

# **On the road to Emmaus**

Study Topic 2024-2025



**Teams of Our lady  
International Leading Team**

# On The Road To Emmaus



Teams of Our Lady

Study Topic 2024-2025  
ERI, APRIL 2024

Dear Friends:

The Teams study topic each year is authored by different country and many times this country shares its format of their meeting in the Teams meeting section. While the United States has its own established meeting format, it's important to recognize that international meetings may differ in various aspects.

As a reminder the following is the USA Teams of Our Lady meeting format:

#### SIMPLE MEAL WITH LIGHT SHARING

- Each person shares highs and lows of the month.
- Others listen without comment, or passing of food.

#### TIME FOR SCRIPTURE:

#### A TIME OF SILENT MEDITATION:

#### SHARED PRAYER ON SCRIPTURAL TEXT

The intent is reflection in the form of a prayer, not discussion.

#### PRAYER INTENTIONS

- Pass card or cross, so people can pass gracefully and the team knows when the prayer is complete
- The team should respond at the end of each person's turn, for example, "Lord, hear our prayer".

#### LITURGICAL PRAYER:

#### CONCLUSION OF PRAYER TIME

#### DEEP POOLING

This is a time to share on more serious matters or when the input of the group is requested. This will not necessarily happen at all meetings.

#### SHARING ON THE ENDEAVORS

We join teams in order to enlist the help of others in growing closer to God. The "endeavors" are practices which we voluntarily assume. They have been found to be a means of drawing us closer as a couple and in furthering our spiritual growth. By sharing on these endeavors at the team meeting we seek help and encouragement of our teammates in our journey.

#### DISCUSSION OF STUDY TOPIC

#### ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

#### FATHER CAFFAREL PRAYER and MAGNIFICAT TO CLOSE THE MEETING

# Presentation

Dear Teams of Our Lady family:

By the time this study theme reaches your hands and you start reading it during the year that will begin in some countries in September, our movement's XIIIth International Meeting will already have come to an end and the transfer of responsibility for the ERI International Leading Team and the International Leading Couple will have taken place, with our successors, our dear friends Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer and Alberto Pérez Bueno.

Preparing a study theme in the transition from two international leadership teams is a complex task, because as we begin to write the theme, the new life orientations that were communicated to the movement at the end of the Turin gathering have not yet been established, and the new international leadership team has not yet been formed, making it necessary for the theme to be developed under the responsibility of the outgoing ERI.

In regards to the development of this study theme, we have to tell you that, although it was a work supported by the whole ERI, which took part in its iterative revisions, the direction of its coordination was assured by Mercedes and Alberto with the help of the editorial team; editorial entrusted, on this occasion, to the RR Liban, and in particular to Georgina and Youssef Elias BOUTROS who were the liasons between the editorial team and the ERI, in this challenge.. We would like to express our gratitude for the work they accomplished in such difficult circumstances.

We must pause here to share with you, as a family, the great difficulties we have encountered in bringing this theme to fruition, which has unfortunately been affected and slowed down by the death of Father Joseph Abdul Sater O.A.M., who headed the writing team and was able to participate in the drafting of the theme's introduction and the working drafts of the first chapters. We wish to express to Father Abdul, in the communion of souls, our feelings of affection and sorrow for his premature departure, certain that, from all eternity, he will continue to intercede and accompany the Team, and especially the RR Liban, on the path he helped to build with such love and dedication.

As with the 2018-2019 study theme, entitled "Reconciliation, Sign of Love", which echoed what was experienced at the Fatima International Meeting, which had this same motto, this ERI decided to conceive the 2024-2025 study theme, which bears the title, "On the Road to Emmaus", also as an extension and echo of what was experienced at the Turin International Meeting. Against the backdrop of the passage of the Emmaus disciples, we had an experience of encounter and reflection on the profound meaning of the Eucharist as the center and summit of Christian life.

From the very beginning of his public life, Jesus was concerned with creating a sense of community among those who accepted his teachings, and to create a spirit of communion with all those who decided to follow him unconditionally. In the story of the Disciples of Emmaus, Cleopas and his traveling companion represent, in a way, the life of my wife and I, who, with our hearts on fire, experience an encounter with another heart, full of mercy, willing to melt into that of these bewildered disciples. It is the heart of the risen Jesus Christ himself.

