no longer needs to see.
- Elijah goes out and the Lord asks him the same question a second time, calling him to existence by name. His answer does not change, but now he has the courage to pronounce it in His presence. Now he is ready to listen to what the Lord has to say to him, free from the fear of death, of living, which is to give life. The Lord invites him to retrace his steps, to resume the mission, to lend his voice to this whisper to let others experience God.

21. He cast his cloak upon him (1Kgs 19,19-21)

Grace: *to feel with what kind of cloak the Lord calls me to serve*

Points:

- Elisha (= God is my salvation) is working, he is plowing the soil, breaking it up and preparing it for sowing, a tough but necessary action. He is leading twelve pairs of oxen, from behind, the symbolic number stands for the twelve tribes of Israel, and in this image, we can already glimpse something of the mission of the prophet himself, called to prepare the soil of men's heart so that one can welcome the word of the Lord. The Lord calls us where we are, in the ordinary of our lives.
- The cloak represents the identity of a person, and Elijah, throwing the cloak on Elisha, somehow takes possession of him, acquires a right over him to have him at his service. This sudden gesture is in fact an investiture, a call to take Elijah's place.
- Elijah is not a slave to his role, to his authority, he performs this gesture with freedom without literally holding back anything of himself, he simply "passes" and throws his cloak on Elisha, without stopping, without saying a word or turning around, leaving Elisha the freedom to decide what to do, whether to follow him or not. Elisha's response is immediate, he runs after him, but first asks to take leave of his affections.
- This farewell turns into a symbolic offering of himself, of the tools of his job, of everything that bound him to his old life, in the image of the yoke in the fire that purifies and prepares the meat. This sacrifice, this form of sanctifying oneself, is a break with the past but also a sign of communion, he celebrates the beginning of his call with a banquet for others, giving everything to become nourishment *for others* himself.

22. To be with Him and to be sent (Mk 3,13-19)

Grace: *to feel and understand that I'm called by name, in order to be with Him, and in order to be sent.*

Points:

- “Mountain” recalls Mount Sinai, i.e. the mount of the Covenant. The call of the apostles is a “new covenant” that fulfills and renews the covenant with Israel. But the mountain recalls also the mount Golgotha. Every vocation is a participation on the Passion and self-giving of Christ.
- The task of those who are called seems articulated in two steps: being with him and being sent. Only the first step allows the second one. Nothing can be done in the Church and in our communities if we are not “with him”. Actually, the second step is a deeper way to enjoy the first step. There is no stronger way to be in communion (to be together) than the radical trust of the sending. The sending (Lat. “missio”) brings together the maximum of distance and the maximum of communion.
- The “missio” of Christ they share is actually to cast out demons. They can do it because they “are with Christ”.
- The text enumerates the apostles by name. The meaning is: Jesus knows them profoundly, in their deepest identity. “Vocation” means that our name is pronounced by Jesus, our identity is embraced and pronounced by Him. Vocation means to become something that Jesus pronounces.



Beato ANGELICO,  
Jesus and the  
apostles, San  
Marco, Florence  
(1438-1446)

23. Send me (Is 6)

Grace: *to let the Lord touch me to be sent for others*

Points:

- Isaiah sees God with his eyes, lives an experience of profound intimacy with Him but terrible at the same time. Terrible because discovering the radical otherness of God, discovering that He is thrice holy (in Hebrew kadosh = separate) and being able to see Him reveals to Isaiah his dignity but also all his misery. He finds himself lost, and with him all the people he belongs to.
- The prophet is the mouth of God, and God purifies Isaiah by touching his mouth, with this intimate contact, which is a kiss, He purifies his capacity for expression. Children put everything in their mouths to experience it, in the same way God purifies his way of knowing, with burning love He gives him back his purity and opens him to others.
- This experience shows Isaiah his truth, he is a rescued sinner. Thus, Isaiah can first fully say "here I am" and immediately "send me!" because that love overflows and cannot help but communicating itself to others. This encounter does not result in a sterile intimism but pushes Isaiah to come out because he has to be sent, to pronounce with his life the Name of God which is like a fire that burns the lips, making Him present.
- The Lord does not hide the difficulty of the mission, Isaiah is sent to cold and closed people, to prepare them for the trials that await them, so that only a log will remain in them, a symbol of humble fidelity, well rooted in the Holy One of Israel, in YHWH, for a new life in Him.

24. Do not say "I'm young" (Jer 1,4-10)

Grace: *to do not be afraid to lend my voice to the Lord*

Points:

- Jeremiah lives in Israel's most tragic period, the Lord calls him to a very hard mission that sees him herald and witness of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, in 586 BC, and of the traumatic experience of the exile. At the beginning, the prophet recalls how the Lord called him, wanted him and consecrated him, which means

to be set aside, chosen all along to be at His service. With firmness and tenderness, the initiative is always of God.

