
**¡SAL DE TU TIERRA!
¡EL APÓSTOL TE ESPERA!**

LEAVE YOUR LAND!
ST JAMES THE APOSTLE IS WAITING FOR YOU!

Pastoral Letter
of the Archbishop of Santiago



COMPOSTELA HOLY YEAR 2021

I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

Luke 15:18

Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.

Luke 5:5

Dear brothers and sisters:

1. With joy, I announce to you who wish to participate in its jubilee graces, the celebration of the Compostela Holy Year 2021, a Year of Grace and Forgiveness. In this third Holy Year of the Third Millennium of Christianity, the courageous witness of the Apostle James is an opportunity to rediscover the vitality of faith and mission, received at Baptism. St. James becomes a powerful voice for all and calls you to the paths of conversion towards God, so that today, the proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth may be the driving force of your pilgrimage and of your prophetic enthusiasm in the Christian mission: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19).
2. In the cathedral that houses the tomb and keeps the memory of the Apostle, we affirm that Tradition is not a relic of the past, but the inexhaustible source, providing the fresh water of the Gospel from generation to generation. In each generation, the Father in his Son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit forms new children and empowers them to be partakers of his Kingdom and collaborators of his mission in the Church and in the world. Those who have received baptism have been anointed for this mission and are called to accompany those who still hope to receive it.
3. I write this pastoral letter with you in my heart and in my mind and with the local church in Santiago de Compostela to which you are heading. It is written from my memory, grateful for the

imprint of faith left in our diocese by the countless pilgrims, who from all continents make this pilgrimage to the House of the Apostle James. Faith makes you partners of the Lord and of his cause, the Kingdom and as the young fisherman of Galilee, friends of the Lord. For centuries, the footprints of so many people opened paths throughout Europe that *“created a way of culture, prayer, mercy and conversion, which has been embodied in churches and hospitals, in shelters, bridges and monasteries. In this way, Spain and Europe developed a spiritual physiognomy marked indelibly by the Gospel”*¹.

4. Those who make a pilgrimage to Santiago do not seek first and foremost a route full of charming landscapes nor of heritage sites, but the path of conversion to God and to humankind. The pilgrimage is a manifestation of popular piety.² You walk with the Church to be challenged by the Word of God and thus be salt, leaven and light for others. You want to rekindle your baptism and to listen to your heart, where we find who we are. Before the *Portico de la Gloria*, you will admire one whom you recognize, someone familiar and you contemplate him with joy because you have come to Santiago for this encounter with the Risen Christ. You have followed with your own the footsteps left by others, the faith of the Church. Arriving in Santiago you touch the foundation of apostolic witness. The experience of the apostles is the root of your faith and you yourselves are its fruits.

¹ BENEDICT XVI, *Address in Santiago de Compostela*, 6 November 2010.

² At the general audience on 15 June 1965, St. Paul VI said: *“It should be said that the outward manifestation of religious sentiment is not only a right, but a duty, by virtue of the very nature of the man who receives from the outer signs an encouragement for his inner activity and expresses it in external signs, thus granting him all its meaning and its social value. Therefore, religious exteriority, when it is neither superstition nor an end in itself, serves as a garment to the divine things, making them accessible to our cognitive faculty. It allows us to somehow present to the Majesty of Heaven the tribute of an earthly offering”*.

5. The House of the Apostle James is a house of welcome for pilgrims. This is recognizable in the architecture designed for him to pass through a living Tradition and a shared Gospel. Therefore, your pilgrimage and that of hundreds of thousands like you prepares the conversion of the pilgrims of tomorrow. Your faith is the fruit of tradition but at the same time, it gives new vitality for future generations who will continue to come to Santiago. The geographical end of your pilgrimage is the House of St. James but your goal is the freedom of your heart, the freedom of God's children to which God the Father calls you. I encourage you in this pilgrimage to always set your eyes on that goal, making your pilgrimage a path of transformation of both mind and heart.

6. On behalf of this diocesan church, I welcome all of you. It is a great responsibility, but I feel part of a great family which is the Church, made up of innumerable people all over the world. I also encourage the people of my diocese to live the call to conversion and marching towards Christ, embrace you as brothers and sisters and wish you peace. If these words lead you to Christ, who is the Way, then make use of them. I am addressing not only those who have undertaken or will begin the Camino de Santiago, but to all who come to this city attracted by the magnetism that the Apostle inspires. I would not like to make your backpacks or luggage heavier but to make your steps more determined and lighter. I hope that you will meet the One who called you from your land and from your home. I am sure that freedom, attentive to the whisper of conscience, will guide you to Christ. I am convinced of this: it is the very goal to which you are heading and the very reason why you are walking. He is your Way, your Truth and your Life.

7. Our Cathedral opens wide its doors because the House of “Señor” Santiago is your home and thanks to you, it continues to become more Catholic, more universal and more welcoming. The Friend of the Lord is waiting for you, with open arms and a smiling face.
8. I would like to leave this pastoral letter unfinished as I announce this Holy Year, so that you, pilgrims from all over the world may complete it with the ink of your faith and with your Christian witness. I dare to make the sentiments of the Apostle Paul my own: *“It is evident that you are a letter of Christ, written by our ministry, written not in ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tablets, but on the tablets of flesh hearts”* (2 Corinthians 3:3). I pray for you and greet you accordingly to your condition or religiosity. *The Holy Door* of Mercy and Forgiveness opens this Holy Year in our Cathedral. When you cross its threshold, may you become one of its living stones or perhaps, one of those shining stars that Abraham, looking up the sky tried to count when God called him out of his land. To realize all this, it is with hope that I invite all pilgrims to the Holy Year 2021 in Compostela.

1. GO FORTH FROM YOUR LAND (cf. Genesis 12:1)

1.1. The Father's Promise, a Path of Freedom

9. It might surprise you that your pilgrimage began about four thousand years ago. You keep alive the journey of an old shepherd to whom God’s promise brought hope. That promise of a life and a future that Abraham welcomed are yours too, as pilgrims. He began his journey because God called him. He called him in behalf of those who make a pilgrimage during the

Holy Year and for all his descendants, which is the Church today,
God's people on a journey.

10. Centuries later by the Sea of Galilee, a young fisherman named *James* listening to Jesus' call and feeling the power of his gaze, left the nets of the past, became a disciple and like that elderly patriarch, also set out on his way to follow the Lord. This old man, Abraham is for today's pilgrims, the origin of one's journey and this young Apostle encountered on the pilgrimage, a witness to *the freedom of God's children.*

**Today you are starting this exodus so that many others
may also hear the voice that calls them
to the freedom of God's children.**

11. The reasons that move you to come to venerate the tomb of the Apostle James at times appear to be individualistic on the surface but show too the collective history of a great family, as numerous "*as the stars of heaven and as the sand of the seashore*" (Genesis 22:17). As you make the pilgrimage, you recognize that you are much more than individuals with religious sentiments as you discover the Father, drawing you to be protagonists of a Living Tradition for a mission: to evangelize.

12. Abraham undertook his journey that day, so that today you may make your own pilgrimage. He listened to God and God set him on a journey: "*Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you.*" (Genesis 12:1). *Faith is linked to listening. Abraham does not see God, but he hears his voice.*"³ Thus began the exodus towards freedom for all his

³ FRANCIS, *Lumen Fidei*, 8.

descendants. Today you are starting this exodus, so that many others may also hear the voice that calls them to the freedom of God's children.

13. His faith is for you now, your walking stick. His confidence in the promise cuts through yours today, so it may open in you and in others that future offered by the Son, Jesus Christ. Abraham left behind his securities and launched a story that culminated with new descendants, born out of a listening that brings about freedom. Therefore, the reward promised to Abraham was something that would not only enrich him nor his lineage but all his descendants, which is the Church. Similarly, your reward when you arrive in Santiago will not only enrich you but all those for whom you have been called.

14. The offspring of Abraham would eventually be the Son (cf. Matthew 1:1), that is, God in the history of all humankind and not only in his promised lineage of descendants. Abraham is the father of faith because he was the first to welcome God and therefore, his reward although hailed from afar, is God himself in the company of all believers: *"for he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and maker is God"* (Hebrews 11:10) and of which you are a part. As you can see, your longing is both personal and intimate with all the distinctions of one's own life but born of a historical community and of a people on a journey, the Church. You do not make a pilgrimage only for yourself nor can you walk the path and reach your destination alone.

15. The God of Abraham also called Moses from the burning bush to free his people from slavery. The people who hears God's voice becomes free and has the experience of one, whom He calls, guides, and accompanies. The Word was expressed in the voice

and became Flesh in the Son so that we may all live our lives meaningfully by becoming children of God. He frees us from the bondage of our sin and sets us on the path to the freedom of God's children. Christ is yesterday, today, and forever giving fulness to our future.

16. On your pilgrimage, you walk a Living Path. Do not limit yourself by following a popular custom nor be moved by a desire for self-fulfillment, knowing that *"being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."*⁴ Whoever you may be, if you have set out on your way, it is because you have felt an encounter and a call. *"You would not have searched for me, if I had not found you"*⁵, St. Augustine thought. Do you not think that it is a real miracle that you could recognize the call amidst daily distractions? That call sets you in motion and it takes you out of the immediacy of your routine experiences. You start by walking confidently but still unable to foresee where you will go. Your destination is in the city of Santiago, but you will do so through a path of conversion that you cannot predict or anticipate. This conversion leads you to the Unexpected: *"Faith requires giving up the immediate possession that the vision seems to offer, it is an invitation to open to the source of light, respecting the mystery of a Face that wants to reveal itself."*⁶
17. He who see this Face cannot remain alive (cf. Exodus 33:20). He dies to his selfishness and to his very self in order to receive new life from God not only for himself but also for others. You walk for an encounter with God, with others and with your very

⁴ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, 1. FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 7.

⁵ cf. ST. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, Lib. X, chap. XVIII and XXIX

⁶ FRANCIS, *Lumen Fidei*, 13.

selves. You walk so that you can hear for yourselves: “As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” So, you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.” (Galatians 4:6-7). Thus, you will become partners in Jesus’ liberating mission so that others in turn may attain that freedom to which you have been called.

1.2. The Value of Faith

18. “The three theological virtues express the new life that Christ has given us, a life that remains the same, fresh and new until we broke our relationship with God and with creation. Faith is intended to recognize God Himself as the foundation of all reality: his existence, his saving acts in history, his faithful companionship”.⁷ It is a lamp for freedom. It does not prevent anyone from taking the steps and following the path. It is not an easy way. On the contrary, faith awakens freedom and conscience and does not replace them. It does not avoid the doubts that could arise when you come at a crossroad. Faith commits you to take up despite the contradictions, the cross that is part of our concrete reality (cf. Mark 8:34). However, you are not nailed to it as a fateful destiny nor have you to resign yourself; nor take it up with a bitter smile nor by force but by surrendering to it freely, as Jesus did. Faith spurs you on the riskiest adventure of life: to bring it to fruition wherever you are and in whatever the conditions are. However, in the culture of prosperity that we have been promoting, the scrupulous zeal to carry out our responsibility strictly and legally, sometimes holds us up from courageous and generous actions for the sake of

⁷ G. L. MULLER, *The Message of Hope*, BAC, Madrid 2016, 5.

others, which volunteers of all kinds do, thus losing the opportunity to understand our work or profession as a service to others.

19. Faith is not the solution to the questions we ask ourselves; it is the question that God asks us. It has nothing to do with the assurances offered by clear and distinct plans over the complexity of life.⁸ You tread into an uncharted path. Remember: Abraham, by faith, set out *without knowing where he was going* (cf. Hebrews 11:8). This path is offered to you by him who calls you to be his children: Do you want to walk it? May fear not constrain your freedom! Your freedom is not in your self-affirmation but in moving forward to the call that God offers you. It will be yours if you follow it. To receive that freedom, go on your way, supported by Christ, the Word made flesh. You will not stop being slaves without leaving the place of your security and without risking losing your balance like the child who learns to walk. Faith matures in risk, adversity, and uncertainty in a person who follows not his own voice but the voice of God. It is not a pious calculation. *“Faith is not a light which scatters all our darkness but a lamp which guides our steps in the night and suffices for the journey.”*⁹

20. Thanks to the love of our parents for the day we were born. We can never be grateful enough for being born. But to become a Christian, a new birth is needed. Like the first, it is also received and born out of love. The first is a natural and spontaneous birth.

⁸ FRANCIS, *Gaudete et Exultate*, 41: “When somebody has an answer for every question, it is a sign that they are not on the right road. They may well be false prophets, who use religion for their own purposes, to promote their own psychological or intellectual theories. God infinitely transcends us; he is full of surprises. We are not the ones to determine when and how we will encounter him; the exact times and places of that encounter are not up to us. Someone who wants everything to be clear and sure presumes to control God’s transcendence.”