The "burning" hearts of the Emmaus disciples are transformed by their encounter with the risen Jesus Christ. At first, these "embers" have a sense of worry, concern, and alarm but similar to the solitary traveler who wanted to join the path of these disciples, our own path continues, and his real presence is revealed; they are transformed into ardor, hope, and inner fire. An uncontrollable emotion urges us not to lose communion with the community of disciples, but on the contrary to foster it by announcing that Jesus Christ is the conqueror of death, and that all our hopes and desires have and acquire their full meaning. For, as the apostle Paul says, "if Christ is not risen, our preaching is empty, and your faith is empty" 1 Corinthians 15:14.

For those of us who took part in the recent international meeting in Turin, and for those who accompanied us with their prayers from home, reading this theme will enable us to live in an incarnate way the experience of encounter that gives meaning to our faith, without escaping the pain of hearts wounded by harsh realities, in the midst of the joys that also accompany our lives, and which can be healed by acquiring another reading, provided we connect with the sacred presence of the Risen One.

At the end of the book, counting on the "complicity" and effort of the SRs who had to postpone the final edition of the study theme until after the meeting, we wanted to include the texts of the beautiful and profound daily reflections that Professor Marina Marcolini made at the start of each day of the Turin international meeting. We're sure they'll be a valuable complement to the theme, and a gift to help awaken and nourish the inner fire sparked by this experience of encounter and recognition.

As in the message and sending forth of the Turin meeting, we hope that, in the communion of your spouses, your couples, your team and the whole movement, the reading of this theme and its interiorization will enable your hearts to burn with the same love for the one who is the ultimate expression of love, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us ask our heavenly Mother, as an example and guide to bring us closer to her Son, to accompany and enlighten us in this new stage of the journey we are about to embark on during this year 2024-2025. Your brothers and sisters in Christ,

Clarita and Edgardo Bernal  
Couple Responsible International 2018-2024

# Introduction

Dear Teams of Our Lady Members,

It is with deep joy that I invite you today to explore together the particularly inspiring theme of the Emmaus disciples. This biblical account from the New Testament (Luke 24:13-35) offers us a rich perspective on the transformative encounter with the Risen Christ that turns our lives upside down, and an invaluable source of reflection and teachings that resonate powerfully with the spiritual and marital aspirations that animate our journey within Teams of Our Lady.

As we reflect on this theme, we are called to meditate on the significance of this encounter on the road to Emmaus, and to explore the parallels between the journey of the Emmaus disciples and our own journey within Teams of Our Lady.

How did the disciples on the road to Emmaus recognize the Risen Christ in the sharing of the Word and the breaking of bread? How can we, like these disciples, open our hearts to Christ's presence in our lives, and in our conjugal relationships in particular? How can we recognize Christ in our moments of doubt and confusion? How can we recognize His presence in our sharing, our prayers and our moments of communion within our teams and our couples? How can we let ourselves be guided by the light of faith, even when darkness and torment threaten to envelop and suffocate us?

This encounter between the disciples and the Risen Christ invites us to reflect on how we perceive the presence of the divine in our lives and our conjugal relationships.

Together, let's delve into the depths of this biblical story and be inspired by the way the Emmaus disciples experienced the transforming encounter with Christ, the true companion on our journey through life.

The disciples of Emmaus, no doubt scarred by the crucifixion of Jesus and plunged into confusion, embark on a journey that will become one of the most edifying stories in the Gospel. They are accompanied, unknowingly, by the risen Christ himself. This journey symbolizes our own spiritual journey, often strewn with uncertainties, doubts and questions. Although their story dates back to antiquity, it has an astonishingly topical resonance for our lives and our couples. Their journey, imbued with a profound quest for meaning and strewn with questions and fears, represents a powerful metaphor for our own spiritual journey.

In Teams of Our Lady, we are fellow travelers, pilgrims on the path of faith and love, seeking to recognize the presence of the Risen Christ in our lives and relationships.

The disciples of Emmaus teach us that, even in moments when we might feel lost or discouraged, the presence of the Risen Christ remains constant and transforms our lives.

At the heart of our approach within the Teams of Our Lady lies the desire to strengthen our bonds with Christ and with our spouses, to journey together towards a deeper understanding of our faith and greater communion with Christ and with each other, thus strengthening the sacred mission that is ours.