- In front of God one feels inadequate, Jeremiah is very young, he defends himself, says he's not good at talking, but he trusts His Word, and this Word reassures him and then physically enters his life. There is nothing more intimate than this "touch", and it is destabilizing. Destabilizing because God entrusts Jeremiah with very harsh words of judgment and condemnation: the people were divided, far from God, as always happens to feel divided in the hardest moments of our life.
- From now on Jeremiah will lend his voice to God, to make Him present, to actualize his Word, even in desolation, loneliness, despair, helping his people to discern the will of God in their history without other guarantees than His presence.
- Authority stands for responsibility, to rediscover what is essential everything must fall, must collapse, even the temple. We believe that vocation is something that brings a certain "order" to our life while in reality it is always accompanied by contradictory situations, in order for this Word to sprout, in order to start over in a more authentic way, it is necessary to go through a painful phase of choice, of purification.

<b>25. You will be different (Ex 33,12-17)</b>
--

***Grace:*** *To realize in my innermost being that God has committed himself to walk with me - and to let my outer life be transformed from that innermost point.*

**Points:**

- Moses enters into a conversation with God about the identity of the chosen people. After a long journey through the desert, where God revealed himself to Israel and where the weakness and stubbornness of the people had become apparent as well. Moses confronts God. He speaks freely to him, obviously trusting in God's promises. On what God had already revealed about himself to him and to the whole people: I am the God who will be with you. Can I talk to God like this? About my path through the desert, my path of success and failure, of seeking and turning away from Him in order to be found by Him again? Can I recognize His presence in this journey - and my mission to witness His presence before the people?
- God's presence does not change - but the way it shows itself changes because the people move forward. I bring God my steps forward and ask him for his presence in every new situation my path leads me into.

- The chosen people of God can be recognized from the outside. The distinguishing mark is "that God walks with us". How does this "nomadic presence" of God manifest itself among us? What does it change *concretely* in us and through us – so that others may say: Yes, God dwells in their midst? With Moses I start a conversation with the Lord about these visible signs of His presence: God, let us know your ways.

26. A particular people (Dtn 7,6-11)
--------------------------------------

Grace: *Recognize God's liberating love in my life and say my very own response.*

Points:

- The reasons for God's election of Israel do not lie in the qualities of the people, neither their numbers, nor their strength, not even their faithfulness... God chooses his people out of love. It is about a movement from Him to His people, without any prior achievement on their part. God's merciful love moves him to the core, so that he liberates his people. The specialness of the people consists in what God has done for them so that they can witness to His presence to others.
- Part of the dignity of the chosen people is that God makes a covenant with them that is based on reciprocity. In this covenant of God with his people, the rights and duties are not distributed unilaterally, so that God would only have rights and the people only duties. The people are allowed to respond to God's act of liberation - but God does not treat them as slaves, as they lived in Egypt, but as free partners. The consequence of God's love is the dignity of freedom. How do I live this relationship with Him?
- "Holy" means that something is set apart from the world - the "profane" - in order to belong especially to God's living space. The mystery of Israel as a chosen people is that it is invited to live this existence as a special property of God in the midst of the world, of the other peoples, as a testimony. From this election of Israel, a red line runs through our sacred scriptures to our special election as baptized people. It is never an "exodus" from the world - but an "exodus" from the Egypt of the world: from the contexts that make us unfree and captive. Our witness as God's chosen people to the world is that freedom exists; that we are liberated because God has made a covenant with us out of love. And that this freedom is not only meaningful for ourselves, but begins and is realized through us for the whole world, the whole cosmos.

27. to take the place of Judas (Acts 1,15-26)

Grace: *to take the place of Judas, to bear witness to the life that comes from Him.*

Points:

+ The hundred and twenty believers gathered together with Peter, are indicated in the Greek text as ókhlos onomátōn, 'ὄχλος ὀνομάτων' = 'the multitude of names'. Everyone has a name and the name is relationship, it is the way to indicate the person as a relationship. They were hundred and twenty (12x10), 12 are the tribes of Israel and 10 is the minimum number required for the community prayer in the synagogue (minyan), therefore 120 people represent the community of all that Israel who believed in Jesus as the Messiah.