⁹ FRANCIS, *Lumen Fidei*, 57.

The second is a birth engendered by the freedom that God awakens, thanks to the gift of Baptism. "In our first birth we were begotten without our own knowledge and choice [...] But in order that we may not remain children of necessity nor of ignorance but of choice and of knowledge ... the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe is invoked upon the water."¹⁰ In this second birth a true miracle happens; the miracle of transformation by which we come out of ourselves to become brothers and sisters, disciples of Christ: *"but if you seek to understand how these things work, ask grace and not human knowledge, ask desire and not intelligence, the groaning of prayer and not the study of texts, the spouse and not the teacher, God and not people, darkness and not brightness, not light, but the fire which completely enflames. This fire is indeed God."*¹¹

21. This new birth, more precious than the natural one, is crowned by the birth of a full-grown Christian. When this occurs, another human being has been born to the world, a new person, free to give to others. This new birth is also born of love but from love for others. It is God who sets him free to seek the faces of people the world has forgotten. In this growth, which is the path of the disciple who follows Christ, faith is a giving light so that one day we may be fully born to ourselves: *"At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known."* (1Corinthians 13:12) That day when we will finally be born, we will love others as we are loved.

**Faith commits our whole being because
God has truly given himself to us.**

¹⁰ ST. JUSTIN, *Apology I*, 61.

¹¹ BONAVENTURE, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, 7.

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22. The Church, the people of God to which we belong is born constantly because of this birth of faith. She was born for a mission, not for herself, as though she were an end in herself but to bring to all, the Good News of the Gospel. She has to get out of confinement and move from hearing her own echoes to hearing the Word of God, allowing herself to be filled with the fire of the Spirit (cf. Luke 24:36; Acts 2). She becomes a pilgrim, sharing the same path of a humanity, who also needs to hear that Resurrected Word to be free because it suffers injustice and sin. In the Church, thanks to the breath of the Spirit, the Kingdom of God is in our midst. She is like us in conversion towards Christ and others.¹²
23. Faith commits our whole being because God has truly given himself to us. On the day of our baptism, he gave us an unconditional yes, so that we may respond with all our strength and energies to the gift we received and to the mission entrusted to us. God does not just share simple gifts: he gives his very self to all. Neither Abraham, nor Moses, nor the Mother of the Lord received faith for themselves alone but for the people of the covenant, that this people in turn might be the seed for another generation, reconciled with God in love.
24. Faith awakens all our energies and not just our mind. *“Losing faith is losing much more than an intellectual certainty; it is to lose the last support of an entire experience, for the righteous will live by faith”* (cf. Galatians 3:11). A person who believes, believes from the feet to the head. Faith is flesh and blood! It is not a special gift given

¹² JOHN PAUL II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 33: *The Church cannot cross the threshold of the new millennium without encouraging her children to purify themselves, through repentance, of past errors and instances of infidelity, inconsistency, and slowness to act. Acknowledging the weaknesses of the past is an act of honesty and courage which helps us to strengthen our faith, which alerts us to face today’s temptations and challenges and prepares us to meet them.*

to an individual to believe a series of truths but for a total change of mentality and attitude for a conversion. It is God knocking at our door and demands all the courage on our part to open it. It is the decision with a capital letter of our life. With it, the almighty God becoming weaker than his own children remains waiting to be welcomed. Opening the door presupposes courage to cut the ropes that bind us to our very self, that is, a circumcision of the heart, of the mind, of the will (cf. Romans 2:29).

25. A person who makes a pilgrimage has to leave his country. Like Abraham, you have undertaken an exciting personal journey. It is leaving behind the self for the Thou of God and the thou of one's neighbor. What else is this leaving of the self behind to make the other the center, if not love? No longer is it self-seeking, instead it seeks the good of the beloved. *"Love is indeed "ecstasy", not in the sense of a moment of intoxication, but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God."*¹³

26. Precisely, not a few of you make the pilgrimage to Santiago in honor of a loved one and whose remembrance has left in you a longing for God. You say that you are doing the pilgrimage for them, as if you were fulfilling a promise you owe them. This is something that could only be understood by a logic that binds you to those persons who have blessed your life and have left you with precious memories. For those who never had this experience, this seems absurd or pointless; but these are the reasons of the heart that reason does not understand. However, for you, there is still a promise that remains unfulfilled and you feel compelled to fulfill what your loved one or friend wanted to

¹³ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, 6.

do, perhaps, even for you. Then along the way, in some moment of silence or even in the contemplation of nature, God brings you the almost tangible presence of those persons whom you are grateful for. You affirm that you never felt alone at any time of your pilgrimage and that, if your first intention was to do it for them, you later recognize excitedly, once you arrived in Santiago that you did not actually walk alone nor for them but with them. We dare to glimpse here a reflection of the communion of the saints. Just a cursory glance stops at cold skepticism. It is not *I give you so you will give me back* nor should freely and spontaneously fulfilling a promise made to someone be called an obligation, despite feeling bound to fulfill it later with effort and sacrifice.

**For what is it to believe in God if not to commit yourself
decisively to his initiative in us and in others?**

27. The Camino de Santiago is a way of conversion offered to everyone who wishes to welcome the experience; it does not require a prior “selection of candidates” nor does it have *numerus clausus*, a quota system. On the contrary, one of its permanent values is that it puts the soul in direct contact with God, even for those who have not yet discovered the Christian faith. This has a special value in our time when many people still feel that our Church is distant. That is why they need a close, patient and welcoming light to help them understand their experience and read the Gospel again, as the Apostle Philip knew what to do

with the Ethiopian eunuch, a high official of the Queen of Candace (cf. Acts 8:27-30). Certainly, God offers to every pilgrim, every human being who comes into this world, a path known only to Him. But, *“how can he recognize him unless someone instructs him?”* (Acts 8:31).

28. Those who believe are not afraid to be involved in the complexity of things, nor does he remain immobile for the fear of not always getting it right in trying to improve them. For what is it to believe in God if not to commit yourself decisively to his initiative in us and in others? *“I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security”*¹⁴ Pope Francis writes.

29. Thus, there are not a few who together with friends, parish groups, schools or religious associations discern their vocation to marriage, the priesthood, or religious life along the Camino de Santiago. The immediacy to which they were subjected did not leave their hearts free to fulfill their deepest desires. As they make a pilgrimage, they are reminded that in the midst of their careers and works, there are faces who embody the beatitudes of the Gospel and Jesus was speaking to these same people with their own struggles. Along the way, maybe during an encounter with other pilgrims or in an oasis provided by community prayer, they feel shaken by a sense of restlessness: *“Jesus needs you for them!”* For many, what starts as a fascination ends up maturing in a marital commitment to form a family and to form a domestic Church.

¹⁴ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 49.

30. Not a few young people make pilgrimages. But how can these young people live and discover their vocation to marriage, the priesthood, or the consecrated life? Is not commitment to others the opposite of freedom? This is a question a bourgeois culture would ask. Are you not wasting your life and the best years of your life? However, these brave young men and women unmask the kind of society that we adults offer them. Despite of this, the young people realize that life becomes impoverished and empty when it is uncommitted. On the contrary, life becomes meaningful when it does not seek itself and can be spent for others. These youth are capable of rummaging through the confusions brought about by slogans and social networks and find true happiness and meaning in their lives.
31. For many other pilgrims, a pilgrimage to Santiago is like a doorway to their Christian commitment. They pray in their daily work and carry the light of faith in their backpacks or in their suitcases. They are like the Apostle James, a disciple of Jesus whose left hand ignores what his right does (cf. Matthew 6:3), helping those in need whether near or far. They are the salt, the bread and the light in their places of work, in their ecclesial communities and in their families. Making a pilgrimage to Santiago and to other places of pilgrimages is a unique opportunity to feel with their own hands and see with their own eyes that the Christian faith has its root in Jesus, as witnessed by his disciples. They prove that their faith is not only based on creeds, even if they were religious but by being witnesses of the Lord.¹⁵ “Simply put”, Christians are those who are aware that the incarnation has made each person, a brother or sister of Christ and his concrete presence: *“How many Christians give their lives for love: they help so many people get well or die peacefully in poor*

¹⁵ SIMONE WEIL, *Waiting for God*, Trotta, Madrid 1993, 128: “Belief is verbal and does not penetrate the soul”.

hospitals, or accompany people enslaved by various addictions in the poorest places on earth, wear themselves out for the education of children and young people, or take care of elderly people abandoned by all, or try to communicate values in hostile environments, or give themselves in so many other ways that show that our immense love for humanity has been inspired by the God-made-man”¹⁶

“I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father”.

John 15:15

32. Although exteriorly, pilgrims are indistinguishable from everybody else, like covered with the dirt of the road or walking through the halls of the airport; however, interiorly, they are wearing white robes, like those of the Lamb (cf. Revelation 7:9). They have been nourished by his body and quenched by his Spirit, who fills their days with good things, *so their youth is renewed like the eagle’s* (cf. Psalm 103:5)¹⁷. They become every morning the leaven for a new society. Therefore, when they arrive at the Cathedral of Santiago, they melt in an emotional embrace with the Apostle, the Friend of the Lord that he may lead them to Him and be able to hear just like the apostles: *“I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father”* (John 15:15).

¹⁶ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 76.

¹⁷ St. Augustine in his sermon 81 writes: “Do not adhere to this ageing world but yearn to be renewed in Christ who tells you: the world perishes, the world ages, the world falls apart and breathes with difficulty because of its old age. Fear not; your youth will be renewed like that of the eagle.”

33. The pilgrimage frees you from deceptions. You want to remove your prejudices and you want to be free through a conversion of heart. You come to Santiago, a city that maintains together a rich artistic heritage and an Apostle's tomb and allows you to encounter Christ, who calls you to walk freely to the path of conversion that the young fisherman of Galilee, James, lived. Faith is not afraid to be entangled in the complexities of life. To believe in God is to commit to the plans he has for us.

1.3. The Church, God's People Going out

34. Pope Francis urges the whole Church *to go out*. This involves taking Abraham's daring and confident step of leaving the father's house or abandoning our nets like the Apostle James. This means to get out of the bubble that isolates us from the rest of the world or makes us return to ourselves. It is to get out without fear of safety and comfort, selfishness, apathy or of self-preservation that knocks many times at ourselves, parishes and communities and where the risk of any change is made up, under the pretext of preserving "the truth". We must go out to the crossroads until the end where Christ is waiting for us.

**Has the field captured our attention more
than the treasure itself hidden in it?**

35. *How is it possible that we seem to live our faith more as a Lenten sacrifice than as an Easter encounter with Christ? Where did the joy go of the one who finds the treasure hidden in the countryside, that treasure for which it is worth selling everything to acquire it? (cf. Matthew 13:44). Has the field captured our attention more than*

the treasure itself hidden in it? If we have over emphasized sacrifice in our message to others, we have to stop and wonder if perhaps at some point, we have lost sight of the most important thing. If a Christian remains staring at his own self-sacrifices, he might not have yet discovered the treasure that motivates him. *What do you want?* Jesus asked the mother of James and his brother John (cf. Matthew 20:21). That question is still being asked of us today.

36. We have allowed the Gospel to slide into a moralism that sought true perfection and not the mercy of God “*who makes his sun rise on the bad and the good*” (Matthew 5:45). We have been more attentive to the mistakes and less sensitive to people’s efforts.¹⁸ At times, it seems that the plant of this moralism grew more in the minds and hearts of Christians than the Word of God itself. Let us be alert as not to reduce the Good News to just an individual’s proper and pious behavior for the afterlife!
37. Perhaps, we have shown a forest of doctrine instead of pointing out the tree that people are really looking for. That tree is the Son of God rooted into the Father and bore fruit for all of us. That tree grew in wisdom and stature in the workshop of mankind. Through the things that happen in life, God sends his messages to each person. Let us open our eyes to recognize and cherish them! Otherwise, our evangelization will resemble a strenuous effort to convince those who “do not believe” and with our finger, point to each one to which category he or she belongs, either to “those of the inside” or to “those of the outside” instead of us recognizing joyfully that God’s grace is already acting in their lives¹⁹.

¹⁸ In this sense, Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*, 37: “We also find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations. We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them”.

¹⁹ Cf. Benedict XVI, Holy Mass for the Inauguration of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin American and the Caribbean: “*The Church considers herself the disciple and missionary of this Love:*

38. *How* then will we experience the joy of recognizing Christ alive in the reality around us? *How* can we understand the courage of the Apostle James to bring the Good News to Finisterre, the end of the earth? *How* will we share Paul's evangelizing passion? And *how* can we help the seeds of the Kingdom grow and encourage the growth to take root into people's lives? The Church cannot be a teacher without first being a disciple, not only of Christ, but also of others: "*The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts*"²⁰.

