

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

38th General Chapter



October 2024

Religious of Jesus and Mary



SPIRITUAL ITINERARY

Important note:

This spiritual journey serves as an inner preparation in anticipation of the 38th General Chapter. It has the following outline:

- Introduction
- Songs
- Biblical text
- Reflection
- Questions

There are four stages, each designed for three months:

1. Reality (October - December, 2024)
 2. Return to the roots (January - March, 2025)
 3. Blessings (April - June, 2025)
 4. New life (July - September, 2025)
- The Songs are in different languages to sense the diversity within the Congregation and all of which are translated.
 - We invite you to feel free to take what helps you from the proposed material, and choose any other hymn or image that helps you, for your personal and community reflection.
 - It will be very helpful to use the method of Spiritual Conversation for some sessions.
 - During the holidays, you can adapt it to your convenience.



1st Part: October - December, 2024 “INTRODUCTION & REALITY”

October, 2024: INTRODUCTION

We listen to this song together, asking the Holy Spirit to guide and accompany us on **the** journey that we wish to commence: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiBA_2VnH-o

“Wherever you go, I will go...” *Ruth 1:16*

We begin our journey towards the 38th G.C.. The book of Ruth will accompany us as we prepare the itinerary to help us open our minds and above all our hearts. As we embark on this journey, we will embrace and personalize each of its significant moments.

This book invites us on a journey of hope, aiming to help us understand the significance of our personal history, recognize how God operates, comprehend our current circumstances, and discern the signs of hope. Such understanding will provide meaning to both our present and our future.



Rather than focusing on hope emerging from grand schemes of the powerful, this story highlights how hope arises from humble beginnings—specifically from a small remnant of Israel, represented by two widows, one an immigrant, and the other a foreigner who become the seeds of hope for the promised salvation.

We suggest that you begin by appreciating the story of Ruth and Naomi, and the different characters who will accompany us on this path.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0h1eoBeR4Jk>

Questions:

- Which character catches your attention the most? Why?
- Contemplating the logo, what does it suggest to you? What does it invite you to?

We can conclude our prayer by listening to this song:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDe6GNMclPE&list=RDqDe6GNMclPE&start_radio=1



November, 2024

Song: "Heal the world" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWf-eARnf6U>

Heal The World

There's a place in your heart
and I know that it is love
and this place could be much brighter than tomorrow.
And if you really try you'll find there's no need to cry.
In this place you'll feel there's no hurt or sorrow.
There are ways to get there
if you care enough for the living,
make a little space, make a better place.

**Heal the world, make it a better place
for you and for me and the entire human race. There are people dying
If you care enough for the living,
make a better place for you and for me.**

If you want to know why there's a love that cannot lie
Love is strong it only cares for joyful giving.
If we try, we shall see in this bliss we cannot feel fear or dread,
we stop existing and start living.
Then it feels that always love's enough for us growing,
make a better world, make a better world.

Heal the world, make it a better place...

And the dream we were conceived in
will reveal a joyful face.
And the world we once believed in will shine again in grace.
Then why do we keep strangling life
wound this earth, crucify it's soul
Though it's plain to see, this world is heavenly
Be God's glow.
We could fly so high, let our spirits never die.
In my heart I feel you are all my brothers create a world with no fear
together we'll cry happy tears.
See the nations turn their swords into plowshares.
We could really get there
if you cared enough for the living,
make a little space to make a better place.



- **Biblical Text** Ruth: 1: 1 - 2:2
- **Reflection:**

Leave the land, if necessary, when times are difficult.

The Book of Ruth presents a scenario that resonates with our current times: hunger drives the poor to migrate en masse to regions that are more prosperous. Elimelech's family, like millions today, are forced to sell their land and emigrate due to starvation, to a foreign country. As it is written, *"In the days when the Judges were governing, a famine occurred in the country, and a certain man from Bethlehem of Judah went—he, his wife, and his two sons—to live in the plains of Moab"* (Ruth 1:1).

Although there are laws intended to protect the poorest by granting them the right to gather the leftovers of the harvest—which no longer belong to the landowners but to the poor (Lev. 19:9–10)—the reality is different. The poor can only glean of what remains if it suits the landowner. What should be a right for the poor has been reduced to a charitable gesture from the wealthy.



