



## PRESENTATION OF THE THEME

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### **“Arise, go on your journey” (Dt. 10:11) trusting in the Promise**

#### **“Arise”**

This is the command of God to Abraham: “Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you” (Gn. 13:17), to our fathers in faith, to the prophets.<sup>1</sup> It is the invitation of the Spouse: “Arise, my beloved...and come” (Sg. 2:10). It is the verb of the Resurrection, of a return to life.<sup>2</sup> It is the directive addressed to Paul on his way to Damascus.<sup>3</sup> It is a word of hope against every fear, every discouragement, every tepidity:

Wherever you may be, build! If you are down, stand up! Never stay down; stand up, allow yourself to be helped to stand up. If you are seated, set out on a journey! If boredom paralyzes you, banish it with good works! If you feel empty or demoralized, ask that the Holy Spirit may fill your emptiness anew. [...] Jesus has given us a light, which shines in the darkness: defend it; protect it. That single light is the greatest treasure entrusted to your life. [...] If you make a mistake, stand up again. There is nothing more human than making mistakes. And these same mistakes must not become a prison for you. Do not be trapped in your errors. The Son of God has come not for the healthy but for the sick; thus, he also came for you. And if you should err again in the future, do not be afraid; stand up again! Do you know why? Because God is your friend. [...] Live, love, dream, believe!<sup>4</sup>

In this context of hope, it seems clear that the invitation of Deuteronomy 10:11: “Arise, go on your journey,” *springs* both from the fidelity of God, who rewrites his words with patience, continually renews his covenant, rebuilds and encourages, and *stands* on the fidelity of God. With this word, “the Lord tells us that our history is still open: it is open until the end; it is open with a mission.”<sup>5</sup>

“Arise,” therefore, is a word of evangelization. Commenting on the directive, “Arise and go” addressed to Philip in the Acts of the Apostles (8:26), Pope Francis says:

This is a sign of evangelization. In fact, the vocation and the great consolation of the Church is to evangelize. But in order to evangelize one must “arise and go.” It doesn’t say, “Continue to sit tranquilly at home.” No! To remain faithful to the Lord, the Church must rise to her feet and go forth: “Arise and go!” A Church that does not get up, that is not on the way, falls sick [...], closed in the small world of chatter, of things...without horizons.<sup>6</sup>

Those who evangelize do so on their feet, “listening to the concerns of the people and always with joy.” It is the attitude of a sentinel, who promptly responds, even through physical posture, to a call, a signal, a sign from the Lord. It is the attitude of someone who is ready to “leave self behind” so as to go out to meet others, remaining open to the logic of love, which becomes “interior fire,” strength and passion.

In the garden of the Resurrection, Jesus says to a woman, Mary Magdalene, “Do not hold on to me...but

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<sup>1</sup> Also cf. Gn. 12:1, 21:18; 1 K 19:5, 7; Ez. 2:1; Dn. 10:11; Jon. 3:2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mt. 9:6; Mk. 5:41, 10:49; Lk. 7:14; 8:54; Jn. 5:8; Acts 12:1-12.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Acts 8:26; 9:6; 26:16.

<sup>4</sup> Francis, *General Audience*, 20 September 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Homily of Pope Francis during the Eucharistic Concelebration with the Cardinals resident in Rome on the occasion of his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of episcopal ordination.

<sup>6</sup> Homily of Pope Francis, Mass at St. Martha’s chapel, 4 May 2017.

go to my brothers...” (Jn. 20:17).

The same love for Christ that prompted her to rise up and go (cf. 2Co. 5:14) has also urged us on from the very beginning. Today we are called to abandon our fears, get to our feet and set out with joy, haste and limitless trust. We are also called to remain vigilant so that, as Fr. Alberione emphasizes, our heart never loses its direction, its vital center:

I would like to say to every heart in particular: Get up! The heart of Jesus is calling you. Why are you losing yourself in trifles? There are enormous treasures to be gained for heaven and a vast wisdom to be learned on earth. So why are you getting lost in silly things? “The Master is here and is calling you” (FSP33, 127).

### **“Go on your journey”**

The expression “go on your journey” includes the dynamism of “going out”: it is the migration of Abraham, who was called to leave for a new land (cf. Gn. 12:1-3). It is the exodus of the Chosen People, guided by Moses toward the Promised Land (cf. Ex. 3:17). It is the spiritual process involved in following the Master (cf. Mk. 10:21).

A *journey* speaks to us about our condition as pilgrims and of our vocation to the Covenant. Our God asks us to “walk before him and be whole” (cf. Gn. 17:1).

Blessed James Alberione’s plea to us should resound with fresh force today: “Onward, Daughters of St. Paul!”<sup>7</sup> With this entreaty, the Founder urged us to never stop, to always move ahead, like the Apostle Paul:

Onward! One step after another, always climbing higher, until we reach Jesus in heaven! Move ahead every day, never stopping on our journey toward holiness or in our apostolic activities. Onward! Ever onward! (FSP55, 185)

Onward! Always keep in mind what remains to be done. There is no time to complacently look back on the past, to talk about what has already been done, the results obtained in this or that diocese, on this or that Marian Day, Gospel Day, Catechism Day, etc. There’s no time! If we want to be wise apostles, formed after the heart of St. Paul, then there is only time to consider what remains to be done (FSP57, p. 344).