+ Judas, repeatedly mentioned, must have been a cumbersome 'presence' for the community. But in prayer the community understands that evil exists and it cannot be hidden, it must come out; Peter says édei 'ἔδει' = 'it had to', it is the same verb used to say that the Son of man must suffer (Lk 9,22). Just as it is necessary that evil comes out of man, so it is necessary that mercy comes out of God to meet our evil. Because man is crucified by his evil and God must be there to meet him.

+ Judas represents the lost man, but we are all lost, he is 'one of the twelve', 'one of us', he cannot be wiped out. Salvation is not an ornament for pious souls, it is salvation from hell. Judas became the guide of those who took Jesus, in Lk 22:54 the verb used is sullambánō 'συλλαμβάνω' that means 'to take, 'to capture' but also 'to conceive', in our sin we conceive His forgiveness, 'because they will all know me... for I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more' Jer 31:34.

+ The Church is already born imperfect because it lacks Judas. Peter too, the representative of the Church, has betrayed. Who can replace Judas? Only an apostle, but who is an apostle? One who knows the whole story of Jesus, who is able to witness the resurrection and a love that overcomes death.

28. Jesus Sends Out the Seventy-Two (Lk 10, 1-12)

Grace to ask for: *Father, that I may recognize how to be a disciple in the style of your Son.*

**Points to reflect on:**

1. "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his field. Go ahead! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves" . Jesus is aware of the urgency of the Kingdom and does not hesitate to call, to send, even knowing the difficulties and dangers his disciples will risk. Am I aware of the risks involved today in announcing the Good News of the Gospel? Who are my companions on the mission?
2. "Carry neither purse nor sandals; and greet no one on the road". Jesus makes it clear what the style of the disciples is: he wants them to be light in their luggage, without many ties, ready, attentive and without distractions on the road. What do I feel and think about this proposal that Jesus makes?
3. "First say, 'Peace to this house' (...) Stay there, eating and drinking what they give you (...) Do not move from house to house". The first thing that comes out of the mouth of the disciple who announces is the desire for Peace. A peace that is built in encounter, dialogue, allowing oneself to be welcomed by the other, sitting at the table. Without rushing, taking the time, without the anxiety of rushing everywhere. With the freedom of knowing that you sow but the fruits of your proclamation are the work of the Lord. How do you live the proclamation of the Good News, as a Living Stone?

29. Charisms (1Cor 12,1-30)
-----------------------------

Grace: *tell me Lord where I can be a gift*

**Points:**

+The ancient city of Corinth strikes for its distinctive geographical situation in the crossroads between east and west and between north and south. Strabo writes: 'Corinth is called wealthy because of its commerce'. Paul must have been attracted to Corinth for a number of reasons: the large size of its Jewish community, the great size and importance of Corinth itself, the reputation of the Isthmian Games, its numerous trade connections. The church of Corinth became one of the largest and most important of the early church. AD 54 is the most likely date for the writing of 1 Corinthians.

+ Paul speaks about unity and diversity. But the emphasis is on the unity of the source, in the light of the same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God, and on the unity of goal, 'building' provides the cohesive goal and purpose of the gifts whatever their variety.

+ The service is the way in which the gifts become real in practice, it is not a matter of having a gift but of being a gift. Paul's first definition of specific ministry on the part of Apollo and of himself is that they are 'servants', 1Cor 3,5.

+ Wisdom and knowledge for the evaluation of realities in the light of God's grace and the cross of Christ, faith as the strong confidence that becomes supportive for the entire community. The gift of healing does not appear in the comparable sample of gifts in Rom 12,3-8 and Eph. 4,11; at Corinth there was a popular temple of Asklepios, the Greek god of healing, this may explain the importance of prayer for supernatural healing by a god in the daily life of Corinth, Paul writes about 'healing by that one Spirit' and in 1Cor 2,2-5 Paul claim to preach with signs and wonders. Where did I see similar gifts? What are my gifts? Where am I a gift?

30. The Love (1Cor 12,31-13,13)
---------------------------------

Grace: *Lord teach me Your style, the style of Love*

Points:

+ Probably at Corinth there was a zealous concern for the gifts of the Spirit that were deemed to be greatest in the sense of their supposedly constituting a mark of a high spiritual status. Paul uses a 'code switching', he argues: do not stop being zealously concerned about the greatest gifts, that is those which serve the good of others and build the community. But what is an even greater way still is the way of love!

+ The Greek noun agapē 'ἀγάπη' = 'love' is rare in Greek literature outside the NT and early Christian writings. This chapter contains the word agapē 10 times, Paul is concerned to disengage agapē from the sensual, emotive or ecstatic nuances which the noun érōs 'ἔρως' = 'passionate love' conveys in Greek. In John 21,15-17 we see the difference between the verb agapáō 'ἀγαπάω' used by Jesus to mean the unconditional love and the verb philéō 'φιλέω' = 'to be a friend to/have affection for' used by Peter. Agapē comes to us as a new creation of Christianity.

