



## SPIRITUALITY OF MARIE POUSSEPIN: ACCOMPANIMENT OF AND AMONG SISTERS

*Sr. Marina Mejía Toro  
April 2020*

It is the normal situation that in our spiritual life we all need accompaniment and that in one way or another we all will find ourselves on either side: to accompany or to be accompanied by someone else.

It seems that when we speak about accompaniment in our Religious and Spiritual Life it can refer either to the situation in which I am accompanied, or I am trying to accompany others. However, it seems to me that in either situation the same principles can be applied, the same qualities can be expected from us and the same results will be the final gift of the Lord for each one of us. As long as there is a piece of the road to walk, we need to be accompanied **because in the economy of salvation we do not walk alone.**

The main point is then to understand why and how this accompaniment should take place.

Often, we may even get discouraged thinking and feeling we are alone in our search for the Lord, this is because we even forget the promise of the Lord so clearly found in His Word.

The prophet Malachi clearly reminds us that in this work both the preparation and the actual search are in the hands of the Lord:

*“Thus, says the Lord God: Lo, I am sending **my messenger** to prepare the way before me. And suddenly there will come to the Temple the Lord whom you seek” Malachi 3:1*

Accompaniment of and among sisters - Sr. Marina Mejía T.

So why to be concerned? Faith is telling me everything will be there! However, we know clearly that the result will be there only after a long and painful struggle. Who is this messenger? What is he/she supposed to do? How do I identify him/her? Do I clearly see? Do I really want to see? Am I ready to accept what I would found out? Why does the messenger need to be sent? What would be the work and the role of this messenger?

Why do I need a messenger? Can't the Lord talk to me directly?

All these are questions raised by my self-sufficiency and my pride of believing I do know everything! That I can always handle the situation by myself! The story of young Samuel sleeping in the temple is a clear example of it: after a third call from the Lord that Samuel did not recognize, it is Eli the High Priest, who finally recognizes the presence of the Lord and directs the boy to give the right response to Him: "Speak Lord, your servant listens" 1 Sam. 3,9

Let us see then the reality of the search, of that situation in which I find myself struggling, seeking and identifying the will of God in my life.

### ***The road***

"Lord, my God, Abraham replied, Lord my God 'how do I know that I shall inherit the land? He said to him, 'get me a three year old heifer, a three year old goat, a three year old ram, a turtle dove and a young pigeon' He brought Him all these, cut them in half on one side, and half facing it on the other; but the birds of prey came down on the carcasses but Abraham drove them off... When the sun had set and the darkness had fallen, there appeared a smoking furnace and a firebrand that went between the halves. That day Yahweh made a Covenant with Abraham..."  
*Gen. 15: 7-21.*

It is then clear that we need a reassurance, a help in the long struggle of identifying the offering that the Lord will ask from us and then, we need not only patience but also understanding, trust and courage.

Several steps seem to be clear in the relations of Abraham with the Lord. Let us look at them. It is God who asks for the sacrifice when Abraham wants to be assured that the promise of the Lord will be fulfilled: "How do I know I will inherit the land?"

"Get me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtle dove and a young pigeon."

The demand of the Lord is clear and specific: the materials for the offering will be chosen from among the possessions of Abraham, grown up animals and those considered pure and worthy to be sacrificed to the Lord.

However, the actual offering is not enough; we may ask? How will the sacrifice be consumed? Where is the fire to consume it? How is Abraham going to know if the offering is really accepted by the Lord?

It is not enough to offer the sacrifice; Abraham must make a total act of trust and **wait** until God himself will provide for the fire to consume the sacrifice, a symbol of God's acceptance of it.

In the meantime, Abraham had to struggle the whole day to defend his offering from the birds of prey, that is, from everything that would threaten or destroy the totality or purity of the gift.

"But the birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abraham drove them off..."

"When the sun had set and the darkness had fallen, there appeared a smoking furnace and a firebrand that went between the halves."

It is God who asks, who suggests the gift He wants us to give to Him! It is again God who provides for the fire to consume it! **This is the totality of His action in our life!** But at the same time, it is the reality of His presence in me and my presence to Him! Nothing is going to happen unless He will do it!! But also, nothing is going to happen if I do not take care of defending the sacrifice from those ready to destroy it. **And this is the lesson I must learn:**

- He Himself will ask for the gift, it is not my own initiative!
- And He will ask for that which belongs to me dearly.
- He then will allow me to perform the offering but then
- He will ask for the trust to wait until He himself will consume this gift, until He will take possession of it!!
- In the meantime, I will have to struggle to defend the purity and totality of the gift from anything that may threaten it.

It is a fact; the birds of prey are also a reality in my life. In my life those birds of prey that threatened Abraham's offering will be present too! And like Abraham my job is to be present to identify them and then to defend the gift from all of them often appearing to be so strong, but at the same time so hidden and so terribly real in my life!!