“Onward,” persevering even when faced with inevitable obstacles, because each one of us, the Congregation and the whole Pauline Family are under the vivifying action of the Spirit, in line with the Lord’s promise of his constant presence.

*To set out on our journey* is an invitation to rediscover the element of Pauline prophecy and renew our missionary vibrancy; to hear once again, in the heart of our call, the urgent need to “do something for the people of our time” (cf. AD 15); to rediscover, in the joy of our vocation, the boldness and creativity of apostles who, in the light of the Word, scrutinize and read the signs of the times.

*To set out on our journey* means to allow ourselves to become involved in it, to feel in unanimity the need to train our minds and hearts to undertake an interior pilgrimage so as to listen to the voice of the Spirit, who is urging us to broaden our horizons. A person who is not receptive to new things or who will not make a commitment to building them does not make this expedition. A person who clings to positions already attained does not notice changes and is not able to marvel at the wonders the Lord is continually bringing about.

*To set out on our journey* means to abandon our comfort zones, dead traditions, sterile past...and to dream of new goals. It means allowing ourselves to be guided by the emerging future, by the advent of the longed-awaited New Jerusalem.

Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth and the life” (cf. Jn. 14:6). The truth is his life, which becomes way, movement, journey. The truth is a Person: Jesus, the One who is on the move and who sets us in motion.

### ***Trusting in the Promise***

The promise of Jesus is the Holy Spirit, who rekindles in us the memory of the covenant between God and humanity.

Covenant is the key to reading our relationship of reciprocity with the Lord, to believing him present in history, and thus it makes us pilgrims. Our personal story and that of our charism is marked by a word of faith, by the promise that the Lord, through our Founder, made to the whole Pauline Family: “Do not be afraid; I am

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<sup>7</sup> Exhortation of Blessed James Alberione from the documentary *In cammino*, Rome, April 1961.

with you” (cf. AD 152; 155). God never deserts us in any situation; instead he always comes to our aid. Our trust and apostolicity are based on the fact that he is faithful to his word and on the recognition that the Spirit is the Protagonist of our life and mission.

The Lord calls us to live this covenant as an experience of him, as a celebration of his presence in history and in daily events.

A covenant that becomes the *spirituality of humility*: to be humble before God and others. The Lord did not choose us because of our merits but solely because he loves us gratuitously. Let us humbly listen to the voices of persons and events that repeatedly recall us to fidelity.

A covenant that is the *spirituality of listening*: a listening that does not label, that does not require conditions for belonging; a covenant that, like Jesus, makes no distinctions (cf. Mt. 11:19), but instead trains us to perceive the other as a “presence”; a listening that becomes receptivity to questions and that, through everyday human words, becomes a reply in which the Word, the Gospel of life and peace, resounds.

A covenant that is the *spirituality of trust*, because God has never regretted entering into a *pact* with us. We cannot permit ourselves to be suffocated by pessimism, as if the grace of God has almost run dry. We cannot succumb to the temptation to abandon paths in need of the Gospel or to avoid them out of suspicion or distrust.

The fidelity of God takes on our weakness and transforms it. It is precisely through the experience of fragility, failure and sin itself that we live the spirituality of the Pact. It is when we feel “weak, ignorant, incapable and inadequate in every way” that the Lord takes action and saves us. As Paul said so well: “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Co. 12:10).

To live the Pact means to enter into the concrete history of the world, to serve the Lord through history and to be open to its innovations. The spirituality of the Pact should help us interpret the signs of the times as signs of the presence of God in history, so as to respond to God, who challenges us today. Our covenant with God, as Pope Francis reminds us, *impels us to go out to the peripheries*:

All of us are asked to obey the call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel (EG 20).

The Church that “goes forth” is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice (EG 24).

Trusting in the Promise and urged on by the Spirit, we are ready to “go out the door” and walk alongside the people of our time. We realize the urgent need to enter the world of modern communications as protagonists so as to evangelize and allow ourselves to be evangelized. We feel called to carry in our heart all the “peripheries,” above all the cultural ones, in view of a “new and fruitful work of making faith culturally responsible”<sup>8</sup>; to “live our witness of life in the furrow<sup>9</sup> of the Gospel narrative, which is possible at any age and in every period of life”<sup>10</sup>; to allow ourselves to be questioned by “the phenomenon of migration, which requires new pastoral awareness and attention from us regarding ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.”<sup>11</sup>

Mindful of the “grace of the origins, the humility and smallness of beginnings that made God’s work transparent in the lives and messages of those who were full of wonder and who set out on their journeys along unpaved roads and unbeaten paths,”<sup>12</sup> we believe that the God of history does not cease to walk with us through the gift of his Spirit, “who impels each individual to proclaim the Gospel and who enables people to welcome and understand the word of salvation.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Proclaim: To Consecrated men and Women witnesses of the Gospel among peoples*, Vatican Press 2016, n. 83.

<sup>9</sup> *Translators note*: here “furrow” is used in the sense of a “pathway” or “channel.”

<sup>10</sup> *Ivi.*, n. 84.

<sup>11</sup> *Ivi.*, n. 86.

<sup>12</sup> *Ivi.*, n. 43.

<sup>13</sup> *Ivi.*, n. 36.