+ The ideal of human love is the union of all these types of love, érōs and philía already speak about God and carry the desire of the gift of oneself. Agapē is the style of the cross, and those who love, giving life, discover that agapē is the fullness of érōs and philía.

**NB: FOR SHORT RETREATS ABOUT “VOCATION” WE RECOMMEND THE BIBLICAL BOOKS OF JUDITH AND JONAS. Some material is available on the international BOX of Living Stones (available only to coordinators)**



**“Hand” (=Word) in the Cross, i.e. “The Word of the cross” (1Cor 1,18, Gr. “logos tou staurou”), Ravenna (XVth cent.)**

## APPENDIX

### To discern means to create

Discernment begins with Creation, indeed it is the Creation's "style." The book of Genesis presents the very act of creation as an enormous "discernment" made by God. According to the biblical narrative, God creates by distinguishing. He separates the light from the darkness, the waters from the dry, etc. One gets the impression that the biblical text is not so much interested in a creation "out of nothing" ("creatio ex nihilo") as in a creation that looks like "putting things in order", that is, forming a "kosmos". To create is to bring forth from the magma of the undifferentiated, of the indistinct. In the narrative, God continues in fact by creating living beings "each according to its kind", that is, as a further work of discernment. Therefore, the "knowledge of good and evil" is at the center of the garden, it is its most profound mystery. This knowledge is reserved to God: man cannot possess it, he cannot "eat" it.

Man and woman are called just to trust God. But the biblical text recounts how man allows himself to be deceived and ends up not trusting. Then God makes the human "not trusting" coincide with an extraordinary gift: the discovery of good and evil. That is, God transforms sin into teaching. In the very act of sinning, the human being begins to understand the difference between good and what he is doing. It can be said that man receives from God the gift of discernment precisely because he finds it difficult to trust.

Discernment is salvation from the deepest and most original sin: the lack of trust, the lack of faith. In other words: discernment is "faith on the way," or "the deepest healing from original sin". For this reason, the Fathers describe baptism (which takes away original sin) as "illumination" and list among its fruits the ability to "distinguish good from evil".

By receiving the gift of discernment, man and woman not only learn anew to trust, but find themselves acting in the same style as the One who created by "discerning". When God entrusts human being with discernment, He is entrusting human being with the continuation of His creative work. To discern is to continue Creation. The true creativity of man resides precisely in discernment, that is, in acting by distinguishing good from evil or by distinguishing everything "according to its kind". Man's true creativity consists in "putting his own life in order".

Therefore, in the rest of the Bible, this capacity of man to make of his own life the continuation of Creation, is often designated with the term "Wisdom". The Hebrew term ("hokmah") designates primarily the technical skill of the craftsman, the worker who "creates," the artist. Just as God created everything through Wisdom, that is, as an artist, now man can make of his own life a work of art, a new creation, or rather: the culmination of Creation. God, the Creator, the Artist, the One who discerns good from evil, leaves the last word of His discernment, the last word of Creation, to man himself. And this is the life of human being. "Putting one's life in order" is that work of art which brings Creation to completion.

In the New Testament, this discernment of man that becomes "God's history" is the very person of Jesus. Jesus is God who definitively chooses man and man who definitively chooses God. But this process of choice that Jesus is, is an "inclusive" process, that is, a process in which we can enter with our lives. Indeed, it is the process in which we find ourselves.

In particular, the Gospel of John presents man's discernment as a process to Jesus. The entire Gospel can be read as a long trial in which the defendant is Jesus, who finds himself between the demands of the prosecution (the Pharisees, the doctors of the law, many of the powerful,..) and the defense (the healed, the forgiven,... a thief condemned to death). The historical process in which he will be condemned, does not only extend to the entire life of Jesus, but also continues through history in the heart of each person. The narrative structure of the Gospel "forces" the reader to situate himself in this process. In the heart of each person, the accused is Jesus himself, because in the heart of each person there is a failure to trust God and his salvation. Jesus (in Hebrew "Jeshua") means "God saves" or "Salvation of God" and it is exactly what is questioned in the heart of man. The "accuser" will try to convince him that "God does not save", or that it is not true that "God-saves", it is not true that "Jeshua".

The Hebrew word for "Accuser" is "Satan" and it is the "voice" in each of us that directly opposes faith. When the first Christian generations had to translate this term into Greek, they chose the verb "dia-ballo" (hence "diabolus", "devil"). It means both "to accuse" and "to divide" and in fact the effect of the accusation is the non-relationship between us and Christ, between us and ourselves.