39. The Pope does not compel us to change for the sake of change. He advises us to carry close to us the lamp of *discernment* so that we may be faithful to the Gospel while being attentive to the signs of the times. "*Without the wisdom of discernment, we can easily become prey to every passing trend*"²¹. It is true that if we do not allow ourselves to be guided by that light, we will expose ourselves to the changing and ephemeral tides of ideologies and pastoral styles that instead of methods are made ends in themselves. We drag the inertia of *it has always been done like this*. This numbs us and perpetuates in us a lethargic Christianity in which the Spirit of Christ remains "locked up" and without us noticing, leaves us in almost complete darkness.

missionary only insofar as she is a disciple, capable of being attracted constantly and with renewed wonder by the God who has loved us and who loves us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:10). The Church does not engage in proselytism. Instead, she grows by "attraction": just as Christ "draws all to himself" by the power of his love."

²⁰ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Gaudium et spes*,1.

²¹ FRANCIS, *Gaudete et Exultate*, 167.

**We are called to work faithfully in the Lord's vineyard
following Him and not Him following us.**

40. As Benedict XVI once said, let us be *“humble workers in the Lord’s vineyard”*, that is, workers of the vineyard and not its owners in order to serve the gospel. In this way, the rightful center of people and of our evangelizing action will be Christ, not us. Otherwise, we will be like that salt of which the Lord affirmed is no longer able to flavor food and therefore becomes insignificant and no longer good for anything (cf. Matthew 5:13-16)²².

41. Let us keep in mind the temptation of the mother of the apostle James. She asks for a special privilege for her two sons: *“You do not know what you are asking”* the Lord replies (cf. Matthew 20:22). In this temptation, we recognize ours and that of the Church for all time when she looks at herself and works for the field and not for the treasure hidden in it. But our shadows fail to eclipse the light of the Sun: *“Jesus Christ becomes, in a way, newly present, in spite of all his apparent absences, in spite of all the limitations of the presence and of the institutional activity of the Church”*²³.

42. We are called to work faithfully in the Lord’s vineyard following Him and not Him following us. The Church is a millennial tree with very deep roots nestled in revelation, but it needs at the same time, the flexibility of the shrub to offer the fruit that others can reach. *“Let us ask the Lord,* says Pope Francis,

²² Ibid., 28: *A task moved by anxiety, pride, the need to be seen and to dominate, will certainly not be sanctifying.* Cf. JULIAN BARRIO BARRIO, *In verbo tuo*, 139. *The Mystery of the Church would fade away and lose its salt if she aspired to be another institution, seeking among other things, those of Caesar, riches that are eaten by moths and corroded by rust.*

²³ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor hominis*, 13.

*to free the Church from those who would make her grow old, encase her in the past, hold her back or keep her at a standstill. But let us also ask him to free her from another temptation: that of thinking she is young because she accepts everything the world offers her, thinking that she is renewed because she sets her message aside and acts like everybody else. No! The Church is young when she is herself, when she receives ever anew the strength born of God's word, the Eucharist, and the daily presence of Christ and the power of his Spirit in our lives. The Church is young when she shows herself capable of constantly returning to her source"*²⁴.

43. The Spirit of the Risen One moves us to evangelize the poor. When that Spirit moves us, it leads us to Jesus and the Church becomes the salt and the leaven. She remains faithful to the Lord and open to his plans. When our parishes and communities drink and share this ever-fresh water of the gospel to others, they become alive and are set free from their self-centeredness. We can be free to share and bring relief to the suffering of the least of our community. Just like Jesus, we will know and recognize them as the blessed ones of our time.

44. From the tomb of the Apostle, we do not allow ourselves to contemplate indifferently as if Christian commitment has become another object in a museum of Christianity. We do not want to be spectators but active witnesses like the Apostle James. This Holy Year gives us an occasion to receive the grace of the Lord so that Ezekiel's prophecy may also be realized in our Church during the Jubilee Year: *"The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he led me out in the spirit of the LORD and set me in the center of the broad valley. It was filled with bones. He made me walk among them in every*

²⁴ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, 35.

direction. So many lay on the surface of the valley! How dry they were! He asked me: Son of man, can these bones come back to life? "Lord GOD," I answered, "you alone know that." Then he said to me: Prophecy over these bones, and say to them: Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus, says the Lord GOD to these bones: Listen! I will make breath enter you so you may come to life" (Ezekiel 37:1-5).

45. The Holy Spirit helps us to test the new paths that lead us from the gospel to the world and from the world to the gospel. We must have the courage to let ourselves be asked and questioned about the society of our time. Reality is not a threat but a call. What places are we being asked to leave? We cannot be satisfied by adorning our seats of honor or write a letter of consolation in gold for the marginalized. If we do not bring the Good News to the rejects of our society nor be the salt for this earth that sustains us; if we do not open the minds and hearts of those who because of indifference live with their eyes closed or if we do not bear witness with passion that God, *"taking down the throne of the mighty and exalting the humble"* (Luke 1:52) is on the side of the least and the last, it is because we have become unreceptive to the Spirit with whom we were anointed in baptism.

**Let us be transformed by the Spirit
into living stones of the Church that journeys everyday
thanks to the Word and the sacraments.**

46. Because of our secular history and our role in the world, we have become accustomed to being the teachers and spokespersons of the Gospel and in making our culture the exemplary vehicle of the Christian faith for other continents. Instead, at this moment in history, our diocesan Churches witness the growth of the Christian faith in other continents. For centuries, the Camino de Santiago has summoned hundreds of thousands of Europeans but the rise of pilgrims from Asia, America and Oceania in search of the historical roots of the apostolic faith gives us hope. A sign of the times, as already noticed at that moment by St. John Paul II, who emphasizes that Catholicism is multicultural when he wrote that *“Christianity will have to respond ever more effectively to this need for inculturation. Christianity, while remaining completely true to itself, with unswerving fidelity to the proclamation of the Gospel and the tradition of the Church, will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which it is received and takes root”*²⁵.

47. For this reason, Pope Francis, who has come “from the end of the world”, tells us: *“it is not essential to impose a specific cultural form, no matter how beautiful or ancient it may be, together with the Gospel. The message that we proclaim always has a certain cultural dress, but we in the Church can sometimes fall into a needless hallowing of our own culture”*²⁶. Let us be transformed by the Spirit into living stones of the Church that journeys everyday thanks to the Word and the sacraments. A Church involved in concrete reality and ready to collaborate with enthusiasm and without delay in building the city of God in the midst of the city of men, says St. Augustine.

²⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 40.

²⁶ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 117.

1.4. Towards the Culture of the Spirit before a Secular Culture

48. By looking at the current anthropological reality, we can perceive the image of a materially and spiritually anorexic person. Pilgrims come from the different continents with their own associations but with similar concerns, seeking answers from the Gospel and the Apostolic Tradition to the penultimate or ultimate questions that they carry with them. In a special way I will refer to Europe as a pilgrim, born on a pilgrimage around the memory of the Apostle James and who must become the “*Europe of the spirit*”²⁷. Our Europe is faced with the challenge of knowing which direction to take. To do this, in addition to talent and creativity, she needs to be nourished by her own roots. They are much more than the collective achievements of medieval Christianity, recognizable in their arts, universities, constructions, hospitals, monasteries, churches, etc. These roots are not just beautiful relics of a past, although now they seem useless and outdated to face new challenges. Our roots are more universal and go much deeper. They are well entrenched on earth and in that very soil, they know what it means to be human. That is why they keep telling us who we are. They are the roots that were generated in the encounter of civilizations between ancient Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean. In “our” Bible, you tour an entire ancient library with the traces of all the cultures from which Europe emerged. It is without a doubt, the book from which our culture is born and the one that gives it, its

²⁷ “Be certain! The Gospel of hope does not disappoint! Throughout the vicissitudes of your history, St. John Paul II wrote, yesterday and today, it is a the light which illumines and directs your way; it is the strength which sustains you in trials; it is the prophecy of a new world; it is the sign of a new beginning; it is the invitation to everyone, believers and non- believers alike, to blaze new trails leading to a “*Europe of the spirit*”, in order to make the continent a true “*common home*” filled with the joy of life. “Post-Synodal Exhortation “*Ecclesia in Europe*”, 121.

own appearance²⁸. In the warmth of this inspired Word, the value of recognizing the dignity of the person germinated regardless of any circumstance. This value was key, for example, during the modern age to the recognition of *the rights of people* from newly discovered lands in the New World.

49. The more complex our challenges are, the deeper the roots are needed. Only in this way can these challenges be resolved with confidence and that the socio-economic level of our continent may not jeopardize the stability of the entire tree. When a culture knows who it is, she knows better where to go. The challenges we face in Europe provide an opportunity that we cannot waste if we face them from the foundation of values that gave us origin and development.

50. It is obvious that it is not the task of the Church to dictate the development of society and culture although she should not be left out²⁹. On the other hand as an institution, we have not always been able to interpret all the changes that can improve our continent; distrust of something new or the speed of change sometimes paralyzes us, without paying attention and supporting what St. Paul wrote: *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things “ (Philippians 4:8). The Pope also reminds us: “if we allow doubts and fears to dampen our courage, instead of being creative we will remain comfortable and make no progress whatsoever. In this case we will not take an active*

²⁸ Cf. E. MORENO BAEZ, *The Foundations of Europe*, Santiago de Compostela 1996. J. RATZINGER, *L'Europe di Benedetto e la Crisi delle Culture*, Rome 2005. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *The Church in Europe*, 28 June 2003.

²⁹ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, 28: *The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.*

*part in historical processes but become mere onlookers as the Church gradually stagnates*³⁰.

51. We welcome with joy the development of our European identity and the contribution of values such as: equal labor rights between men and women, the greater social integration of people who because of their physical or intellectual condition or their sexual orientation suffered marginalization by society, the growing respect for the environment, the courageous commitment of many NGO's in defense of the weakest especially with immigrants and also in their commitment to justice in developing countries, maintaining *"an increasing awareness of the need to establish a healthy balance between the economic and social dimensions"*³¹. These are all advances that should not be reversed. To the extent that they help recognize the dignity of people and promote social justice, they also promote the growth of the Kingdom of God.

**However, a Europe locked up in its economic interests,
as well as the injustice to other peoples
to which she herself is a debtor, suffocates herself.**

52. However, a Europe locked up in its economic interests, as well as the injustice to other peoples to which she herself is a debtor, suffocates herself. She cannot become an island of social welfare

³⁰ FRANCIS, *Evangelium Gaudium*, 129.

³¹ BENEDICT XVI, *Papal Address to the participants of the Congress on the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. Values and Perspectives for Tomorrow's Europe, promoted by the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE), Rome 24 May 2007.*

that must be defended. This is neither realistic nor fair. Precisely, the injustice we generate in developing countries is the breeding ground for the violence we fear. We have a cultural and valuable identity, capable of offering authentic values that can enrich other cultures³².

53. For the old continent, the odyssey of the hero Ulysses represents the return to the security of the home. This myth seems to describe the current obsession of our Europe, but unlike our character this nightmare for safety and well-being paralyzes her and takes away confidence from her own future³³. The demographic crisis that clouds the future, the media banalization of important dimensions of existence like death or sexuality; the questioning of the family as an institution, the fear of foreigners, the distrust of institutions and among individuals, paralysis in the face of commitment, are some of its manifestations³⁴. On the other hand, the sciences, considered "in themselves" are neutral to our Christian tradition. However, the resources they have; the purpose for which they are investigated or the recipients of their implementation³⁵, need ethical and moral references. The only science - which is real and concrete - requires broader horizons than those of its immediate application or its profitability.

³² J. BARRIO BARRIO, *Address at the Council of Culture Department of Strasbourg, 27 November 2018: "Saying "Europe" must mean saying "opening". It must therefore be an open and welcoming continent, which continues to carry out in today's globalization, not only in forms of economic cooperation, but also social and cultural cooperation"*.

³³ FRANCIS, *Christus Vivit*, 92: "In some host countries, migration causes fear and alarm, often fomented and exploited for political ends. This can lead to a xenophobic mentality, as people close in on themselves, and this needs to be addressed decisively". Rich countries want to educate the poor with "an 'education' that reassures them and turns them into domesticated and harmless beings". Injustice is the breeding ground for violence (Cf. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 59-60).

³⁴ FRANCIS, *Lumen Fidei*, 55: "If we remove faith in God from our cities, mutual trust would be weakened, we would remain united only by fear and our stability would be threatened".

³⁵ FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, 107: "We have to accept that technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups".

54. The educational field also requires sustained lights. Qualified professionals are needed but their integral human training and their vocation of service to society should not be eliminated even if the profitability of the market is the one that decides and determines their curriculum and training profile and the profitability of the individual is not the only *raison d'être* of their work. If their work or academic preparation were only configured by the demand of the private or public company, which institutions of knowledge and culture will remain as a point of reference that guides our society?

