

*“Rise, and go towards...”*



Dear Sisters, during the Council of the Congregation we chose as a priority in our lives listening and meditating on the Word of God as a *source of transformation* for our mission as witnesses of the Gospel (cfr Report of CoC 2023). I therefore wish to dedicate my letters in preparation for the Jubilee and the General Chapter 2025 *to meditate on the Scriptures in order to open our hearts to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and grow together in that synodal discernment* that the ecclesial journey is asking of us in order to be able to read the signs of our time. In this first letter I invite you to reflect on the encounter between the apostle Philip and the Ethiopian. (Acts 8:26-40)

## **PREPARE MY SELF**

*By creating a deep space of silence within myself, I internally express my desire to be in the presence of the Lord*

## **READ the TEXT of SCRIPTURE carefully and calmly**

“Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe this generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the Good News about Jesus...”

## LET US BE INSPIRED

### ***Guided by the Holy Spirit***

It is significant to note how all of Philip's actions are motivated and accompanied by the Holy Spirit. Its mission of announcing the Gospel does not arise from a simple human will or from an activity that advances automatically because it has been learned for some time. He is a man attentive and docile to the Holy Spirit, a Spirit that pushes him to "rise" and *go towards* a "desert road" in the hottest hour of the day. It would seem like an absurd invitation because he is asked to go to a place where no one passes, where there is no life and one can even lose one's life. What kind of announcement can be made in the desert? Yet Philip obeys, arises and sets off actively collaborating with the invitation of the Spirit.

*The Holy Spirit always pushes us to arise from some situation or choice that makes us sit back and not advance. It puts us on the path* according to reasonings that go beyond our habits and our own skills, however great they may be. The Spirit moves our most beautiful energies and makes them bear fruit for the common good...

### ***“Go over and join this chariot”***

The Spirit invites Philip to join the chariot that is passing by at that moment, a chariot driven by an Ethiopian, a eunuch. There is not a crowd of people to announce the Gospel to but a single person, sterile, foreign, passing through a deserted road, unaware of what he is reading. Filippo reaches him, joins his path and accepts the invitation to get in his chariot. The Spirit educates Philip in the authentic style of mission: to be a companion on the journey of the humanity that is passing through his life at that moment, even if it is only one person.

*Mission* is not simply doing things or carrying out activities *but it is letting ourselves be guided by the Spirit of the Risen Lord* by immersing ourselves in the current reality. It is being attentive to the people we serve, their stories, their wounds and the "sterility" that we also carry within us.

## ***“How can I understand it, unless someone guides me?”***

The Ethiopian is reading the Scripture. He perceives that Scripture is saying something to his heart and his life but he is not able to interpret it. Philip will help him to understand that passage of Scripture not as a doctrine to be known but as "living water" that will quench his deepest needs and open his mind to what illuminates his entire existence and history: the love of Jesus Christ, dead and resurrected.

How many people even in our current world are waiting for someone who brings a word of "Good News", a spiritual guide... a community that knows how to welcome and make people feel at home! ***Synodality challenges us to convert from "I" to "We"*** because only together can we discern how to live and announce the Gospel today, responding to that thirst for "life in abundance" present in everyone.

## **LISTEN DEEPLY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT**

In a climate of prayer and sharing on a personal and community level, let us ask ourselves: *What does this text of Scripture say to my life and to the journey of our Congregation? Where do we have to get up from to set out on a synodal journey alongside today's humanity with the precious gift of our spirituality and charism?*

Dear Sisters, Mother Bernarda taught us with her life and her missionary style how important it is to walk with the wisdom of the Spirit and announce the Gospel to every person, with love and without fear. Only in this way we are a gift for the Church and for the world!

*Let us therefore dare to take new steps together, with the strength of the Holy Spirit! I am with you...in the desire **to arise and go towards** where the Spirit is calling us....*

*Sr Dorina*

Sr Dorina Zanoni

Congregational Leader

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