Instead, "defense counsel" is called "Paraclete" in Greek, which also means "Comforter". From the Gospel of John onwards, "Paraclete" designates the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who in us "reminds" us that "God saves", makes us believe in God's Salvation. As St. Paul mentions several times, only in the Holy Spirit

we can say that the man hanging on the cross is the Savior, the very Salvation of God.

A prerequisite for any discernment is therefore to recognize that our heart is like a "courtroom" in which both the accuser and the Paraclete speak and in which we are facing Jesus himself. Therefore, there is no discernment apart from prayer. Discernment is not a psychological technique or a "managerial" method, but begins by placing oneself in front of the cross of Christ.

It is interesting to consider that in the 4th century, when Christians were able to build their own buildings of worship, they did not choose the architectural scheme of pagan temples, but chose the "basilica", which was, among other things, the hall in which justice was administered (originally, the hall of the "basileus", the "king-judge"). To enter the Christian sacred space, that is, to enter into prayer, is to enter into an "inner process" where the accused is Jesus himself and where we listen to two "voices" (the accusation and the defense) that are not identical to our "I" but which our "I" must accept or reject. In this process one cannot avoid to take a position.

Already in the Gospel of John, the reader is led to a choice of field. And if he chooses to associate himself with the voice of the Paraclete, then he places himself as a "witness" on behalf of the accused. "Witness" is Greek for "martyr" (hence martyr). The point of arrival of discernment is therefore "martyrdom" in the sense of "radical witness" in favor of Jesus with one's whole life. There is no true discernment if it is not translated into a witness of life.

The Fathers reflected in many ways on this teaching on discernment, that is, on deciding to listen inwardly to Christ. Augustine speaks of the "inner teacher", Gregory of Nyssa compares the soul to the bride in the Song of Songs, in which desire and fear, embrace and absence alternate. But it is the "desert fathers" who collect the most "practical" teachings on how to distinguish the "voice" of the Paraclete from the "voice" of the accuser. They teach how to defend oneself from the many "logismoi" (thoughts) sent as many deceptions by the "enemy of human nature".

Medieval masters also re-actualized the practice of discernment particularly through many operational criteria for the "spiritual struggle", as for example Kempis in his "Imitation of Christ" or St. Catherine of Bologna in her "Seven Spiritual Weapons". The latter wisely distinguishes the different changes of strategy of the "evil one" and writes: "With true discernment it is therefore appropriate to use all the spiritual and human virtues, since the enemy, when he sees that he cannot prevent the servant of Christ from doing well, tries to deceive her by doing too much" (*Seven weapons*, I, 1). But it is probably Ignatius of Loyola who synthesizes with a more linear pedagogy the teachings of Tradition in his "Rules for Recognizing Spirits", designed for those who are doing the Spiritual Exercises, that is, for those who are giving abundant time to silent prayer.

Ignatius' first indication is that we can find ourselves in two diametrically opposed "life situations". The first "life situation" is of those who are going from bad to worse and the second is of those who are walking toward good. If we are in a moment of life or we are dealing with an area of our life in which we are going from bad to worse and we are moving further and further away from the Lord, the "evil spirit" -Ignatius tells us- will try to encourage us in this way of evil "proposing to us apparent pleasures,... to better maintain us and make us grow in our vices and sins". Typical of this situation is the "enemy voice" that minimizes the evil done, that self-justifies it, that tells me "I can stop anytime I want", "I'm not hurting anyone", "everyone else is doing it". Or who suddenly says to me: "you're done for, you can't do without doing this". It is always an accusation because it judges us incapable of going on without sinning and it is telling us that God will not save me from this sin. In the same situation -Ignatius continues- "the good spirit stimulates the conscience to remorse through the judgment of reason. That is, for example, it makes me understand that choosing worse is not only doing worse but it's to "worsens me". It makes me understand that I do not need to do evil in order to move forward. It makes me understand that this evil that I do contradicts the deepest desire of my heart, that is, that this evil causes me an internal contradiction, a division, a sadness.

If I choose to listen to the "good spirit" and change course, then I find myself in a second "life situation" that Ignatius calls "proceeding from good to better." Note that to find myself in this new situation I do not need to be "a saint." It is enough that my "arrow", even small, even distant and flickering, desires to point toward God. I can also be the good thief. Well, in this new situation, the previous mechanism is reversed. Ignatius says: "For in this case, it is proper to the evil spirit to remonstrate, to grieve, to pose difficulties and to disturb with false reasons, in order to prevent one from going forward". In this case, accusations are unleashed such as: "you can't go on like this", "there are more urgent things to do that are more important", "if you give him a finger God then asks for your arm", "if you go on you lose your autonomy and you lose control over yourself", "it's all an ideological fabrication you've built up", "you've been influenced by a context that doesn't allow you to be yourself", "you're going down this road out of pure selfishness", "how much time you're wasting! "You're basing your life on chatter", "no one really believes in these things", "God can never forgive what you've done", "God has other things to do than thinking about you", "If God really loved you, he would have done more for you", "it's too late", "your life is already marked and wrong since the beginning", "you're terribly lonely".