This reflection on the disciples of Emmaus inspires us to welcome the Risen Christ into our daily lives, and to share His light with our spouses in our Teams. It teaches us to walk with confidence along the path traced by the Risen Christ, our guide and faithful companion.

May the Risen Christ accompany us on this spiritual journey, illuminating our path and strengthening our fraternal ties within Teams of Our Lady, so that through a better understanding of the essential role faith plays in our married and family life, we make our meetings, sharing and prayers moments that transform our lives, awaken our hearts and renew our commitment to the values that animate Teams of Our Lady and strengthen the foundations of our families.

May we, like the disciples of Emmaus wandering along life's path of disillusionment, doubt and confusion, witness this extraordinary encounter that transforms our confusion into an experience of profound intimacy with the Risen Christ, and feel the warmth of His presence in our common walk.

Finally, we pray to the Lord that our membership of the Teams family, while imitating the disciples of Emmaus in particular this year, will guide us towards the Ultimate goal of our journey together, culminating in a collective transformation into a "Church on the move", a Church that puts consecrated and lay people front and center, at the heart of the action, and that responds to Pope Francis' call to all Christians to move towards a new missionary impulse to identify new existential peripheries with a view to evangelization.

Prof. Joseph Abdul Sater



# Chapters and Objectives

## Chapter 1 (Luke 24:13-14)

Title: Broken Hearts

Objective: In this first chapter, we'll explore the meaning of disappointment on our journey of faith as Christians, explore the passage to hope and realize the importance of journeying together as a support.

## Chapter 2 (Luke 24:15-16)

Title : At The Heart of History

Objective: In this chapter we discover a God who does not dwell in heaven, a God who became flesh, who takes our paths, who enters our history without imposing himself, but delicately reveals to us his loving face, his Fatherly face.

## Chapter 3 (Luke 24:17-19)

Title : Hearts Challenged

Objective: In this chapter, we discover the tenderness of a God who stoops to challenge us and is passionate about listening to us. Our experiences of defeat, suffering...are so precious to Him that He is ready to empty Himself to receive them, contain them and transform them into experiences of life.

## Chapter 4 (Luke 24, 19-24)

Title: Hearts in Confusion/Uncertain

Objective: In this chapter we explore uncertainty and confusion in our faith journey, in prayer, in our relationship with God, and discover a path of openness to his mysterious presence at the heart of our lives.

## Chapter 5 (Luke 24:25-27)

Title: Hearts Open To The Word of God

Objective: In this chapter we discover a God who reveals Himself through the Scriptures. We are encouraged to engage in listening to His word, which helps us to know Him in His truth and essence, which is Love.

## Chapter 6 (Luke 24:28-29)

Title : Flaming Hearts

Objective: In this chapter we journey together to encounter a God who awaits our invitation to enter and remain with us, during the night, in an incomparable intimacy.

## Chapter 7 (Luke 24:30-31)

Title : Welcoming the Broken Bread

Objective: In this chapter, we discover that the pinnacle of our individual and couple spiritual journey is in the encounter with God and union with him in the mystery of the Eucharist.

## Chapter 8 (Luke 24:32-35)

Title : At The Heart Of Our Teams, At The Heart Of The Church

Objective: In this chapter, we discover the joy of journeying together in our teams, as disciples, and seeing ourselves transformed into missionaries of Love at the heart of our Church.

