

PEDAGOGY OF THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

- A pilgrimage as a couple with the Risen Jesus -

The courses / hostels - or themes of general training - offered by the Movement of Teams of Our Lady have as a reference one of the most beautiful stories in the Word of God, taken from Luke's Gospel, in which a **pedagogical** method is presented or a **methodological path** proposed by Christ Himself in the encounter of the Road to Emmaus, from which each team member couple can also start an exciting process in the company of Jesus, as the Master par excellence.

To better understand this divine pedagogy of the encounter and of the dialogue, motivated by the logic of love, read carefully the text of **Luke 24, 13-35**.

But it is important to say, from the beginning, that this biblical text, exclusive of Luke, represents the paradigm of the catechetical journey (PATH) of Christian maturity, from the encounter with the Lord, by listening to the Word, by the sharing of the Bread and by the mission.



As we can see in the text of the Gospel, one of the disciples of Emmaus was named Cleophas. As to the other, no information is given. Although tradition has identified this other disciple as a female character, perhaps the wife of Cleophas, named Mary, a woman who is mentioned at the cross in the death of Jesus (Jn 19:25), other more spiritual interpretations identify this character without name as any other disciple of Jesus.

Therefore, and without any undue claim, we can say that this Biblical narrative refers to a couple who were returning to their home - husband (Cleophas) and wife (Maria, sister of Our Lady) - and that earlier had followed Jesus. This couple was returning after the Easter pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Chapter 24 from Luke is the last part of the whole composition of his Gospel, which presents a particular characteristic: **the conclusion of the entire journey made by Jesus and his disciples.**

In the disciples of Emmaus, discouragingly leaving the city of Jerusalem, we can recognize the community of the friends of Jesus who, after having lived and followed their Master during those years, suffer the impact of his violent death. On the way to Emmaus, Jesus takes the initiative of approaching and only at the end is He recognized by the two disciples.

Reflecting on the teaching of the Master, the aspect that draws attention in the first place is that Jesus approaches them by putting Himself on their path, placing Himself at the same point on their way, being interested in their history. Jesus seeks to know these people inside. During the walk, the pedagogy of the Master allows catharsis, that is, leads and encourages the disciples to speak of what ails their hearts.

Along the way, Jesus keeps revealing himself, enlightening their eyes, stirring the hearts of the disciples. Consequently, the recognition of the Lord is the restoration of the complete communion which occurred at the time of breaking and sharing the bread. Approaching the village they were heading to, Jesus acted as if he would go farther. The disciples of Emmaus, however, insisted, saying: Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over. So Jesus went in to stay with them.

Then Jesus takes the opportunity of the disappointment of the disciples of Emmaus and of their confusion to explain to them the Scriptures, warm their hearts

and take them before the Eucharistic table. This prepares and encourages them for their mission.

The Biblical report of Emmaus presents an experience of faith soon after the Easter events. Observing the structure of the narrative, the reader may notice a **maturing journey of faith**, or even an initiation process in the knowledge of Lord Jesus, which creates the missionary disciple out of the following elements: the **encounter** (learn walking with the Master), **the word** (learn listening to the Master) and **mission** (learn acting with the Master).

The narrative in the first part of the biblical text contextualizes the encounter between the two disciples and the stranger who starts walking to their destination.

These two disciples make a journey, a path, **Jerusalem - Emmaus - Jerusalem** that has an important theological meaning in Luke's Gospel, which is to recall all the events - words and actions - ranging from birth to death and resurrection of Jesus.

While they discussed along the way, Jesus himself came up and began to walk with them. The initiative comes from Jesus; He does not interrupt the subject. Jesus' attitude is to walk with them, because to approach is to be willing to know and feel the needs of others. Jesus goes with them, listens to them and understands the situation. Hence the importance of realizing that the text of Emmaus is not an isolated event in history, but an experience of the community of those who believe in Jesus and set out on the path of discipleship.

The road is not done. It renews and reshapes itself to the extent that people discover new questions, answers and proposals of life.