Always in this same situation in which we walk towards the good, Ignatius says: "It is proper of the good spirit to give courage and energy, consolations and tears, inspirations and serenity, diminishing and removing every difficulty, in order to go forward in the way of good".

Ignatius then goes on to better define the basic grammar of spiritual discernment, always from the perspective of those who walk towards the good (that is, fundamentally, those who put themselves in prayer). The feelings left by the good spirit he groups under the overall label of "consolation" and the feelings left by the bad spirit he groups under the overall label of "desolation". It is important to point out here that Ignatius presupposes a capacity for inner listening in order to give a name to the feelings, or rather, to what he calls "motions". These are not thoughts or ideas, but rather states of mind, internal "deep waves" that move within us and are provoked by the thoughts that pass through us. We could say they are like the "aftertaste" left by a good or a bad wine after having tasted it. Or the smell (or bad smell) left by a person who crosses our room. Every thought and every action leaves with it and behind it a deep reverberation that speaks of its attunement or disconnection towards the desire for God which was sown in the depths of our hearts and in which we are walking.

St. Ignatius further describes the motion left by the good spirit so that we can more easily recognize it. He writes, "Spiritual consolation. Consolation is understood to be when an interior stimulus is produced, whereby the soul is inflamed with love for its Creator and Lord, and thus cannot love any of the realities of this world for itself, but only for the Creator of all; likewise, when one sheds tears that bring him to the love of the Lord, whether from the pain of his own sins, or from the passion of Christ our Lord, or from other motives directly ordered to his service and praise. Finally, consolation is understood to mean every increase of hope, faith and charity, and every interior joy that stimulates and attracts to the heavenly realities and to the salvation of the soul, giving it tranquility and peace in its Creator and Lord".

Let us emphasize a few terms. The first criterion is love. Consolation is fundamentally a flame of love. An experience that points the way to love. The second criterion is that this love is love for God. It doesn't mean the contempt of things but it is the distinction between God and things. It is the exit from idolatry of things. It is loving things not as goals in themselves, but as a means to love. This explanation is followed by the very important indication on tears. Consolation is not an "easy joy", it is not a "but what does it matter!", it is not a "Colgate smile". Consolation fully assumes the situation in which one finds oneself and can have all the nuances of the strong emotions one has in an embrace when two people meet again after a long time. Consolation is perception of God's presence. When a child gets lost in a supermarket and then finds his mother again, he

embraces her and begins to cry. These are tears in which everything is mixed together: happiness for having found her, an outlet for the fear he had, sorrow for being lost, a whole hearted delivery... all of this is consolation.

Then Ignatius gives the perfect "litmus test" for recognizing consolation: the three theological virtues: faith, hope and love. A feeling is consolation if it increases trust in God, if we breathe deeply as we look to the future and desire to live, if we love more and desire to love more. Finally, Ignatius closes his definition by picking up on the basic tones of consolation, which are joy and peace. If a thought leaves a feeling or "motion" that can be described in these words or some of these words, then it is a thought that comes from the "good spirit". It is, we would say, the Holy Spirit blowing in our hearts. It is the word that the Lord himself has given me.

Symmetrically, Ignatius defines desolation: "Spiritual desolation. Desolation is understood to mean all the opposite. For example, the darkness of the soul, the inner turmoil, the stimulus towards low and earthly things, the restlessness due to various agitations and temptations: thus the soul is inclined to distrust, is without hope and without love, and finds itself lazy, lukewarm, sad and as if separated from its Creator and Lord. For just as consolation is contrary to desolation, so the thoughts that arise from consolation are contrary to those that arise from desolation".

The first term chosen, "darkness", is indicative because it recalls fear and the impossibility of seeing, that is, the impossibility of understanding. Desolation removes clarity about the "target" of our lives. The idea of attraction towards "low and earthly things" suggests an "emptiness" felt in the heart that must be filled immediately with some immediate satisfaction, but it also suggests a heart that feels akin to what is dirty, decaying, reprehensible. The word "restlessness" indicates the loss of peace, of that God-given peace.