# Word of God

Lk 24:13-35

"That same day (i.e. the first day of the week), two disciples were on their way to a village called Emmaus, two hours' walk from Jerusalem, and they were talking among themselves about all that had happened. While they were talking and asking questions, Jesus himself came up and walked with them. But their eyes were unable to recognize him. Jesus said to them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" Then they stopped, all sad. One of them, named Cleopas, replied, "You are the only foreigner living in Jerusalem who is unaware of the events of these days." He said to them, "What events?" They replied, "What happened to Jesus of Nazareth, the man who was a prophet powerful in deed and word before God and all the people: how the chief priests and our leaders handed him over, had him condemned to death and crucified him. We hoped that it was he who was going to deliver Israel (despite 3 years of teaching, they understood nothing: the presence of the Lord must transform, must leave traces). But with all that, it's already the third day since it happened. To tell the truth, some of the women in our group filled us with amazement. When they went to the tomb at dawn, they didn't find his body; they came to tell us that they'd even had a vision: angels, who said he was alive. Some of our companions went to the tomb, and found things just as the women had said; but they did not see him." Then he said to them, "You foolish men! How slow is your heart to believe all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary for Christ to suffer this in order to enter into his glory?" And, starting from Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them, in the whole of Scripture, what concerned him. As they approached the village they were going to, Jesus pretended to go further. But they tried to hold him back: "Stay with us, for it's getting close to evening and the day is already drawing to a close." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread, pronounced the blessing, broke it and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us, as he spoke to us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" Immediately they got up and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven Apostles and their companions gathered together, who told them, "The Lord is truly risen: he has appeared to Simon Peter." In turn, they told what had happened on the road, and how the Lord had been recognized by them in the breaking of bread"

# Chapter One: Broken Hearts

In this first chapter, we'll explore the meaning of disappointment on our journey of faith as Christians, explore the passage to hope and realize the importance of journeying together as couples to support each other.

"That same day, two disciples were on their way to a village called Emmaus, two hours' walk from Jerusalem, and they were talking among themselves about all that had happened." Luke 24:13-14.

We are in the presence of two disciples walking together on the same path. We know that one of them is called Cleopas, but the other has no name. So it could be any one of us.

To experience all the spiritual riches of these two verses from Luke, we invite you to follow the same path with these two disciples.

Let's begin by briefly reminding ourselves of the context of this Gospel passage:

In the previous chapter, we have the trial of Jesus, his condemnation by Pilate, then the Passion, death and burial. Chapter 24 concludes Luke's Gospel, and opens the Book of Acts. This same chapter begins by stating that "on the first day of the week, at dawn, the women went to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled to the side of the tomb. They entered, but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus."

You notice everything that points to death, to the end of a story. Nothing left to hope for. Next, the meeting of the women (Mary of Magdala, Joanna and Mary mother of James) with the two angels. According to Jewish tradition, they had to go to the tomb to heal a dead body they had seen with their own eyes on the cross. Little did they expect the question: "Why do you seek the Living among the dead? He's not here, but He's risen..."

They told the Apostles what they had seen and heard (or, more accurately, what they had not seen). But their words seemed like a delirium, an illusion. Nobody believed them. Peter himself went to the tomb, saw the linen cloths alone, and the empty tomb, but returned home amazed at what had happened.

So now we propose to stop, slow down the pace of our daily lives, and take some time with these two disciples. The road to Emmaus is first and foremost a geographical one, although it is difficult to say where the ancient village of Emmaus is located. But it is also, and above all, a spiritual journey for each and every one of us. Since our Lord's resurrection, all our paths in life can become roads to Emmaus, where the Risen Lord wants to meet us. Let's walk alongside the disciples of Emmaus, keeping these two pilgrims company on their journey, which becomes our own in faith. Let's try to make ourselves present to the event and make the place our own. Let's take the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Let's join these disciples in their thoughts and even their emotions.

What does this first day of the week mean to us? It is the 8th day, the day of the Resurrection. We are fully in a new time that breaks with all that has gone before. A new beginning, a new story, a new life.

Who are these two disciples? They were not newcomers. They had been following the Lord for a long time. For months, they had seen his miracles, heard his words and finally believed in him. They were among the Eleven when the women came to report what they had experienced. They heard them. But for them, it's all over now. They're going back to their old lives. Sad, discouraged and resigned, they had left the community of disciples. It was hard for them to understand, to believe, to hope again. It was easier to turn back and get as far away from Jerusalem as possible. They were even prepared to walk against their deepest desires.

What does Jerusalem mean to them? It's the city of God's presence, the place of the Temple containing "The Holy of Holies," but also Jerusalem is the center of power and success. What kind of God did they expect in this city? What were their expectations, their dreams? A victorious God, dominating through the exercise of his power. A liberating God who comes to deliver his people from Roman rule and give them back their freedom. They did not expect such a humiliating death. What a disappointment! What a defeat! What a disgrace!