55. We must work for the well-being of all but by ensuring that it is not a source of injustice for anyone. With hope, we must continue to seek in the “new Europe of the spirit” that working conditions be worthy and that the timetables are adequate for the reconciliation of both professional and family life. It is a reality that many young people are forced to emigrate in order to perform the work for which they have prepared for years or earn a living in exhaustive occupations in conditions of real exploitation³⁶.

**The application of technologies also provides
an ethical challenge for the world and for our Europe.**

³⁶ FRANCIS, *Christus Vivit*, 270: “Besides making them poor, the lack of work impacts negatively on young people’s capacity to dream and to hope, and it deprives them of the possibility of contributing to the development of society. Often job insecurity among the young is linked to economic interests that exploit labor”.

56. In reality, he who promotes injustice becomes a victim of it. He who profits from the exploitation of others disfigures his own dignity and misuses the opportunity to give meaning to his life. A life spent just to enjoy and to accumulate things without sharing, ends up being a substitute for happiness that does not translate into joy that comes from the heart nor gives meaning to life³⁷.

57. The application of technologies also provides an ethical challenge for the world and for our Europe. It is not uncommon for the Pope to say that *“the great sages of the past run the risk of going unheard amid the noise and distractions of an information overload”*³⁸. The immediacy and overload of information takes away the perspective of events from us and worse, immunizes us in the face of the pain of others. We end up confusing virtuality and reality³⁹. Technology allows us to connect devices but not always to real people⁴⁰. On the other hand, the globalization that technology allows, makes it easier for the Europe of peoples to look like a cultural plain: for example, a teenager from Warsaw is confused by impersonation with somebody else from our Galicia.

58. *“Today’s media enable us to communicate and to share our knowledge and affections. Yet at times they also shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and the joys of others and the complexity of their*

³⁷ LEO THE GREAT, *Sermon on the Beatitudes*, 95, 2-3: PL 54, 462: “You cannot doubt that the poor more easily obtain the gift of humility than the rich, for the poor, in their destitution, are easily familiar with meekness, and instead the rich, with pride”.

³⁸ FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, 47.

³⁹ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 62: “priority is given to the outward, the immediate, the visible, the quick, the superficial and the provisional”.

⁴⁰ FRANCIS, *Christus Vivit*, 90: “Immersion in the virtual world has brought about a kind of “digital migration”, involving withdrawal from their families and their cultural and religious values, and entrance into a world of loneliness and of self-invention, with the result that they feel rootless even while remaining physically in one place”.

*personal experiences. For this reason, we should be concerned that alongside the exciting possibilities offered by these media, a deep and melancholic dissatisfaction with interpersonal relations, or a harmful sense of isolation, can also arise*⁴¹ “. The faster our societies experience changes, the more we need discernment to value them. From what criteria do we decide on moral, personal or collective dilemmas? What lamp will shed light to help us decipher them? We are citizens, not just submissive consumers forced to defend alone the valuables in our homes without support from our community⁴². To know who the person is, it is necessary to know to whom he belongs. The dignity of man is the echo of God’s transcendence and an anthropology without God or Christ cannot exist. We run the risk of becoming “light” individuals for whom the priority is to surf complications⁴³; individuals who build an identity based on their consumption habits; individuals, in short, who forget that “*I am me, but I am not mine*”⁴⁴.

**We have to prune the tree,
but we will not leave it without roots.**

59. We need the light of discernment. Without realizing it, we can equate the unconditional value of the person with the absolutism of the individual; the necessary equality of rights between men

⁴¹ FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, 47.

⁴² ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Ordine*. 2, 10, 30: “It is difficult for man to turn and find himself. Eager of exteriorities, his very greed leads him to the void. And, fleeing from himself, he falls into the torture of multiplicity”.

⁴³ J. BARRIO BARRIO, *Confident in Your Word Lord*, 81-82: “We run the risk of aesthetically varnishing everything and in which we can, without pretending, live turning our backs to the disease and, above all, to the sick, ignoring that, before or after, pain visits us, given the fragility of our bodies. We do not seldom see that the sick win over the healthy in terms of tenderness, love, and kindness.”

⁴⁴ ST. AUGUSTINE, *In John*, 29.3.

and women with a gender ideology that is not uniquely or mainly encompassed in the issue of women's rights, but rather in the displacement of the notion of individual freedom from the "I can do what I want" to "I can be whatever I want," aggravating that this self-affirming decision seeks to impose its acceptance by others; the convenient secularity of the State with secularism that nullifies religious rights in the public sphere; love for the land and the environment with an environmentalism without anthropology nor social justice. It will be better to stop and awaken our conscience, before it ends up thinking no more than what is acted upon in practice. In this perspective, Europe will be the Agora, the meeting place of responsible citizens that it needs.

60. A European culture that disregards the Christian tradition would be nothing more than at best, a fictitious story without an ending. There are siren songs that incite us to reset our history, our culture and even our human nature from scratch. However, "*man does not create himself. He is spirit and will, but also nature*"⁴⁵. So, as the ancients already wondered, we too have to think about it: *cui prodest?* That is, he who profits, is he not who commits the crime? What character is at stake? What kind of society and human being are we heading to? Is it possible that we are calling democratic, utilitarianism of the majority, and freedom, the consumption capacity of an individual?

61. In our culture, achievements are publicized as if we were the architects of progress and free from the onerous burden of traditions. We have to prune the tree, but we will not leave it without roots. On the contrary, Europe could be a beautiful

⁴⁵ FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, 6. In this same sense, already the SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL in its *Gaudium et Spes*, 53: "*Whenever it comes to human life, nature and culture are in the most intimate connection*".

flower held in a glass of water: a beautiful image yes, but without any soil, nor life within: a community of utilitarianism and aestheticism but without the foundation of the truth of being human. *“Is it not surprising that today’s Europe, while aspiring to be regarded as a community of values, seems ever more often to deny the very existence of universal and absolute values”*⁴⁶?

62. But can there be anything more absolute than the dignity of every person, being the image of God? On the other hand, when this value is excluded because of convenience, we are already crossing a point of no return that ends up justifying for the sake of well-being, the violence and manipulation against a human being. If we do not protect absolute values, this or that person, with his first and last names, with his real and particular situation, has already become relative, that is, expendable, or as Pope Francis tells us, is *disposable*. The Christian faith brings for our Europe a perspective in which every human being, every person, regardless of his vital circumstances and his origin, from the womb to his last breath, is absolutely sacred to God, and therefore also necessarily for man himself ⁴⁷.

63. You come from other continents, nationalities and cultures to the city of the Apostle Santiago. These different languages do not constitute a barrier in your communication, on the contrary, you experience it as an enrichment that gives complementarity. The

⁴⁶ BENEDICT XVI, Papal Address to the participants of the Congress on the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. Values and Perspectives for Tomorrow's Europe, Rome 24 May 2007.

⁴⁷ BENEDICT XVI, *Homily during the Eucharist held in the Praza do Obradoiro*, November, 2010: *“One cannot worship God without taking care of his sons and daughters; and man cannot be served without asking who his Father is and answering the question about him. The Europe of science and technology, the Europe of civilization and culture, must be at the same time a Europe open to transcendence and fraternity with other continents, and open to the living and true God, starting with the living and true man. This is what the Church wishes to contribute to Europe: to be watchful for God and for man, based on the understanding of both which is offered to us in Jesus Christ.”*

Camino de Santiago gives you the opportunity without fear or mistrust to live and share with someone who is different. We find in Santiago that all cultures are welcome, without losing their identities, opening up to one another, and where any person can recognize in his fellow human being, even if a stranger or unknown, his neighbor, a brother or a sister . *“In Santiago, a city in the far west of Europe, the entire Continent converges. In it are both the center and the periphery. It is therefore a highly symbolic place to discover the great wealth of Europe united in its religious and cultural tradition”*⁴⁸.

2. GO ON YOUR WAY!

2.1 Listen: A Journey towards Interiority

64. In reality, there are as many reasons to make a pilgrimage to Santiago as there are as many pilgrims; each of these motives is “flesh and blood”, made of the specific and personal circumstances of each pilgrim. It is God who stirs up the “whys” of the journey, for He is the one who calls and the only one who actually knows their names. It is something that does not fit in a statistic. Along the way the pilgrim withdraws from the ordinary life he left behind and decided to free himself from his routine. At the conclusion of the pilgrimage, and having lived this experience, not a few, like the patriarch Jacob, exclaim: *“Truly, the LORD is in this place and I did not know it”* (Genesis 28:16).

Who can deny that in all these experiences,

⁴⁸ FRANCIS, *Message to the President of the Council of European Episcopal Conferences*, Rome, 23 September 2019.

the Word by which all things were made, was being revealed?

65. The confidences and testimonies of those who make a pilgrimage to Santiago form a vast inter-cultural mosaic of interreligious expectations, personal stories and yearnings. Some pilgrims felt a need to gather among themselves or a thirst for silence that their frantic rhythm of work does not give them. Aware of the weariness of a consumer society, or an affluent but unchallenging life, they are amazed to discover nature as God's creation. The pilgrimage became for them a path of spiritual education. Perhaps they will not use the name Creator of the sun that shines on them every day or of the rain that falls. They discovered like a revelation what they once perceived with indifference and now feel fortunate and even grateful⁴⁹. They received a glass of water as a treasure and a word of encouragement or a direction as a real gift. Their experience of the Camino led them to value what in their daily lives seemed trivial or natural and as if "owed" to them. In their encounter with other pilgrims, they appreciate the greatness of the seemingly small and insignificant. Through their deeds and their encounters, they in turn become protagonists for other pilgrims to rediscover the simplicity of life. That old lady, that man, that place where a shade or a small chapel was found, those pilgrims, that fountain, that silence... His pupils receive, as for the first time, the purity and uniqueness with which each creature is clothed⁵⁰. Paying attention to beauty and cultivating it, helps us get out of utilitarian pragmatism. Who can deny that in all these experiences the Word by which all things were made, was being

⁴⁹ Fr. RUBIO BARDON, *El Camino Agustiniiano*, Ediciones Paulinas, Madrid 1991, 126, 6: "The beauty of the universe is like a great book. Behold, examine, read what is up and down. God did not make you know him cast in letters but placed the creatures before your eyes. Why are you looking for more eloquent testimony? Heaven and earth are yelling at you: We are God's creation".

⁵⁰ MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Centuries on Love*, I, 1-83.

revealed? The prophet Isaiah perceives this: *"I was ready to respond to those who did not ask, to be found by those who did not seek me. I said: Here I am! Here I am! To a nation that did not invoke my name"* (Isaiah 65:1).

66. The Camino de Santiago is a path of transcendence in which one discovers that each place and each person includes an unexpected sacramental depth. The efforts and sacrifices of the pilgrimage, the fraternal relationship between the pilgrims and those who welcome them, provoke an interpretation of an experience that calms the pragmatic culture and the fast-paced reality in which we live.

**Blessed is he who believes and walks
without having seen yet!**

67. There is a tendency developing in our society that before you start thinking about others, treat yourself well first. Maybe the opposite is true. Only those who live their lives for others can achieve peace within themselves. Our hearts start to stop when we start thinking too much about ourselves. It recovers its heartbeat if we give ourselves to others: *"Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit"* (John 12:24).

68. The pilgrim comes to discover that his pursuits begin and end *in the old man*. However, as he walks, he makes a promise to give up his old self to truly become *the new man*. He ceases to be just a bundle of impulses, thoughts and ideas that should make him feel better and enlightened. *"Certainly this is a superficial conceit:*

there is much movement on the surface, but the mind is neither deeply moved nor affected."⁵¹ If one really wants to find himself, he must not be afraid to get lost, leaving his very self: *"whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"* (Matthew 10:39-40). He has stopped seeking his comfort. He searches and yearns for his real self, that self he does not yet know. He is discovering who God is for him and what is the mission to which he calls him. God will be revealed to him in Jesus Christ, his Son.

69. Blessed is he who believes and walks without having yet seen! *"Wisdom is shown to those who do not demand trials and reveals it to those who do not distrust it"* (Wisdom 1:2). The pilgrim must not let himself be weighed down by his past and must trust by setting himself on his way to Christ. In Him, all the promises of God have been fulfilled because of his definitive yes and without turning back (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:19-20). The Christian faith is the determined response to God's promise to all. *"Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the "peripheries" in need of the light of the Gospel"*⁵². Let us not forget what the Lord says to Peter: *"when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go"*(John 21:18). Faith *"sees to the extent that it journeys, to the extent that it chooses to enter into the horizons opened up by God's word"*⁵³. Whoever wants to see has to take risks and prepare for the encounter with God, learning to be born from above (cf. John 3:3ff). This height is not at the top of one's spiritual perfection, but on the plain of service to the concrete reality of others, especially the poor with their needs and worries.

⁵¹ FRANCIS, *Gaudete et Exultate*, 38.

⁵² FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 20.

⁵³ FRANCIS, *Lumen Fidei*, 9.