The thought of desolation seeks to take away the gift God has given to the heart. The enemy attacks right after the heart has been visited by God. So sometimes the thoughts alternate quickly and it becomes more difficult to distinguish them. Here again Ignatius uses the three theological virtues as a sure criterion, but this time in reverse. If a word takes away trust in God, makes the future feel closed and dark, weakens love, then that word is not from God, that thought is whispered by the enemy. It is whispered by the one whom Ignatius calls "the enemy of human nature". We could say: enemy of the deep desire that is the desire for God. Finally, Ignatius reiterates some of the key words of desolation: laziness which is opposed to the power of action given by the Spirit, lukewarmness which is the extinguishing of the flame, sadness which is the dominant background

tone, and above all separation from the Lord because the "diaballo" is the one who accuses and separates.

It is important to explain that the enemy is "master of lying". That is, the thought that brings me desolation is a lie, always. But since the deceiver knows that there is no worse lie than the one that has a part of truth, then he always chooses a true detail. A weakness, a limitation, a sin. And he generalizes it to the point of making me believe that my whole person and life is that sin or limitation.

The important thing in the journey of discernment is not to not experience desolations. Desolations are inevitable because the enemy constantly speaks to our heart. But the important thing is to know how to reread what my heart is experiencing. By rereading a desolation or a chain of deceptions I often learn more than if I had had great peace and joy. It is in the alternation of spirits and motions that Ignatius understood the "language of God" in the human heart. Therefore, it is essential to stop, to listen to oneself, to name the feelings, to distinguish the different thoughts and the different deceptions, to mark those words that the Lord has told me.

We can add a further rule that Ignatius suggests to those who make the Spiritual Exercises, but which is also valid in daily life: "In the time of desolation one must never make changes, but remain firm and constant in the intentions and decision in which one was on the day preceding that desolation, or in the decision in which one was in the previous consolation. In fact, just as in consolation the good spirit guides and advises us above all, so in desolation the bad spirit does, and with his advice we cannot take the right path". This is a true "golden rule" in the art of choosing. It is on the fullness of joy that we build our lives. And it is there that we must return with memory and heart whenever we are tempted to change course.

Spiritual will is then not so much a kind of "stoic heroism" but the ability to remember the moment of consolation in order to be able to continue on the same path even in the time of desolation. If I have embarked on a right path, I must expect the attacks of the enemy and therefore desolations. They are those trials in which I learn to remember, to trust even without signs, to cry out to the Lord even more loudly my deep desire for Him. In the alternation between consolation and desolation, the Lord forms me, shapes me, creates me. The people of Israel had embarked on the right path when they came out of slavery in Egypt, but they had to struggle for forty years against the desolations that immediately gave rise to "murmurings" and the desire to turn back. Moses is the one who knew how to remain firm to the decision he had in the great consolation of the Red Sea. This is why every Passover and every Jewish feast is nothing other than a return to that consolation.

Further on, Ignatius adds other rules to defend oneself from the enemy when he tries to deceive "under the appearance of good". These rules are especially designed for those who no longer have to discern between good and evil but between two goods. Generally in a choice of life we are faced with the alternative between two or more possibilities that as such are good. So I ask myself: which one is the best for me? In other words: in which choice will I be able to love more? In the end, discerning is understanding where to love until the end, that is, where to bring to completion that work of love which is Creation itself.

The entire process of discernment and choice can be graphically summarized thanks to a brilliant work by Caravaggio: the vocation of Matthew, preserved in Rome in the church of "San Luigi dei Francesi". In this 1599 painting, the Lombard master describes the vocation as a new Creation. Indeed, the outstretched hand of Jesus calling recalls the very famous gesture of Creation in the Sistine Chapel. But on closer inspection, the hand of Jesus is not a copy of the hand of Michelangelo's Creator, but rather the hand of Adam. As if to say: vocation is a new creation that passes through the human flesh (the Adam) of the one who enters our lives as an instrument of God.

This new creation does not happen in an instant, but rather through the stages of a process that is precisely discernment. As many scholars now suggest, Caravaggio does not clearly identify Matthew among the characters sitting around the table. This suggests that everyone is Matthew, or rather that each of the characters seated represents a step of this vocational journey.

The starting point is undoubtedly the boy sitting on the far left, hunched over, closed in on himself as he counts the coins. His hands seem animalistic, almost as if he were a pig. And it is precisely these hands that the light of grace illuminates. The first rule of discernment of Ignatius of Loyola comes to mind, explaining how the good Spirit visits those who go from bad to worse with remorse and reason. The boy still has his face in darkness but finds himself discovering the deformity of his hands, the ugliness of what he is doing. And this "ugly surprise" is grace.