## What About Us Today?

Like these two disciples, we sometimes drift away from Christ. Even if we still claim to be believers, we cut our ties with faith and hope. For us, Jesus remains in the tomb. We become lukewarm. Our fervor, enthusiasm and passion are a distant memory.

If we examine our own conception of God, to our surprise, we may discover that we have constructed false images of this God:

- Some count on an Almighty God. Such a power that reduces him to an interventionist God who must spend his time short-circuiting the events that weave our history to make life joyful and easy for us. A God who protects us from all kinds of suffering.
- Others rebel against the image of a Spectator God, who abandons human beings to their fate, so slow to respond to the cries of his people to curb the power of evil. A God who is silent in the face of suffering, even profoundly absent.
- Others may look for a magician God who responds to his children's desires because he is a Good God, so affectionate and loving.
- Alternatively, some fear the image of a God who pursues us to evaluate our actions or even our thoughts, and subsequently capable of afflicting us with chastisements.

All these false images, and many more besides, are preconceived in our minds, the fruit of each person's personal history. They can prevent us from meeting the Lord and asking Him for the grace to reveal His true Face to us. It is only in the intimacy of a personal encounter that our God will show us His Face and His way of acting in our lives. If Christ hadn't come to meet the disciples himself, they would probably have gone on their way and disappeared into anonymity. But Christ, his heart burning with love, approached them, and this personal encounter with Him changed their lives. The great Jesuit theologian François Varillon wrote: "God is not all-powerful, His Love is. We will discover His Love through all the wounds we cause Him and which He never ceases to forgive."

## What About Our Lives As Couples?

At some point in our lives, we started out as a couple with a preconceived idea of what our life together could be like. We had expectations, aspirations, dreams... And then, at some point, we come to a halt in the face of unexpected events, often unwanted, experiences of failure, difficulties in our relationships, even with our children, losses, bereavements, disappointments even in the relationship. The other person no longer lives up to my expectations, this event or that reality is far from what I wanted. This can surprise us at any point in our lives together. Moments of free-fall, painful times. One of us, or sometimes both of us, finds ourselves weak, fragile, discouraged, hopeless. The horizon no longer shines. We want to let go, give in, give up and sink into the death of a love that once united us. It's a time of crisis and defeat. Sometimes we can even throw stones at each other, saying "it's his or her fault," "this isn't the life I wanted."

There are many challenges that can undermine our identity as a couple (the image I've built up of the other person and of our life together as a couple that must meet my own needs, the image of the spouse-hero, the spouse-perfect, the image of a perfect life...).

Some experiences can also shake us up spiritually. And we question our vision of God and our mission. We're no longer sure of our vocation, of the call we received when we consecrated ourselves in the sacrament of marriage.

In our "Jerusalem," in certain situations in our lives, we are tempted to crucify God, to eliminate him from our lives, from our cities, from our important decisions. We only think of him in times of great disaster, or to furnish our family celebrations. This is the drama that has just been revealed on the road to Emmaus. It is also what the disciples of Emmaus are talking about, as they flee Jerusalem, where they had believed, eight days earlier, that all their hopes would be fulfilled.

If Luke recounts this conversation and meeting on the road in such detail, it is perhaps to enable us to share in the disciples' despair. This blindness that is often ours, leaving us with the bitter taste of failure and gloom. We then have the impression that even if faith doesn't disappear, it's no longer of much use.

But let's notice one thing, one small detail: despite their defeat, their disappointment and the long duration of the walk, the two disciples stayed together. They continued to walk, in defeat and tiredness, in despair, but still together. In our life as a couple, as a family, do we agree to walk together in all circumstances? If one of us finds himself more in trial, can the other be a good support? To walk at his own pace, be patient, accompany, and hope?

#### And The World We Live In?

A world plunging ever deeper into darkness of all kinds: climate change and natural disasters, violence and war, indifference and injustice, abuse of power and exploitation...suffering and death, weapons and destruction...a never-ending list that generates nothing but anguish, fear, discouragement and disappointment. How should we react to these painful realities ?

Indifference or compassion ? Passiveness or contribution ? In the face of distress, we are called to intervene. Let us contemplate the examples of human figures who have believed in the power of love, not the kind that comes from our own efforts, but from the Love we draw from the source of all Love (St Vincent de Paul, Mother Teresa, Sister Emmanuelle, Father Pedro in the slums of Madagascar, Raoul Follereau...and many other unknowns who work discreetly on the paths of our Humanity. A soul that rises, lifts the world. A gesture made with love and tenderness contributes to a new creation. This is our hope. We are all interconnected. The image of the drops of water that, together, make the ocean... Let us be challenged by this image.