70. The ecclesial community confronts us with other people, in short, with the concrete and sinful reality in which she loves a God only for himself. She does not live at the expense of others nor serves only at certain times nor for spiritual comfort. The faith of the Church is a light that God gives us so that we may focus on others: *“Faith transforms the whole person precisely to the extent that he becomes open to love”*⁵⁴. Without it, we would perhaps seek *“a God without Christ, a Christ without the Church, a Church without her people”*⁵⁵. We must walk toward God, not with our backs to Him so that what the prophet Jeremiah says does not happen to us: *“but they did not listen to me, nor did they pay attention. They walked in the stubbornness of their evil hearts and turned their backs, not their faces, to me”* (Jeremiah 7:24). The Church does not walk backwards. She walks forward because he hears the Word with *“one ear placed in God and the other in the people”*⁵⁶. She does not live on the repetition of a sterile past, nor of a passive waiting for better times, nor is she shielded in the *“it has always been done so”*⁵⁷. She walks with the sentiment of St Paul: *“forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal”* (Philippians 3:13-14).

**Interiority is a door that opens from within,
but always outwards.**

⁵⁴ FRANCIS, *Lumen Fidei*, 26.

⁵⁵ FRANCIS, *Gaudete et Exultate*, 37.

⁵⁶ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 154.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 33. Cf. JULIAN BARRIO BARRIO, *Alocution in the Department of Culture of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 27 November 2018: “If we want “the contemporary European Christian” to approach “the eternal today of God”, we need a passion and courage that shakes our apathy forcefully”*.

71. Indeed, the Church is on a journey with Christ ahead of her. He is her future. Behind us, however, are our individual and institutional customs. Forward, there is our own origin and reason for being: the open side from which Christ gave himself up for all and from which the Church is born. We run towards perfection *“for a small step, in the midst of great human limits, can be more pleasing to God than the outwardly correct life of those who spend their days without facing important difficulties”*⁵⁸.

72. In this consciousness we discover that interiority is a door that opens from within, but always outwards⁵⁹. Being a Christian is much more than being “good” in life whether in private, in the family or at work. We can be helpful, give generously what we have and even receive the sacraments, but if we collaborate even if it is not consciously and deliberately with those who profit from injustice or perpetuate it, as individuals or as institutions, we would be like the foolish virgins (cf. Matthew 25:1-13). We are asked not to be complicit but to be very attentive and to keep our eyes open. Can a Christian have spiritual peace while others, the Body of Christ, are on the cross?

73. An evasive spiritual attitude seeks an intimate expansion of the heart but one that lacks a neighbor, and therefore the Church. The Risen Christ never provides an inner paradise but gives us peace and shows us the wounds of giving himself up for all. Nor does it lead to the self-measurement, which is pride that kills the soul, putting ourselves or the group itself on a stand above the

⁵⁸ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 44.

⁵⁹ J. BARRIO BARRIO, *Alocución...*: *“In a time when publicity insists on the human being’s own decision-making capabilities, the right of the individual to pamper himself, in the goodness of “egoism” (masking that this is just another way of saying selfishness), Abraham’s vocation reminds us that the human being is only truly him when he is to the other, since the person is only performed in the relationship. God Himself, to the extent that the poverty of our language allows us to speak of it, exists “outward”.*

Church⁶⁰. The Christian faith is oblivious to the pain that is included in any sacrifice done for it⁶¹. There is a sacrifice that makes the person more consistent, when he discovers his reality and makes him more attentive to the needs of his neighbor, but there is another one that is vain glory. Sacrifice can also be a source of selfishness and resentment but if its motivation is charity, it implies the purest act of acknowledging the other. A Christian lives his faith with a sense of gratitude. Thanking faith not only for getting him through dark times but also for having surrendered to her. He is grateful for all the threads that have been weaving his life, knowing that everything comes from the hand of God and is sure that God is the good Father who wants nothing more than our good and leads our lives along his ways. Faith allows us to choose not our ways but God's ways so we may live our lives towards him.

Wisdom is forged in silence.

In it the seed of the Word germinates in us imperceptibly

74. *"God takes care of you"* (Matthew 6:5). We experience this truth in prayer. Without doubt we need tranquility and silence to reflect about who we are. Knowing more about ourselves requires an experience of silence, or rather a silencing. This is a silence that is

⁶⁰ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, 35: "Whoever is able to help recognizes that, precisely in this way, he too is helped; being able to help is neither your merit nor a source of pride".

⁶¹ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologicae II-II*, q. 30, a.4: "For He needs not our sacrifices, but wishes them to be offered to Him, in order to arouse our devotion and to profit our neighbor. Hence mercy, whereby we supply others' defects is a sacrifice more acceptable to Him, as conducing more directly to our neighbor's well-being." ALBERT VANHOYE, *Christ and man. Writings on Biblical Spirituality*, Messenger, Bilbao 2014, p. 81: "Instead of dwelling on the aspect of deprivation and pain about the common idea of sacrifice, we should turn all our attention to the aspect of transformation. If the Lord asks us to offer something, it is not to enrich himself, but to communicate his holiness to us, to transform ourselves and rise in love, with his Spirit of Love. In a Christian sacrifice the most important thing is not suffering, but the divine fire of love that triumphs over suffering".

not mute nor impatient for the next new thing.⁶² Wisdom is forged in silence. In it, the seed of the Word germinates in us imperceptibly⁶³. The silence of prayer will be the workshop where it will mature. Why else did Jesus teach his people to pray by urging them not to use many words like the Gentiles? (cf. Matthew 6:7). When your mind is silenced, God can then speak to you in your heart⁶⁴. And if you really want God to listen to you, *“do nothing contrary to prayer that God may come near and walk beside you”*⁶⁵.

75. We tend to give value to the news magnified in the media, even if many of them are momentary. When there is no news, it is easy to imagine that nothing important is happening. However, it is in this silent and constant day-to-day where life grows. The grass does not make noise as it grows. So is the charity that gives birth to life. It works without bragging or publicity. *“When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing”* (Matthew 6:3). In this charity the Mother gave birth to what is life, Jesus Christ. She did not look in the mirror of one's greatness but in that of the Lord, praised in her canticle exclaiming, *“The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty”* (Luke 1:53). This must be the burning charity of the Church from which we are called to be living stones.

2.2. Build: Hunger and Thirst for Justice, the Message of the Poor

⁶² J. BARRIO BARRIO, *Address.....: “Despite secularism and relativism, technology and electronics, mobility and rapid travel, the exploration of space and the speed of information, everything seems to reveal that people try to root themselves in the firm and stable ground of the sacred. The faster humanity walks, the greater the need to feel solid foundations”*.

⁶³ ORIGEN, *Homily on Exodus VII: “If you want to eat from manna, that is, if you want to receive the Word of God, you must know that it is small and very subtle, like the grain of coriander”*.

⁶⁴ ROWAN WILLIAMS, *Being a Christian, Follow Me*, Salamanca 2018, 103.

⁶⁵ EVAGRIUS THE MONK, in *Filocalía of the Desert Fathers* Vol. I, 66.

76. Our so-called developed societies value freedom and happiness even in an austere lifestyle. In our little West there is a mentality that instinctively rejects all kinds of deprivation and dismisses any occasion of not having things immediately. Of course, misery dehumanizes people and entire societies ⁶⁶. Our attitude sometimes absorbed by instant consumerism is immersed in parallel levels of well-being and indifference, consumer goods and inner emptiness.

77. Jesus in the Gospel proclaims: *“Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours”*(Luke 6:20). Only the humble can access this blessing of the Savior. Of course, misery is inhumane, but opulence is the woodworm of the heart and empties life of its meaning, generating in no few cases misery for other people. The Apostle James was called by the Lord to follow him on the path of his poverty: *“Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head”*(Matthew 8:20). In fact, the hunger of the Lord’s disciples made them pick heads of grain on the Sabbath under the condemning eyes of the Pharisees (cf. Luke 6:1-5).

78. Hunger and thirst are experienced directly. Not a few human beings go and fight hunger daily to escape death⁶⁷. For those of us who live in societies that have more than necessary,

⁶⁶ FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, 149: *“Extreme deprivation... facilitates the emergence of inhumane behavior and the manipulation of people by criminal organizations”*.

⁶⁷ *“It is true that poverty is an evil in terms of social and global reality. It is an evil that the goods of the land are distributed in such a way that a minority have the bulk of the resources, while large masses of population are forced to seek an uncertain subsistence day by day. It is clear that poverty as a social situation is not only undesirable but must be constantly and deeply fought. But that is precisely why the desire of a poor Church is the desire that the Church not be a factor that perpetuates injustice, but that she should be on the side of those for whom the Gospel is to be good news”* A. NOVO CID-FUENTES, *Theology in Pope Francis*, *Lumieira Magazine* 82-83 (2018), p. 26.

experiencing hunger and thirst can become an opportunity for a deeper and more real discovery of our human condition. Austerity sharpens the inner ear to better discern God's will and gives us the opportunity to do justice to those most in need. The Church presents the Lenten fast as a pedagogy for the mind and heart. Its disregard was denounced by the prophets and by Jesus himself. Perhaps, we have reduced it to a custom that does not help us see the meaning that Scripture reveals: *"Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking off every yoke? Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; Your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard."* (Is 58:6-8). *"When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to others to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you"* (Matthew 6:16-18).

The pilgrimage passes unnoticed day by day

but is an opportunity to discover the roots of our humanity.

79. Looking at the generations of our elders, we notice that scarcity has been the burden of their beginning. How many fathers and mothers fed and educated their children during material hardship, thanks only to their creativity and ingenuity! In their childhood, the lack of means made them abound in imagination

for the games they shared with other children in the streets and squares. Nor is it uncommon for not a few in our societies by touching rock bottom develop the strength that enables them to survive. This appears strange for a culture that reveres well-being, but necessity can become a teacher of life.

80. Today, we still encounter hunger and thirst. Needs are artificially created by an oversupply of products⁶⁸. They are a language of the body that completely shuts down the message for our soul. The toughness of the road helps us to discover nuances of our existence already present but awaiting our due attention. The pilgrimage passes unnoticed day by day but is an opportunity to discover the roots of our humanity. These roots, at first, turn out dry and bitter in taste but shows the body's dependence and vulnerability, that is, its reality. This experience helps put yourself in the place of those whose need is their daily "bread". It further reveals that self-sufficiency is a fiction created by the so-called developed societies and that the abundance of goods clouds the mind and hardens the heart. In this experience one realizes that a backpack loaded with things does not help at all in walking and that what consumerism qualifies as *indispensable* is, in fact, a trap for us to fall into its web.

81. The pilgrim who travels light has his heart filled with realism and emptied of excess. He relishes the roots producing food: *"In the desert we rediscover the value of what is essential for living; thus in today's world there are innumerable signs, often expressed implicitly or negatively, of the thirst for God, for the ultimate meaning of life. And in*

⁶⁸ Ibid., 50: *Blaming the increase in the population and not the extreme and selective consumerism of some is a way of not coping with problems. Cf. JOHN CASSIAN, Cenobitic Institutions, Monte Cassino Editions, Zamora 2000: "Let no one eat until they are satisfied. Indeed, it is not only quality, but also the quantity of food that dulls the vivacity of the heart".*

the desert people of faith are needed who, by the example of their own lives, point out the way to the Promised Land and keep hope alive”⁶⁹.

82. Both the Savior's forerunner, John the Baptist and the prophet Elijah bravely faced this desert. In this way, one day this very void would provide the Word, a place in freedom. The Bible reveals to us that the desert is much more than a geographical vastness. It is also a need, vital for the soul. Moreover, the Fathers and Mothers of the desert⁷⁰ lived in a bare space of spiritual warfare like this, men and women who populated the wastelands of Egypt, Syria, Cappadocia and Palestine seeking union with the Absolute. For anyone who walks through a desert where God can speak to him in his heart and encounters him, the pilgrimage is a place of questioning habits and prejudices, of silencing and emptying the mind, so that God can be heard in the heart and have the experience of the Virgin Mary who brought us Life. We remember the words of the prophet Hosea: *“I will lead her into the wilderness and speak persuasively to her. Then I will give her the vineyards she had, and the valley of Achor as a door of hope”* (Hosea 2:16-17).

**We must seek the source that pours and runs
even though it is night as St John of the Cross wrote.**

83. The Camino reminds us of the real thirst and the real hunger: *“hunger and thirst for justice”* (Matthew 5:6). The Risen One

⁶⁹ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 86.

⁷⁰ Douglas Burton – CHRISTE, *The Word in the Desert*, Siruela, Madrid 2007, 384: *“The parents of the desert experienced words as events. The surplus of the meaning of Scripture endured not in the form of comments and homilies, but in acts and gestures, in lives of holiness transformed by dialogue with Scripture”*.

challenges us by saying, “*Let anyone who thirsts, come to me and drink!*” (John 7:37). Therefore, if we want to change this world wounded by inhumanity and find ourselves strangers in the land of injustice and forgetful of God, we must seek the source that pours and runs even though it is night as St John of the Cross wrote. The source is Christ who will make us drink from his Spirit to transform us but not to quench our thirst for righteousness.