Discipleship is not a finishing line, but a process: "Being a disciple is a gift that must grow." Thus the Christ-event is therefore the beginning of this new person, which appears in history and we call disciple."

The second moment of Luke's narrative inserts us into the deepening of the encounter that is in dialogue. The evangelist reveals a whole expectation due to the passion and death of Jesus, a real disappointment. The stranger finds them in an existential situation of deep sadness, but he cares about the situation of the two walkers.

The author of the gospel organizes the dialogue between the two disciples and the stranger in a direct way. Luke reprised some preaching passages or of Christian

catechism that circulated among early communities and drew a long didactic dialogue. The answer to so many issues troubling the disciples should be given by themselves.

Jesus' attitude toward them is that of a Master, for it explains to them that God's plan has a logic different from human reason, pointing out that suffering is part of this divine plan and that it is a means by which God purifies and leads everything to fullness.

The major issue, the text itself incites each one, concerns the true experience we can have with Jesus: the two disciples seem to have reached their destination. Jesus pretends that he would continue on the way, but they insist that He stays with them: Jesus accepts and sits at the table with them. So here we have the celebration of the Eucharist, the celebration of sharing; that is when they recognize Him.

That is why what matters to Luke is to go through all the path that leads to the recognition of Jesus: the listening to the Word, that changes the heart, and the breaking the bread in community. At this point the eyes open to recognize the presence of the Risen in the community of brothers.

When the disciples recognized Jesus, resume the road to Jerusalem, there is a fresh look, a new motivation, a light on the horizon.

The evangelist, in this third part of the text, draws attention to how the story of Emmaus begins, " that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus " and ends the narrative: "They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem ". The two disciples make an opposite move; returning to the starting point, that is the city of Jerusalem.

There is a radical change in the lives of these who walk with the Lord, they make a choice and recognizing Jesus, will announce the experience made along the way and in the house around the table: a Paschal faith experience.

It is evident that through the theme of "path", very emphasized in the report, the evangelist wants to make a reference to the concrete path of every baptized person, at all times and everywhere, full of difficulties and trials, however sustained by the mighty action of the Risen. So the story is a tacit exhortation to Christians not to be bewildered in the face of the problem of evil in the world, but illuminated by the Scripture, be at the service of the salvific plan of God, who conquers evil and saves history.

According to the example of the disciples of Emmaus, we also have need for this re-enchantment experience in faith. The heart heated drove them to dynamism for the mission, with renewed vigor by the presence and proximity to the Risen, their eyes open, their hearts heat up. Now the new fervor spreads, leaves the heart and reaches the mind, conscience, and move the feet that leave to evangelize.

The encounter between Jesus and the disciples of Emmaus happened in an atmosphere of dialogue and fraternal communion: explain the Scriptures and the breaking of bread made them return to Jerusalem with new attitude of life, with the heart warmed; they set out to meet the other disciples to tell about the joy of meeting with the Master, assuming the mission to form communities and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, the disciples return to the community with new eyes, with a new spirit, with a better understanding of the mission.

The call to mission resulting from our Baptism implies a free response, in an act of trust in God. In this sense, evangelization, catechesis and pastoral care of the Church help the baptized to discover the beauty of following Jesus Christ as a coherent life proposal with the Gospel.

Pointing the way to those who are willing to be a disciple of Jesus is to look and review the Road to Emmaus. Disciple is not one who knows, but who follows the Master, who wants and has a personal dialogical relationship, and shows, in real life, interest in the Master's project and his project of life and of Christian.

In Christian education-training, what one does and what one says, indicates that training-education is not to teach some ideas as someone who knows everything. Life is also a path, and no one learns everything at once; it is required, therefore, a continuing personal, social and spiritual cultivation. It is a process in which the human being will fortify in the direction he wants to give to his life, in order to continue his maturation path and of more life in faith and in spirituality.

Let us ask ourselves: to what extent are we truly Jesus' "travel companions" in our personal lives, married life, team life, in the Movement, in the Church?