A glimmer of hope: Excerpt from a homily by Pope Francis (source: Holy See press office, July 28, 2022).

"The journey of the Emmaus disciples at the end of Luke's Gospel is an image of our personal journey and that of the Church. On the road of life, and of the life of faith, as we pursue the dreams, projects, expectations and hopes that dwell in our hearts, we also come up against our frailties and weaknesses, experience defeat and disillusionment, and sometimes remain prisoners of the sense of failure that paralyzes us. The Gospel tells us that, precisely at this moment, we are not alone: the Lord comes to meet us, joins us, walks the same road as us with the discretion of a kindly traveler who wants to re-open our eyes and re-fill our hearts.



And when failure gives way to an encounter with the Lord, life is reborn with hope, and we can be reconciled: with ourselves, with our brothers and sisters, with God.

So let's follow the itinerary of what we might call: from failure to hope.

It's an experience that also concerns our lives and our spiritual journey, on all those occasions when we are forced to resize our expectations and face up to the ambiguities of reality, the darkness of life, our weaknesses. This happens to us every time our ideals collide with the disillusionments of existence, and our intentions are ignored because of our frailties; when we cultivate good projects but lack the capacity to implement them (cf. Rm 7, 18); when in our activities or relationships, sooner or later, we experience a defeat, an error, a failure or a fall, when we see the collapse of what we had believed in or committed ourselves to, when we feel crushed by our sin and guilt.

Here, however, we need to be alert to the temptation to flee, present in the two disciples of the Gospel: to turn back, to run away from the place where the events took place, to try to take them away, to seek a 'quiet place' like Emmaus so as not to think about them any more. There's nothing worse in the face of life's failures than running away to avoid facing them. It's a temptation from the enemy, who threatens our spiritual journey and the Church's progress: he wants us to believe that this failure is now definitive, he wants to paralyze us in bitterness and sadness, to convince us that there's nothing more to be done and that it's therefore not worth finding a way to start again.

The Gospel reveals to us, on the contrary, that precisely in situations of disillusionment and pain, precisely when we experience with amazement the violence of evil and the shame of guilt, when the river of our life dries up in sin and failure, when stripped of everything, it seems we have nothing left, precisely there, the Lord comes to meet us and walks with us."

#### A Message Of Hope From Father Caffarel's Letter To All Broken Homes

"To disunited couples, I have one thing to say: never resign yourselves to disunity. We mustn't forget, in fact, that contracting a Marriage is a commitment to never cease wanting and pursuing a total union. This commitment is made between two people, but afterwards, one is not released from it because the other neglects or denies it. The great fault of so many

married Christians is to give up working towards union, to accept division. Those who work towards this union without believing in it, without really wanting it, are no less failing in their commitments.

Marital harmony is not an object of luxury or comfort, which is why spouses have no right to renounce it. It is necessary, for themselves and for many others. Their disagreement would hurt these others as much as themselves. Instead of being the great means of self-improvement for both man and woman, a home where disunity sets in becomes a breeding ground for all the deadly sins, and often leads to the moral bankruptcy of one or both spouses. And while a climate of love is for children the primordial condition for their physical and moral development, the disunity of parents tears at the very core of their being. Society itself suffers from this failure of a home; for it is no longer a living cell, dispensing warmth and light, but a tumor that grows to the detriment of the social body. Finally, let's add that a disunited home, instead of being a praise to the glory of divine Love, is a false note in the concert of creation."<sup>1</sup>

#### Testimonial

We are Berta Horta and Edgar Laura, members of the Teams of Our Lady in Pemba. Pemba is the capital of Cabo Delgado province, the northernmost province of Mozambique. We're going to share our experiences of the terrorist attacks in Cabo Delgado, in the Mocimboa da Praia district.