84. All Christians and the Church as such, are called to be pilgrims. The word *parish*, in its etymology means *residence abroad*. *Abraham journeyed to the land promised as a foreign land, dwelling in tents, as did all his descendants, declaring themselves as strangers and aliens on earth* (cf. Hebrews 11:9,13). It is clear that for those who are truly Christian, the reality we live in is far from the Kingdom of God, realized definitively in Jesus. For this reason, the Church lives on the gospel and encourages the hope for a better world. This new world is already laid out in the real colors of the teaching and ministry of Jesus and the witness of countless saints, confessors and martyrs, even those of our day. That is why Christian hope is much more than just waiting. It is the gift of God that mobilizes and arouses charity to transform this society and this world from its root.

2.3. Trust: The Disciple’s Proven Hope

85. “*Make hope resound within this altitude*”⁷¹, are the prayerful words that Dante placed in the mouth of Beatrice addressed to the

⁷¹ DANTE ALIGHIERI, *The Divine Comedy*, I sang XXV: “*Smiling there afterwards, said Beatrice: Illustrious life, by whom the benefactions of our Basilica have been described, make hope resound within this altitude; Thou knowest as oft thou dost personify it as Jesus to the three gave greater clearness*”.

Apostle James. "All my hope lies not but in your very great mercy. Give what you command and command what you want"⁷², St. Augustine wrote. "Hope does not disappoint" (Romans 5:5). " He addresses God in his goodness, in his righteousness, in his mercy as the ultimate end to which all is ordained"⁷³ Do not let doubts that may assail you, stop you, pilgrims, because "living from hope does not suppress the problems of our lives [...] Never in our history, after original sin, has there been an earthly paradise"⁷⁴ You may often be judged in your place of work or among your own friends and acquaintances for being Christians, although not as in countries where there is persecution and Christians ending up as martyrs. Some of the criticisms maybe an honest attempt to tell you the truth, but others, possibly not. You like to have an immediate answer for all these questions, but deep down, you realize that giving *a reason for your faith* (1 Peter 3:15) is not just having clear arguments that will convince those who do not believe. They would, in any case, stop the arguments, but do not change attitudes. The Church is holy not because of our particular holiness or our fidelity to the Gospel but because in her Jesus is sanctifying us by giving up himself for us and forgiving us.

86. At other times, the same or similar questionings come within yourself. I do not mean what we sometimes call "questions of faith" that do not affect the heart nor question the "truths" of our faith. What I refer to is the temptation that goes down to the very core of your Christian commitment: Is it worth it? What if God does not ask so much? Why worry about others?⁷⁵

⁷² ST. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, BAC, Madrid 1955, Lib. X, chap. XXIX.

⁷³ G. L. MULLER, *Report...*, 5.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 11

⁷⁵ FRANCIS, *Gaudete et Exultate*, 134: "Like the prophet Jonah, we are constantly tempted to flee to a safe haven. It can have many names: individualism, spiritualism, living in a little world, addiction, intransigence,

87. Moments of trial or temptation are occasions to take out our self-conviction in faith and to strengthen it with the hope placed only in God. It is an opportunity to put our feet on the ground and recognize that faith is a continuous gift of God, not a self-belief, and that if for a single moment we let go of his hand, we would be lost in the void. The enthusiasm of the young Apostle James had to be considered when Jesus asks him and his brother John: *“You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”*(Mark 10:38), that is, are you able to follow me to the end? Are you able to carry your cross and follow me? (Luke 14:27). Temptation leaves us at the threshold of the question Jesus asks us. The answer can only be given by us. There lies the difficulty, but also the opportunity to mature in our faith. When we suffer from these moments of temptation, we also have the opportunity to find our real motivations in our Christian commitment and thus discern them. Therefore, examine yourselves every day before God, paying as much attention as possible on yourselves. Search your heart with the light of the Word to discover within its crevices the resistances to his will: *“Even if the love of money does not overcome me, even if I do not care for possessions and riches, however, I am eager for praise and seek human glory, I depend on the reactions and words of men, what does he think of me, what respect does he give me, what upsets him, what pleases him ... while I am seeking these things, I am your slave. I would like to act at least in such a way that I could be free”*⁷⁶.

the rejection of new ideas and approaches, dogmatism, nostalgia, pessimism, hiding behind rules and regulations. We can resist leaving behind a familiar and easy way of doing things”.

⁷⁶ ORIGEN, *Homily on Exodus*, XII.

88. We follow the Savior's divine teaching, asking Him to *"do not lead us into temptation,"* that is, Father, you who know us, do not lead us to the test! We pray with all confidence as we recognize sincerely our frailty and so need the power of His mercy. St. Augustine wrote: *"I will confess then what I know of myself, I will confess also what I know not of myself. And that because what I do know of myself, I know by Thy shining upon me; and what I know not of myself, so long know I not it, until my darkness be made as the noon-day in Thy countenance"*⁷⁷. Because to know who we are is *what we owe to faith, and not to our works*. Like Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness (cf. Galatians 3:6). You have probably experienced that trial and temptation have made you stronger in humility and weaker in your pride: *"If you have not done many jobs before, if you have not overcome many trials and temptations, you do not deserve to receive the teachings of freedom and hear from the Lord: I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of slavery"*⁷⁸.

**Sometimes we have the same cry as that of the father
who came to Jesus, in the face of his son's illness:
"I do believe, help my unbelief!" Mark 9: 24**

89. *"Without experiencing temptations, it is impossible to acquire the wisdom of the Spirit. The man who is not capable of a great temptation is neither worthy of a great gift. As God takes this man away from the greatness of temptation, so he also reduces the greatness of the gift. God never gives a great gift and a small temptation. No one can delight in the good if he has not first been tested by the temptation of undesirable things"*⁷⁹.

⁷⁷ ST. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, Lib.10, chap. V.

⁷⁸ ORIGEN, *Homily on the Exodus*, VIII.

⁷⁹ ISAAC OF NINEVEH, *The Gift of Humility*, 56. Cf. FRANCIS, *Gaudete et exultate*, 29: *"At some point we will have to perceive the truth itself head on, to let it invade for the Lord, and this is not always achieved if*

90. Sometimes we have the same cry as that of the father who came to Jesus in the face of his son's illness: *"I do believe, help my unbelief"* (Mark 9: 24). Perhaps we are confused: is faith, a security? How does one express such a cry both in time of faith and of disbelief? But is this not our same concern and perplexity? Do not the injustices we witness, the indifference of our society, the lukewarmness of those of us who call ourselves *Christians*, or the lethargy of our ecclesial communities put us into temptation? Do they not make us doubt, too, the lack of immediate response from God to our petitions and our needs? Should Jesus not be awakened from sleep at the stern of the boat, as his disciples did? (cf. Mark 4:35-40). We complain at times like the prophet Habakkuk: *"Your eyes are too pure to look upon wickedness, and the sight of evil you cannot endure. Why, then, do you gaze on the faithless in silence while the wicked devour those more just than themselves?"* (Habakkuk 1:13)

91. Reading through the gospel, we realize that God does not want the evil that we cause people. Jesus fights evil and he suffers it too. None of God's children suffers injustice without it affecting Christ himself: *"whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me"* (Matthew 25:40). If what we seek is an explanation, God then will offer us his silence, the infinite silence of his crucified Son. His free surrender and the injustice he suffered, silences any reasoning or explanation of what should or should not happen. If, moreover, we seek to change things, God offers us hope.

one is not seen on the edge of the abyss of the most overwhelming temptation. Thus, we find the great motivations that drive us to live our own tasks thoroughly".

92. Christian hope has nothing to do with an ephemeral optimistic feeling; much less with the acceptance that things, by themselves, will end up getting better; nor is it just waiting for the storm to pass. This disposition may be useful on some occasion, but that is not Christian hope. Christian hope is born out of the faith we have received, and, like it, rests on Jesus. Christian hope is hope in Jesus. If we have put our faith in him, we will discover that what we have so far imagined as a utopian future is a reality in him, in the now of God. He whom we have contemplated crucified, now lives and returns to all those who like him – are on the cross. If not, our hope would be unfounded (cf. 1Corinthians 15:14). *“At the root of this loss of hope is an attempt to promote a vision of man apart from God and apart from Christ”⁸⁰.*

93. That is why, cheer up! We are assured we have faith as long as we continue our journey. We are filled with Christian hope as long as we remain close to those who are suffering and do not remain indifferent. Our faith is alive even as we silently endure the doubts of others and are helpless to stop it. We must cast the anchor of our little boat into Jesus who tells us as he told Paul: *“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.”* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Blessed be our pilgrimage if it increases our need for God’s grace! *“Glory in his holy name; let hearts that seek the LORD rejoice”* (Psalm 105:3).

**The hope she summons gives the Church
her identity and her program.**

⁸⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *The Church in Europe*, 9.

94. This need is nourished by an unending encounter so that we do not stop seeking and enjoying God: *“Whoever has not liked anything ignores what he lacks, says St. Basil the Great. But whoever has liked something, wants it even more. He who liked the sweetness of the first commandments and knows that they gradually lead to the imitation of Christ, has a great desire to follow the others. Having a glimpse of the most hidden of God’s mysteries enclosed in divine scriptures, he has a great thirst to understand it. A greater knowledge awakens a more vivid and fiery thirst, as if he were to drink a flame. Because the divine is incomprehensible, one always remains in thirst”*⁸¹.
95. As her hope weakens, the Church risks falling into inactivity, yielding to the temptation to establish herself as a purely human institution. Instead of boldly walking forward with an eye on God’s promise, she seeks back her refuge in the social and cultural structures of the past. The hope she summons gives the Church her identity and her program.

2.4. Witness: Charity Sees

96. Along the Camino de Santiago, pilgrims receive the hospitality of religious institutions and individuals, who offer encounters for the sharing of experiences of the pilgrimage. Above all these are moments of prayer and the celebration of the sacraments which can rekindle the spirit through coming in contact with God and through sharing their faith. These gatherings are also given attention and affection by those who anticipate the pilgrims’ needs. These are moments when a small detail can be rewarded greatly by a sense of gratitude.

⁸¹ PETER DAMASCENE, *Second Commandment*, in *Filocalia of the fathers of the desert*, vol. III.

97. In churches and hostels, the liturgical celebration is not a strange service in a pilgrim's life, but an answer to his need for meaning, often sought in other areas. In the liturgy, the Spirit truly transforms people and, with his grace, disposes them to welcome the moment of salvation. Christianity is not a religion of the conversion of chemical elements but of the people themselves.

98. Moved by hospitality, so valued by the peoples of the desert, Abraham at the hottest part of the day, rose from the door of his tent to welcome the three people who appeared before him, prostrating himself before them (cf. Genesis 18:1). His descendants will remember that the land is owned by the LORD, and they know that there are guests in it. The Lord himself tells us that whoever welcomes a stranger, welcomes him: *"I was a stranger, and you welcomed me"* (cf. Matthew 25:31-46).

**There is a privileged place to listen to the Word:
at the feet of the Lord.**

99. Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus, welcomed the Lord (cf. Luke 10:38-42). Their encounter with Jesus places before us a permanent task. Martha was more attentive to the things of the house than attentive to Jesus himself. However, Mary – as he says – *"has chosen the better part"*. Sitting at the Lord's feet, she was listening to his word. Of course, Martha's work is important, like that of many women who are the heart of the home and the family, especially when they have to combine it with their professional vocation. Mary had chosen the better part, as the

Lord says. It is Mary who does not have anything to do with the needs of her guest. Martha continues the servile role of women while Mary joins the group of disciples listening to the Master. She was at his feet, a sign of hospitality *par excellence* with which the host receives the newly arrived, washing off the dust from their feet and anointing them with perfume. Simon, the Pharisee, did not perform this task when he invited Jesus to eat (cf. Luke 7:36-8:3).

100. All this reminds us that there is a privileged place to listen to the Word: at the feet of the Lord, that is, at the feet of his Body, who are the least in our society⁸². Therefore, a perfect listening to the Word of God needs a broader temple than our churches. That temple is also greater than the inside of our little heart. In order to reach the gates of that temple, *“not built by human hands”* (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1), we need to cross the threshold of charity. If charity is not in us, we will not be able to listen to the Word of God.

