

GET UP, PICK UP YOUR SLEEPING MAT AND WALK

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“*Get up, pick up your sleeping mat and walk*”. Perhaps we have heard this word “*walk*” a lot in recent times....set off, move forward, take the necessary steps towards that which we have been asked as a Congregation, towards the “*new face*” which we are all looking for and desiring.

We must humbly recognize that we have taken important steps, but they are not sufficient. The journey which we still have to make is even longer, and as we make it we will become aware of our smallness, we will feel fragile and weak. This is in reality who we are, nevertheless, when we feel like this, these words of Jesus “*Get up, pick up your sleeping mat and walk*” become our response.

Jesus invites us to get up, to pick up our mats (limitations, fragility...) and set off confident that He is our strength, our sure light on the way. With Him in us, we will arrive happily at the end of this journey which we have begun in his name. To continue on this journey we need to put all our trust in Jesus and allow Him to be the one who leads us on the “*way*”. “*Get up, pick up your sleeping mat and walk*” are words of life, joy, healing... Words which invite us to risk, to gather our best energies and set off.

It might happen that we have become accustomed to being on our “*sleeping mats*”, that we have settled down on them; the invitation is to stand up, to discover that we have to lift our mats, to take charge of our mats and not let them take charge of us and paralyze us. The invitation to stand up, is an invitation to leave the places to which we have become accustomed. It is a disposition of the heart and a willingness to move into the paths through which the Lord wants to bring us.

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It is natural in human life to feel oneself to be limited, vulnerable and to experience the powerlessness and inability of getting up; as it is also very human and Spirit filled, to experience the courage, audacity and creativity of Love to be able to pick oneself up. It is the invitation from a God who loves us and wants his promises to be realized in us, that we would live to the full the words, *“choose life and you will live, you and your descendants...”* (Dt. 30, 15ff).

At times, blocked by our own mistakes, fears, hidden egoisms, stored up resentments, unhealed wounds... we slump and remain in a state of sadness, losing a taste for life, laid up on our mats. Mats which may take different forms: self-justification, despair, false reasoning which is so interiorized that it can appear tremendously authentic. All of this prevents us from living fully that life that God wants to gift us with.

In the process which we are living as a Congregation, we have begun a very important phase within our *“Road Map”*: the *“phase of Revitalization”* a privileged time of *“encounter”*: Encounter with the One who calls us to life, to faith and to love, and who continues calling us to an encounter with Him, so that with Him and inspired by our charism and spirituality we can be witnesses of his Love in the world: Encounter with our sisters with whom we share the same vocation and mission.

This will be a great opportunity to reflect on the *“geography of grace”* which is being drawn in our inner being, in our interior landscape, where the hand of God has been present minute by minute, in the big and small moments of our life. It is an opportunity to discover that God has planted his tent in our heart and in the heart of each of our sisters. It is an opportunity to ask ourselves at a personal level and as community; what is the most essential aspect, without which it would not be possible to live our consecration to the SS.CC. meaningfully and with true joy?

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Joy has a source, a meaning; *“when he called us God said to us: “you are important to me, I love you, I am counting on you!”. Jesus says this to each one of us. That is where joy is born! The joy of the moment in which God looked at me. To understand and feel this, is the secret of our joy”* (Evangelii Gaudium).

When we reflect deeply on the whole of our life and our vocational response, we will be aware of the richness and the strengths which motivate us, but also of the limitations which paralyze us and we will have the opportunity to listen to Jesus saying to us: *“Get up, pick up your sleeping mat and walk”*, revitalize your consecration and mission.

This will be the moment to pick up our mat and walk forward, to hand ourselves over once more to the call and the experience which at a specific concrete moment of our story, seduced our heart and conquered our life. It will be the invitation to renew and recreate our love for the One who first loved us and called us, convinced that He is faithful and will never abandon us. It will enable us to recognize God as the centre of our life and allow ourselves to be transformed by Him, and be a credible witness of the gift we have received by our way of being, living, believing and above all loving. We don't make this journey alone, but in the company of countless other sisters who are faithful to our SS.CC. charism and spirituality, who walk with us full of zeal for Jesus and his Kingdom.

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The journey which we are making as a Congregation needs us to be on our feet; taking up our mats, humbly discovering and recognizing the ways in which we are paralyzed, and being aware also of

the many signs of life. We set off grateful for the gift of our vocation and well rooted in Jesus and his Word.

“Go to God confidently, his love will sustain you”. Supported by this thought of the Good Mother,

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let us entrust our entire life to the heart of God and He will do great things in each of us. Let us allow the Lord, our potter, to make us anew and to sustain us in his love. The “new face” which we are seeking and desiring, will only be possible with us, with each and every one of us; it will be our ss.cc being and doing which will gradually shaped.