As illustrated in Ruth, *"Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'Let me go into the fields and glean ears of corn in the footsteps of someone who will look on me with favour.' She replied, 'Go, my daughter'"* (Ruth 2:2).

Our world today is marked by violence, hatred, a lack of peace, and shortage of food and material goods, highlighting a desperate cry for a world where everyone can live with dignity. Beyond material needs, there are other kinds of hunger—hunger for God, love, peace, acceptance, identity, meaning in life, companionship, and relationships—that touch the core of our existence. Our hearts yearn for connection, purpose, and fulfillment. Just as Naomi sought sustenance in Bethlehem, we all seek nourishment for our souls. The Book of Ruth offers a powerful narrative that resonates with the human experience across time and reflects our contemporary reality. Ruth's decision to care for Naomi exemplifies compassion and solidarity. Today, we face a global cry for justice, peace, and equality.

- **Questions:** The book of Ruth invites introspection at personal and community levels.
 - *What resonates within you from this text?*
 - *Identify your needs/hunger at personal/community level. How do you feel about them?*
 - *What hungers drive me/us, and how do I/we address them?*



December, 2024

- **Song:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bc_YDNMVQKk

GOD WILL MAKE A WAY

*God will make a way
where there seems to be no way.
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me.
He will be my guide
hold me closely to His side.
With love and strength for each new day
He will make a way, He will make a way.(2)*

By a roadway in the wilderness,
He'll lead me.
Rivers in the desert will I see.
Heaven and earth will fade
but His Word will still remain,
and He will do something new today...

Oh, God will make a way...

By a roadway in the wilderness,
He'll lead me.
Rivers in the desert will I see.
Heaven and earth will fade
but His Word will still remain,
and He will do something new today...

Oh, God will make a way...

Yes, He will, He will make a way for you.

- **Biblical Text:** Ruth: 1:6, 1:12-13, 1:20
- **Reflection:**



Know how to embrace what life offers

Elimelech and his family lived in Moab for ten years, experiencing the ups and downs of daily life. They found work, and the children married Moabite spouses. However, misfortune struck once more: first, Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, followed by the deaths of her two sons. Three women are left alone, poor, widowed, and childless. This is the fate of many women around the world. For them, there seems to be no way out. The prevailing belief was that women without their men were insignificant and worthless. They were expected to resign themselves to their misfortune and accept whatever life handed them. However, Naomi is not one to be intimidated. Her experiences have made her resilient, and she decides not just to accept her circumstances but to take control of her life and make her own decisions. But what should she do? What guidance does she have to make the right choice?

When confronted with desolation, it is important to hold onto your roots and memories of faith to maintain hope. This is a period of deep despair. There is neither solid ground beneath your feet nor a roof for protection. Even faith fails to provide comfort. The sense of loneliness is intense. The situation is painfully difficult: three impoverished women are left with nothing, which means having no identity, no sense of belonging, and no future. Moreover, Naomi, the eldest among them, is an emigrant from Bethlehem.



Naomi is acutely aware of her situation, expressing her feelings of bitterness and loss. She tells others to call her *Mara*, which means "bitter," because she believes the Almighty has made her life bitter (1:20). When she left Bethlehem, she was poor and hungry but felt "full" because she had her husband and children with her, giving her a sense of completeness and purpose. Now, she returns feeling "empty," having lost her husband and children, and she is left in poverty with nothing tangible to hold onto. This emptiness reflects not just in the absence of her family, but also her belief in her own lack of worth, which is influenced by societal prejudices. At the time, there was a prevailing notion that single or widowed women were without value. Naomi has internalized these beliefs, and as a result, she does not yet recognize her own value or that of her daughter-in-law. Her perception is clouded by her grief and the societal views that diminish the roles of women without male support.

Yet, despite this experience, Naomi does not give up; she has something fundamental: she has not lost her roots or her memory of faith, which makes hope possible for her. *"When she heard that the Lord had cared for His people, giving them bread"* (1:6).

Christmas also reminds us that Mary and Joseph were not in their own land. They were immigrants in another country, giving birth to Jesus and facing their own difficulties, with no place to stay.

- **Questions:**

- *What resonates within you from this text?*
- *In the time of desolation, what gives me/us hope and assurance?*
- *In the light of Advent/Nativity, what new life are we invited to embrace?*