At 4 a.m. on March 23, 2020, the second attack began. This time much more aggressive and terrifying: countless people were decapitated. A very large number of people lost their lives during these new attacks. Many of these people were our friends. We lived through these confrontations in fear and disorientation, not knowing what to do. We were constantly full of fear, panicking and worrying that our homes would be burnt down. We seriously feared for our lives. In the midst of all these massacres and to protect ourselves, we were forced to leave

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<sup>1</sup> Henri Caffarel, *Lettre aux Foyers de l'Anneau d'Or*, special issue on "love and suffering", n 15-16 May-August 1947

our homes and hide in the vegetation, in the bushes and undergrowth surrounding our houses. Our neighborhood, located at the entrance to the city, was surrounded by a lot of vegetation and bushes, it was the 30 of July. We began to notice that many people were running, fleeing from all sides and from other neighborhoods, along with us and a few neighbors, who were also fleeing and running for their lives. Men, women, children, the elderly, people of all ages were fleeing in fear of being massacred and murdered.

The next day, still in hiding and aware of the great danger we were in, we had to make the decision of our lives: we had no choice but to try and escape from the village to safety. In the midst of all this distress, fear and terror, we give thanks to God that, despite all the fear and fright and everything we went through, nothing serious happened to our family or the people who were with us. Every day and all the time, we thank our good Lord. We had to leave everything behind us, everything we had acquired over many years of work in the north. We were only able to leave with a few personal documents and our clothes, as the few cars that existed didn't even have enough room to transport anything other than fugitives like us. So we had to leave all our belongings behind.

When we arrived in Pemba, thanks to God and the invaluable help of our very dear brothers and sisters of Teams of Our Lady, we were able to gradually resume our lives and overcome all the terror we had experienced. In Pemba, we were warmly welcomed and accommodated by my mother-in-law, my wife Berta's parents. We stayed in a very small space, but in complete safety. Thanks to the invaluable help of our dear brothers and sisters in the Teams of Our Lady, we gradually managed to overcome the difficulties and traumas we experienced. Their support has been unconditional and fundamental for us. In the team that welcomed us, the advice, sharing, fraternity and friendship we received were a great strength in helping us overcome the difficulties we encountered and, little by little, we were able to rebuild and regain our lives. Once we'd lost everything, we had to start from scratch. It wasn't easy at all. We thank our good Lord, because we've already managed to get my job transferred to Pemba and I'm now officially and definitively in this town. Trying to move forward little by little, we are in the process of rebuilding our new little house so that we can return and have our own familiar space. We haven't been back to Cabo Delgado since we arrived in Pemba. We admit we're scared and don't even know if we'll ever go back. We don't even want to imagine what our possessions that we had to leave behind are like, in what

condition they are now, or even if they still exist... Slowly, with God's grace, with the help of our family and our brothers in Teams of Our Lady, we are making our way and overcoming the traumas we have experienced, gradually rebuilding our new life.

Berta and Edgar

### Let's Pray Together

Even today, Lord, you join us on our human journeys, which often resemble the road to Emmaus.

We, too, feel as if we're wandering along dark paths where we don't know what to hold on to. Like the disciples, we don't always feel your presence in our lives, in our suffering, our disappointments and our discouragements.

Our Father God, we often have trouble discerning the signs of your presence at the heart of the world and at the heart of our lives. Open our hearts to your Word. May your presence make us stronger in the face of doubt and discouragement. Let us discover that your Son walks with us on the roads of our lives. He who is Alive with You, and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever. We pray Amen.

### Questions To Share As A Couple.

1. In the difficult moments that can cross our lives as a couple, how do we relate to God?

Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, do we turn our backs on him and take a step backwards in our faith? Do we dare to express our disappointments and defeats in trust? What are the obstacles that can stifle this trust?

2. During our journey together, do we leave room for the expression of our emotions and the deep sharing of our personal experiences? To our children? How deeply do we welcome and listen to others, who are sacred creatures created in God's image and worthy of all value and appreciation?

Questions To Share At The Meeting With Our Team.

1. What might be our own false images or perceptions of God? How can they be an obstacle to a true personal encounter with the Living Christ, working on the paths of our lives?
2. Walking together, as couples and families, can sometimes be a bit tricky. "It takes two to tango". (Knowing that tango is a mystical dance that binds the dancers together between elegance and sensuality). What can our inner gestures and attitudes towards each other be, especially at difficult moments in our relationship, and reflect our deepest communion and inseparable union?