The second stage is represented by the mature man with the beard. With his left hand he seems to ask, "are you really calling me?". On closer inspection, the finger remains ambiguous and can point both to himself and to the curved boy on the left -an extra indication that it is the same person. By the way, of the two "pig" hands, one is really his and not the boy's. But it is indeed the same person.

The gesture of the hand that remains ambiguous echoes the gesture of Jesus who calls. We can say that Matthew "reflects" (like a mirror) the Word of the call. A word symbolized by the hand that is under the window in the shape of a cross.

Because the Word is none other, as St. Paul says, than the "Word of the cross". It is the Jesus of the cross who calls. Only love calls. One discerns before the absolute love that is the cross.

Reflecting on the Word of the one who calls is the first positive step in this itinerary. Therefore this person bears the beard of the wise man. And therefore it is the first time that the light of grace illuminates his face. But this light is precisely a new creation that gives birth to the one who is called. Therefore, the following character is a child. It embodies the rediscovered purity of which Matthew the tax collector was undoubtedly deeply nostalgic. The vocation coincides with a journey of purification in which God restores our lost purity. Finally, the fourth seated character is represented in the very gesture of getting up. His stool is already out of balance, symbol of the "unbalance" that is every choice. This character has a sword, a sign that "de-cision" always involves a cut (cf. Lat. "caedere"). He is a young figure, in the age of choice.

It is interesting to note that around the table, in addition to the seated figures, there is only one person standing, wearing glasses. He is, considering the structure of the painting, exactly symmetrical to Jesus and seems to be whispering between the young man locked in himself and the man with the beard. What is this old man whispering, looking down as if he were "the one who knows"? We can imagine him trying to dissuade Matthew from raising his head. He tries to keep him attached to that table, that is, to that kind of life in which people are just coins and relationships are just violent demands. This is the negative prompter, the "enemy."

The Gospels recount Matthew's vocation as a creation because they repeat the verb ("follow me" and "followed him") as an immediate reference to Genesis ("let there be light" and "the light was"). But for Caravaggio this new creation unfolded in a process in stages that is "vocational discernment". Between "follow me" and "he followed him" there is all the discernment described by the sequence of the four characters and by the disturbing presence of the old enemy. It is a journey between death and life. In fact, in the very text of the Gospels, between "follow me" and "he followed him" we read the very verb of the Resurrection: "he stood up". We can say that the process of discernment coincides with an experience of Resurrection. Discernment is letting the Word of the Cross become Resurrection in us.

When Matthew gets up, he begins to follow Jesus, that is, he becomes his witness, until his physical martyrdom, represented by Caravaggio right in front of this painting. On the other hand, if Matthew got up, it is perhaps also thanks to the presence of Peter, who is not explicitly named in the Gospel but whom Caravaggio makes present in this scene. Peter is the Church. He is the testimony of imperfect people who, however, allow others to stand up and become witnesses in their turn. Perhaps precisely because Peter is

imperfect, Matthew feels authorized to stand up too, perhaps even with the desire to complete what is missing in Peter's testimony. Vocational discernment is a process that takes place in the Church and with the Church. And it is what is lacking in the Church that "calls" new young people to become "witnesses".



Some other tools...

Mark E. THIBODEAUX, *God's voice within. The Ignatian Way to Discover God's will*, Loyola Press 2010.

Marko I. RUPNIK, *Discernment. Acquiring the Heart of God*, Pauline Press, 2005.

Silvano FAUSTI, *Occasione o tentazione*, Ancora 2007.

About Caravaggio's Vocation of Matthew:

ITA:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MqWBRUk2Dk&t=597s>

ESP:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l\\_7-z05tZfQ&t=2127s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_7-z05tZfQ&t=2127s)

FRA-ENG:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1ZKycr22k4&t=220s>

Contacts

Facebook: [PietreVive](#)

Instagram: [@pietre\\_vive](#)

YouTube channel: [Pietre Vive Living Stones](#)

Pietre Vive Secretary: [segreteriapietrevive@gmail.com](mailto:segreteriapietrevive@gmail.com)

<http://www.pietre-vive.org/>

See you all in Lisboa...

**International LS  
Formation Week-End  
LISBOA  
April 29<sup>th</sup> – May 1<sup>st</sup>**

**REMEMBER ALSO:**

- **Spiritual Exercises in the Swiss Alps**
- **Biblical formation in Jerusalem**
- **Formation camp in Greece**
- **Special missions: apostolic camps in Amsterdam, Spain,...**

*Living Stones have two sides: local and international. Take away one of both and the stones will not be living any more.*



LIVING STONES