101. Pope Francis clearly points out to us the two sides of the “cliff” on which we can fall: *“I regret that ideologies lead us at times to two harmful errors. On the one hand, there is the error of those Christians who separate these Gospel demands from their personal relationship with the Lord, from their interior union with him, from openness to his grace. Christianity thus becomes a sort of NGO. For these great saints, mental prayer, the love of God and the reading of the Gospel in no way detracted from their passionate and effective commitment to their neighbors, quite the opposite. The other harmful ideological error is found in those who find suspect the social engagement of others, seeing it as superficial, worldly, secular,*

⁸² JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 49: *“If we have truly started out anew from the contemplation of Christ, we must learn to see him especially in the faces of those with whom he himself wished to be identified”*.

materialist, communist or populist. We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world"⁸³.

102. Perhaps we would prefer to contemplate the Lord only in the serenity of prayer or conversely in social and visible action for others, but we are called to recognize him wherever he is close to us. Not only where we would choose to find him. Would it not be better were he the one choosing instead of us? If it is in contemplation, may he find us zealously obeying his will, and if it is at the feet of Christ, serving those most in need, may he find us enthusiastic in charity.

103. "Supernatural charity is God's intimate union with us: he lives in us and we are his children"⁸⁴. Only charity can see. It can recognize the actual presence of Jesus in the lives of our unwanted neighbors⁸⁵. This charity does not retreat into emotion; quite the opposite, it comes out and anticipates, creates the reality that is yet to come, and activates the lost hope of the least, because it comes from Jesus Christ, God's ultimate future for each of them. This charity manifests his Kingdom and his presence in our midst⁸⁶. She rebuilds what inhuman structures and personal sin destroy: dignity and joy. Therefore, the person who practices charity does not become complicit in injustice by

⁸³ FRANCIS, *Gaudete et exultate*, 100-101.

⁸⁴ G. L. MULLER, Report..., 5.

⁸⁵ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, 31: "The Christian's programme —the programme of the Good Samaritan, the programme of Jesus—is "a heart which sees". This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly." ROWAN WILLIAMS, o.c., 69: "We already knew that Jesus is someone who practices hospitality, but now we learn that his welcome makes others able to welcome. Celebrating the Eucharist not only reminds us that we are invited to it and welcomed; it also brings us into the account that we are given the freedom to invite and welcome others. We have experienced the hospitality of God in Christ, so our lives are prepared to welcome others": p. 73

⁸⁶ PAUL VI, *Mysterium Fidei*: "Such presence is called real, not by exclusion, as if the others were not real, but by proper name, because it is also bodily and substantial, for Christ, God and man surely becomes present by it , whole and complete".

looking elsewhere, nor does he observe from afar or from above those who suffer⁸⁷. He stops at the one who suffers when others go around and pass by; his heart is moved in defense of human dignity and he treats the wounds in a way that the one who has them does not suffer alone. Can there be anything that simultaneously brings us closer to Jesus Christ than those who are *the least*?

Sometimes, we can forget that the celebration of the Eucharist is inseparable from communion among ourselves.

It is not an act of a particular devotion.

104. In God's gift of charity, a personal encounter with Christ takes place. Charity is celebrated in the Eucharist as its concrete motivation and as its fulness. So, every time we leave our own self to meet those who need us; every time we carry on our backs someone who is badly wounded in the middle of the road; every time we promote justice and truth in this society; somehow, we are already preparing the altar of the Eucharist. In that wounded neighbor is God, for in him is the crucified Lord and on his altar for the Eucharist, all love for the other is contained. There, Jesus Christ distributes his own love to us, *giving himself* through the gifts of bread and wine, consecrated in the fire of Charity, which is the Holy Spirit, that we in turn may become bread of life for others⁸⁸.

⁸⁷ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, 31 and 35: "Charity should not be a means depending on what is now considered proselytism. Love is free; it is not practiced to achieve other goals. This is a way of serving that humbles the one who serves. He does not take a position of superiority before the other, however miserable his situation (not the person!) is momentarily. Christ held the last place in the world—the Cross—and it is precisely with this radical humility that has constantly redeemed and helped us".

⁸⁸ ST AGUSTIN, *Sermon 272*: "Consequently, if you are the body of Christ and his members, the mystery which you are yourselves is set: you receive the mystery that you are. To what you are, you answer Amen, and

105. Sometimes, we can forget that the celebration of the Eucharist is inseparable from communion among ourselves. It is not an act of a particular devotion. The sacrament of the altar is a communitarian reality, which helps us to discover that what can be called solidarity among persons already has a Eucharistic meaning. Because the Eucharist is not only a sacrament to be celebrated but also to live. *“Do you realize what I have done for you? You ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do”* (John 13:12-15). Whoever dedicates oneself to others participates in communion with Jesus.

106. As we celebrate the Eucharist we receive the most holy body of Jesus Christ, born of Mary, died and rose again for us; but let us also be united with the Church, that is, not only with those of us who celebrate the sacrament, but also with those whom Jesus declared *blessed*. Let us not separate the two bodies, welcoming each other without receiving the other. Communion with Christ is at the same time union with all others to whom he gives himself⁸⁹. We receive the Holy One in the Eucharist and with our charity we are made one with his Mystical Body: *“Do you wish to honor the body of Christ? Do not despise it when you see it naked in the poor, nor honor it here in the temple with canvases of silk and then as you go out, you leave it cold and naked. For the same one who said, This*

as you answer (so) you rub it. You listen, then: Body of Christ, and you answer: Amen. Be a member of the body of Christ, that your Amen may respond to the truth. Why exactly does all that happen with bread? Let us not provide personal reasoning in this regard; let us listen, once again, to the Apostle himself, who, on the basis of this sacrament, says: One bread: being many, we are one body. Understand and enjoy: unity, truth, mercy, charity. One bread: Who is this one bread? Though being many, we are one body. Bring to the memory that bread is made not of one grain, but of many. When you were given the exorcisms, you are grinded; when you were submerged in water, as kneaded; when you received the fire of the Holy Spirit, as cooked. Be what you see and receive what you are. [...] Likewise, Christ, the Lord, also symbolized us; he wanted us to belong to him; at his table he consecrated the mystery of peace and unity of us with him. He who receives the mystery of unity and does not possess the bond of peace receives not the mystery for his own benefit, but a witness against him”.

⁸⁹ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, 14. Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 48: Learn [Christians] to offer oneself by offering the immaculate host.

*is my body, and with his word actually brought to reality what he said, also declared: I was hungry, and you gave me no food and later: "what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me". What good would it do to adorn Christ's table with gold vessels if Christ himself starves?"*⁹⁰

**The difference, when lived from the same Spirit,
unites us all in one body.**

107. At the end of the day whether of each day or of the last one granted to us; each will be like the charity one has done. All of us at the end of life will be free from the burden of possessions. But there will be two different types of poor that day: those who lived only for it and those who will show the wounds of their empty hands⁹¹. To these, Jesus will *multiply the harvest of his charity* by filling them with joy (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:7), and will say to them, *"Come, blessed of my Father, I was a stranger and you welcomed me"* (Matthew 25:35). For this reason, St. Paul assures us that *"now these three remain, faith, hope and charity, but the greatest of all is charity"* (1 Corinthians 13:13). Charity is the only thing left when everything else disappears. *"The Eucharist is called communion, because in it we become one with Christ and receive his flesh and his divinity, and through it we unite with one another, for by partaking of the same bread we are all the same body of Christ and of the same blood and come to be members of one another, for we are the same*

⁹⁰ JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homily on the Gospel of Matthew*, 50, 3-4: PG 58, 508-509.

⁹¹ Cf. BASIL THE GREAT, *Homily 3 on Charity*, 6: PG 31. *You should be grateful, satisfied, and happy for the honor you have been given, as it is not you who is to bother others' doors, but others who come to yours. And instead you retract and become almost inaccessible, you refuse the encounter with others, so as not to be forced to release a small gift. You only know how to say, "I have nothing to give, I'm poor." It is true, you are poor and deprived of all good: poor in love, poor in humanity, poor in trust in God, poor in eternal hope.*

*body of Christ*⁹² Now you know that if you live the same charity of Jesus, *you will be called children of the Most High* (Luke 6:35).

108. The Tomb of the Apostle lies at one end of western Europe not at its strategic center⁹³. This moves us to launch a call from the city of Santiago for Europe without losing her identity to welcome all those people coming from all the ends of the earth. This is the experience of getting together that pilgrims have in our Cathedral. The difference when lived from the same Spirit unites us all in one body.

109. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a king who said to his servant, *“Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in here the poor and the crippled, the blind and the lame”* (Luke 14:21). We are now the servants called to gather to the wedding banquet, that is, to the Eucharist that we celebrate, all those who lack the bread of peace, food, justice, dignity, so that they may be welcomed and sit at the banquet of the Kingdom and eat with us the Bread of Life. That day the Eucharist will be complete because we will all be seated at the table.

3. SANTIAGO AWAITS YOU

3.1. A Narrow Door

⁹² JOHN DAMASCENE, *Of Faith* Ort. 4, 13: PG 94, 1154 A.

⁹³ J. BARRIO BARRIO: *“Santiago de Compostela is not among the financial centers of the continent, nor among the main centers of political decision-making. The true value of the Camino de Santiago, together with those of Jerusalem and Rome, is to be a path of the spirit of the human being, who rebels against disappearing under the suffocation of materialism”*.

110. As you enter Galicia, you recognize that it is geographically constituted by small parishes and most of them rural. The Church that you know gathers hundreds of millions of people from all over the world. It is above all Catholic or universal. This is felt in every small village of our diocese especially when its parishioners gather on Sunday to hear the Word and participate in the shared Eucharist. The Church is Catholic because she lives this totality by not excluding anyone, however, small one may seem. So, in the life of faith of every small parish, catholicity resounds and becomes present, a full experience of the salvation that is Jesus Christ. The Church itself encouraged by the Spirit shines in her catholicity when she brings all persons together without exclusion⁹⁴.

**When you finally arrive in Santiago,
you enter its cathedral through the Holy Door.
You realize that this rite symbolizes your process of
conversion.**

111. The Catholic Church also journeys with the other Churches and other ecclesial communities to bring about the unity of all Christians. The body of Christ cannot be divided. Therefore, ecumenism is a sacred duty to us. This takes us beyond manifestations of good intentions but also specifying concrete initiatives. Thus, in our city of Santiago, Anglicans, Orthodox and Protestants share the same sacred space, a small church, so

⁹⁴ The example of Paul VI, the first Pope who was in Latin America, in uttering these words to the peasants of Colombia is expressive: *"We have not come to receive your acclaimed subsidiaries, always pleasant and moving, but to honor the Lord in your people, to bow to them and to tell you that that love, demanded three times by the risen Christ to Peter, of whom we are the humble and last successor, we surrender to Him in you, in your very selves"*.

that the same Spirit that makes us Christians, will help us to live together in our pilgrimage to unity.

112. When you finally arrive in Santiago, you enter its cathedral through the Holy Door. You realize that this rite symbolizes your process of conversion for you have turned your back to sin and have moved on to a new life, remembering those words of Jesus: *“I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners”* (Luke 5:32). In ordinary life when we walk through a door, we enter the intimacy of a home. However, the house of God is not any private Upper Room, but that of all mankind: *“My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it”* (Luke 8:21). Therefore, becoming a “family” of the Lord is an opportunity offered to all, for we can all partake of it, if we agree through the narrow door of conversion towards God and others. We all have that opportunity because it was God himself, who became a member of the human family through his incarnation, thus entering the intimacy of human beings and giving his life for all.

113. The Holy Door refers to Christ who said to us, *“Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep... I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture”* (John 10:7-9) and who truly became flesh of our flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary, the First Disciple of the Lord and Mother of the Church. *“Though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness”* (Philippians 2:6-7) from birth to death. His humanity like ours except in our sin that dehumanizes and divides us, is the living sacrament of encounter with God and among us. Therefore, if we focus on him all our energies, we will be making ourselves more human.

114. There could be no other access to the Holy Year which we are celebrating. The house of James the Greater is spacious enough to welcome all but had to have this narrow door of his gradual conversion to the Lord: *“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few”* (Matthew 7:13-14). The Apostle had to learn that his closeness to the Lord together with Peter and John did not imply an advantage over others for it is *much better* for men to rely on the will of God. He had to leave behind the impulse and triumphalism of the newly converted - he wanted revenge on the Samaritan “impures” for whom his Master was also giving his life - and admit his fear in the garden of Gethsemane: *“Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test”* (Matthew 26:41). Only at Pentecost when he received the Spirit of the Risen One did he begin to act on his vocation as a fisher of men, that is, helping everyone become partakers of the Savior's life. He was a disciple up to the very end, passing through the narrow door of martyrdom by decision of King Agrippa I.

Entering through the door of the Gospel

we discover that for God, no one is dispensable

115. The house of James built with the hands of faith bears witness to the Gospel to all who come to it: *through the narrow door*, one gains access to catholicity, to the fulness of Jesus Christ, through the sacrament of the concrete and the real. Entering through the door of the Gospel we discover that for God, no one

is dispensable, however small in the eyes of men. The Church welcomes all.

