

Bind us together Lord with cords that cannot be broken.

Jesus said to disciples caught up fighting the strong wind at the sea of Galilee *It is I, do not be afraid*. And since then, Jesus had proved His presence to His early disciples in the past and continues to prove His presence even today. Presence of Jesus is the antidote to fear. So, why do we fear when Jesus is here and near? Fear, anxiety and concerns about the unknown future are part of human life. There is no use trying to be superhuman. So just be human. What is of human nature will remain till the end of our life here on earth. Sometimes we are able to discipline our erroneous human nature which leads us to sin. At times we get succumbed to it, but through the grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, once again we are reconciled with God and each other and begin again a new life.

We (OLOTA) have entered the process of Discernment of Regional Options for Western Canada in the Secular Franciscan Order. We have started well with the short time together in ZOOM Discernment Mini Retreat and Prayer. It is just the beginning but if we are open to the Holy Spirit and allow the Spirit to work through us, there will be a greater end. So, where is the Spirit leading us to? Before taking our needs and petitions to anybody else, first take them to God in prayer. God has deposited love, joy, peace plus all kinds of blessings in our ATM account. Use without limit. The Pin Code is PRAYER. Pain is a sign that we are alive. Problem is a sign that we are strong. PRAYER is a sign that we are not alone.

There is risk involved in any new endeavors but risk is worth taking to find the hidden treasures. True discernment in prayer and contemplation, listening not only with our ears but with our eyes open to realities around us and with fraternal dialogue, will surely lead us to make decisions and choices that are SMART = **S**pecific, **M**anageable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**ime bound. As a universal Church we are in a synodal process pondering on the theme "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission." Documents from the continental stage echo strongly and speak about 'Listening Church and Co- responsibility.' Let us Listen with curiosity, speak with honesty and act with integrity - be synodal people in everything we speak and do.

Life is a journey, a journey leading to heaven. On this journey, we are not alone, we have the Risen Christ journeying with us. A beautiful example of this is the two disciples walking to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-35). Broken and frustrated with what happened to Jesus, their master, they take steps to go back to their village. Discouraged and sad as they were, a 'stranger' (Jesus) joins their journey, learns from them about their pain, listens to them and explains the Scriptures. Here we notice, Jesus does not walk ahead or behind them, but walks along, together with them, side by side. He does not get angry but is patient and kind with them explaining in detail the Scriptures. Walking together is the mark of Christ's disciples. If we want to walk fast, walk alone but if we want to walk far, walk together.

As we go through this discernment process, let us also take time to discern the true cords that bind us together. As Christians, Baptism is the cord that binds us together as brothers and sisters belonging to God's family. As Franciscans, the Holy Gospel of our Lord (Rule of life) and our profession (vows) are the cords that bind us together as brothers and sisters of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare, belonging to a Franciscan family. It is our relationship with each other built on love that binds us together. It is ultimately the Agape Love of God that binds us together in HIM.

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