116. A pilgrim is aware that it was not his initiative that brought him into this new life as it was the case for James but Christ himself, who seeks, calls and waits: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). Jesus is at door, knocking. He will not enter if we will not open it, nor will he ask us whether we are worthy of him entering our home, but only if we have need of him. “The Eucharist, although it is the fulness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak”⁹⁵. The Church is not the assembly of the best but of those who are on their way to Christ and called by him. She is not only the one who opens when the poor knocks on her door, she also knows that she comes to Jesus Christ through the living door that they are.

117. For those of you who have made pilgrimages in the spirit of penance and conversion, crossing the *Holy Door* is a renewal of your baptism. Like the ancient sailors, you have thrown away the burden of your sin so as not to shipwreck among the waves. You left behind everything that stood in your way and you have taken an “easy yoke and a light burden”. That *light burden* gives you the strength to move forward because your life receives with it a meaning, a direction, and an impulse. There is always a burden for a specific person: your families, your co-workers with whom you earn your living and improve society, young people and children if you are their catechists or educators in the faith, the foreigners you welcome, or the sick and elderly you care for.

⁹⁵ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 47.

Carrying this burden is what the Pope calls “*holiness found in our next-door neighbors*”⁹⁶. By revitalizing our Baptism, we discovered that fear and selfishness burdened us and now it is the light burden of caring for others that helps and urges us to walk.

118. We now realize that our Christian commitment makes us appreciate reality; being immersed in it with its apparent paradox and absurdities; consenting to the loss of our ego; assuming life with all its expressions in our hearts, and then re-emerge with them, as Jesus did by giving his life and rising again for us: “*by his wounds we were healed*” (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24). For this very reason, we have been baptized or could be baptized. Like James, we can be *fishers of men* according to the vocation that the Lord calls us, knowing that our faith did not need many reasonings, but just the wood of the cross to put us in touch with reality and in contact with humanity. Like St. Augustine, you may also exclaim: “*Late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved you! Lo, you were within, but I outside, seeking there for you, and upon the shapely things you have made I rushed headlong – I, misshapen. You were with me, but I was not with you. They held me back far from you, those things which would have no being, were they not in you. You called, shouted, broke through my deafness; you flared, blazed, banished my blindness; you lavished your fragrance, I gasped; and now I pant for you; I tasted you, and now I hunger and thirst; you touched me, and I burned for your peace.*”⁹⁷.

3.2. Sandals of Hope

⁹⁶ Cf. FRANCIS, *Gaudete et Exultate*, 7.

⁹⁷ ST. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, Lib. X, chap. XXVII.

119. If we want to be a Church that *goes out*, we need new sandals, sandals of hope. The ones the father of the parable commanded his servants to put on the prodigal son (Luke 15:22). The new sandals to follow Christ are the ones we receive when we are reconciled with God and with our neighbor. This requires the purification of all our exclusive resources, personal and ecclesial. It is also needed for the forgiveness of God celebrated and shared sacramentally. The Sacrament of Penance reconciles us not only with God but also with others, the body of Christ, whom our sin hurts. In this way, once we reconcile with one another, *we can present our gift to the altar* (cf. Matthew 5:23-24), and instead of being subjected to our desires, we become like James, friends of the Lord, and servants to one another out of love (cf. Galatians 5:13-15). We need to celebrate this sacrament, for to be alone with our own sin is to be left completely alone, and we also need it to receive the tangible and concrete yes of God's forgiveness; forgiveness that we easily receive for ourselves and yet deny for others. With new sandals, we walk with hope. Jesus' new wine needs new wineskins. With this message, Jesus proclaims his Kingdom and urges conversion.

120. In our Christian rebirth, the Church, unmindful of her prestige nor seeking the recognition of men, follows Christ crucified and wants to give him and to God the Father, glory. The new sandals of the Church are those of hope because they make it easier for us to walk, and to "*tread*" praises or rejections that come by following Jesus, without deviating left or right from the mission of serving our fellow human beings. They enable us to walk with the *power to tread upon snakes and scorpions* (cf. Luke 10:20). The Church is thus saved from falling into triumphalism for she knows that the Kingdom comes to us only through the Cross, as the Lord says: "*do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven*". Since

the Crucified One lives definitively near to all, the Church appears immune to discouragement. The praises cannot make her forget whom she follows and whom she serves nor can rejection turn away her faithfulness to the Gospel and to the least. The Church has her loins girded, guards her own freedom, and does not want to seek refuge in structures of influence, so that her soul may not be corrupted.

**The Apostle James, together with Peter and John,
were witnesses of the transfiguration of the Lord.**

121. The Apostle James, together with Peter and John, were witnesses of the transfiguration of the Lord. They were favored to contemplate the luminous humanity of Jesus at the top of Mount Tabor, not only to admire the glory of the Master, but also to be witnesses of the future humanity transformed by him. For an instant, they saw the mystery of Jesus not with the eyes of faith, as when they were called by the Sea of Galilee but without a veil, face to face, seeing him as the Son. This revelation gave them the strength to live the gospel that passes through the cross. We now understand the hope they received as we come close to the tomb of the Apostle James.

Christian hope has a firm anchor.

122. What happened at that time in Tabor became definitive and complete in the resurrection. That is why Christian hope has a firm anchor. The cross is no longer senseless nor absurd that one has to accept passively. It is true that in hope we continue to experience abandonment and failure but at the same time we

know that it is also the sign of our fidelity to God and to men, as it was in Jesus. If we are on the cross for this reason and only for this reason and not for another, it is because our steps follow those of Jesus.

123. Christian hope is born from the reality of Jesus crucified and risen. This is not just optimism nor a marketing product. It allows us to see from God's perspective and not from our judgments, what must be healed and fulfilled in our world and in our Church. Remove the possibilities of a concrete human being and recognize where the gaze that judges sees only an immigrant, a drug addict, an unemployed, a prostitute, a homeless man, a humanity disfigured by injustice⁹⁸. Hope is right to create the necessary cracks in attitudes and in society for personal and community resources to be mobilized: *"Give them food to eat!"* (Matthew 14:16). Therefore, the fulfillment of hope is charity.

3.3. New Pentecost

124. In the house of the Apostle James, dear pilgrims, you present the treasure of your conversion with tears of joy and gratitude. You have become a living gospel reliving the freedom of God's children. *"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom"* (2 Corinthians 3:17b). When you leave the Cathedral, you can see on the south façade an inscription inspired by the Book of Revelation: *"I am the alpha (α) and the omega (ω), the beginning and the end"*. These are words spoken by the Lord of history, by

⁹⁸ SIMONE WEIL, *Waiting for God*, Trotta, Madrid 1993, 93: *"Creative attention is about paying attention to something that does not exist. Humanity does not exist in anonymous flesh and passive on the edge of the road. The Samaritan who stops and looks, nevertheless pays attention to that absent humanity and the acts that follow bear witness that this is real attention"*.

whom and for whom the miracle of creation that you have been admiring along the way, came to be. In Jesus Christ, the life of all mankind is interpreted and definitively illumined by his death and resurrection. Hence this inscription in stone expresses what the Gospel tells us: *“I am your reason for being (α), and your ultimate fulness (ω)”*, that is, *I am the way, the truth, and the life.*

125. On this façade of the cathedral, the inscription you see sculpted follows the reverse order. Was it a mistake on the part of the stonecutter who carved it? The letter omega is before, and the letter alpha is after. This sums up, before you say goodbye to Santiago, one last message for all. You have concluded your pilgrimage. You share and discuss among yourself a mixture of feelings: the joy of having completed your wish and at the same time a certain regret for having finished it already. With St. Paul you say: *“I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.”* (2 Timothy 4:7), and again like him, you feel his sorrow when he said goodbye to the priests in Ephesus (Acts 20:17 ff) as you also say goodbye to those with whom you have shared so many experiences. Perhaps like Peter, James, and John at Tabor (cf. Luke 9:33), you would wish your pilgrimage to continue and not to end.

126. Recall what is conveyed to us in the book of Revelation: *“Behold, I make all things new”* (Revelation 21:5). You wonder which or where that newness is. This newness has been revealed to you: it is the Risen Christ and you too have been renewed and reborn by your faith in him. You know who you are and the voice who calls you and brought you forth from your land.

127. At the beginning of my letter I told you that the promise of Abraham is you. With the patronage of the Apostle you have reached the goal of your pilgrimage, that is, to meet with Christ. He is your fulness and that of the whole creation. Christ now empowers you for a new life and to return to your reality by another path. Have you not received new sandals? Having arrived in Santiago, the Camino as in a new Pentecost begins now in all directions. Having followed in the footsteps of James, the Risen One is now waiting for you in your Galilee. You will see him there. The encounter with him always sets us on the path and thrusts us into our mission: *“Sometimes we are tempted to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord’s wounds at arm’s length. Yet Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others. He hopes that we will stop looking for those personal or communal niches which shelter us from the maelstrom of human misfortune and instead enter the reality of other people’s lives and know the power of tenderness. Whenever we do so, our lives become wonderfully complicated and we live the intense experience of being a people, the experience of belonging to a people”*⁹⁹.

128. Being a Christian consists of a continuous discernment and in a common search with others for fidelity to the Spirit of the Risen One, vigilant in being able to give ourselves through the openings that life allows us¹⁰⁰. It is about keeping alive the novelty of the Gospel that is Jesus in the specific circumstances of your daily Camino. Christian joy is not triumphalism but includes regret for one’s sins and tenderness towards others. Human success is unrelated to mission and has nothing to do with Jesus.

⁹⁹ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 270.

¹⁰⁰ MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *On the theology and economy of the Son of God*, 2: *“For by nature, every spiritual method ceases to be practiced when the goal has been achieved or is thought to have been achieved”*.

**The fire of the Holy Spirit enables you
to stoke the embers of love.**

129. The fire of the Holy Spirit enables you to stoke the embers of love between people, protecting the smoldering wick without suffocating the seeds of truth that are growing in people's lives. He will help you recognize and do what is honorable and just wherever you are. You become the salt and give its full flavor to people and their yearnings. Thus, we are in "*Christ as a sacrament or sign and instrument of intimate union with God and with all mankind*"¹⁰¹.

EXHORTATION: "SALT OF THE EARTH" (cf. Matthew 5:13 ff)

130. At this point, I would like to end my letter so that you may fill and complete it with the letters of your example. After your pilgrimage, remembering all that you have experienced, you recognize the Providence of God. Sometimes, God's care for us seems to escape from the present moment. Our memory then becomes the window that shows its Providence. You noticed that at the time of your pilgrimage, your steps were being accompanied not only by those of your fellow pilgrims but by those of him who became a pilgrim for all, Jesus. You can then say of your own life: "*It is your Providence, Father, who guides it, because even in the sea you opened a way and a safe path among the waves, thus showing that you can save from all danger, that even one without skill may embark*" (Wisdom 14:3-4).

¹⁰¹ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

131. You have discovered that the city of Santiago is more than just these magnificent stones; that it is a place of friendly and hospitable people; that the cathedral is more than a façade or a portico but built with the living stones of pilgrims who arrive with their dreams, their sufferings and their gratitude. This is so because the Camino, the city and the cathedral have a human face, gazing at James the Apostle. He has brought you to his tomb so that you may know the model of perfect humanity. He will accompany you on the paths of your life in the country, in the city or in the town where you live. Be God's providence for others! How else can someone in need, experience God's closeness and the concrete help that you are now thankful for? Recognize in the call of your brothers and sisters the voice of Providence, who gives you the opportunity to become a neighbor to them.

132. Grateful to the call of Jesus and like the Apostle James, you will gather from your pilgrimage a great abundance of fish, a miraculous catch, that is Life. By having gone forth from your land and embarked confidently on this adventure, you have cast the net in his name. *"May mercy and peace, on the part of Almighty God and Jesus Christ, our Savior, be given to you in all its fulness"*¹⁰².

He greets you with affection and blesses you in the Lord
on the Feast of the Translation of the Body of the Apostle
December 30, 2019.

¹⁰² Beginning of the Letter of Saint Polycarp to the Philippians.

+ Julián Barrio Barrio,
Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela

Index

Introduction

1. GO FORTH FROM YOUR LAND	
1.1 The Father's Promise, a Path of Freedom	6
1.2 The Value of Faith	10
1.3 The Church, God's People Going Out.....	18
1.4 Towards the Culture of the Spirit before a Secular Culture	25
2. GO ON YOUR WAY!	
2.1 Listen: A Journey towards Interiority	34
2.2 Build: Hunger and Thirst for Justice, the Message of the Poor...	41
2.3 Trust: The Disciple's Proven Hope.....	46
2.4 Witness: Charity Sees.....	51

3. SANTIAGO AWAITS YOU	
3.1 A Narrow Door	58
3.2 Sandals of Hope	63
3.3 New Pentecost	66
EXHORTATION: “SALT OF THE EARTH”	69