It is here that the accompaniment is needed:

- a) to be able to identify those things that within me are trying to rob and to destroy part of my gift.
- b) to use the right tools or weapons to chase them away and preserve the purity and totality of the gift until the moment when God Himself would provide the fire to consume the sacrifice as a foretelling of His coming.

I ask again: Which are these birds of prey? How can I identify them?

How are they trying to steal the gift?

How do I prevent them from robbing and spoiling the offering of my life given to Him the day of my consecration?

It is not enough to honestly and sincerely offer the gift; this is only the beginning of my religious life!! At the same time it is only the beginning of the struggle that will last my whole life until the fire of His love, like a welcomed messenger, would take over my whole being and consume the offering I have worked so hard to protect from the devouring birds of prey!

Accompaniment of and among sisters - Sr. Marina Mejía T.

It is here where the presence of the messenger will be clear! Each one of those coming into my life are bringing, are offering to me the strength I need to continue the struggle and keep the sacrifice “intact” until His coming; then it will be consumed by the fire of His Love.

Does Marie Poussepin give to us clear directions on this matter? Is she concerned not only with the totality of the gift but also with the identification and welcome of those messengers giving me the courage to be awoken and watchful until the arrival of the Lord?

**Marie Poussepin** in her 'Reglements' is very clear concerning the need of one another on this path of holiness, for the possibility to arrive to the total gift of ourselves. For her, the messenger seems to be each one of the sisters in the community and among them the first one is the superior.

### ***How is this messenger going to deliver his/her message?***

Let us look at the Reglements:

#### **Reglements Chapter 2: Union and Charity of Sisters among the Sisters**

- Mutual Charity which should be found among persons in community, must be based on that which Jesus Christ had for us and based not on relationships of alliance, nor should be according to mood or favors received, and it should not seek one's own interest.
- True charity will lead them to cordiality, graciousness, mutual admonition, and deference in all things. It will invite them to bear with one another in their weaknesses and imperfections. It will inspire them always to judge other's actions favorably or to excuse the intention when they cannot justify their actions. *Charity will even give them the courage to practice the precept of the Gospel which orders us to warn others, with prudence and gentleness of their faults, in order to destroy the evil which could come about by making more of them than they are.*

#### **Chapter 3: Humility**

They will see their weaknesses and their failings and will tell themselves that they can do nothing without grace.

The motives of this virtue (humility) will lead the Sisters never to prefer themselves to anyone, neither privately nor publicly... All these advantages will never lead them to hold themselves better than others, nor to seek esteem and praise from others...

They will banish from their hearts all resentment and all feelings against those who caused these sorrows...

They will avoid self-glorifying tasks.

Accompaniment of and among sisters - Sr. Marina Mejía T.

## **Chapter 19: The Mistress of Novices**

“- First of all, she will apply herself to make them (the novices) know, as perfectly as possible for her to do so, Jesus Christ Our Lord.”

## **Chapter 17: Virtues and qualities that a Superior should have**

- “The Superior must be instructed about the truths of salvation, in order to be able to teach her sisters...; she will give them the necessary advice about what they propose. She will help them when in doubt...”
- A superior who knew how to discover the character of the persons entrusted to her would be aware of using the same remedies for all the sickness into which they may fall.... She will be vivacious or slow, gentle or severe according to the needs... she will encourage the weak and console those who, despite their good will, never cease to make mistakes... She will spare the more sensitive persons, whom we dare not touch without causing a deep hurt. ...
- She would be more willing to use gentleness rather than severity, and not forget her own nothingness at the sight of other’s faults.
- The superior will make it her duty never to correct when she herself is upset, even slightly. She will be no less attentive to defer correction when she notices that the persons whom she must reprimand are still in a state of great emotion for fear of exposing them to greater faults.

The task of the messenger is to remind that the Lord is coming, and we must constantly be ready for receive Him. Can we have the faith and trust to accept those messengers trying to destroy in the fire of love, the birds which rob the gift before love can consume them?

Our Mother foundress in the Reglements again points out some of the origin of those flames of love, of those messengers consuming the gift before the coming of the Lord.

### **Again, in Chapter 3, on humility she points out:**

“everything is made easy by humility because it draws God’s attention to our prayer, sends us help from heaven, and makes us masters of ourselves. It incites the Lord to remember us when we are assailed with woe, and to deliver us from our enemies.”

“... never to lose sight of what has been commanded, and often to bring to mind that He Himself will be the recompense for those who love Him and serve Him.”

“... they will welcome the advice that we judge appropriate to give them. We are all subject to an infinite number of faults. There is pride in being sad about our faults, and especially in being plunged into discouragement for the things that God is ready to forgive... if they (the Sisters) succeed in anything, it is only by the grace of Him who is the author of all good.”

“... Humility, ... is like the foundation of the spiritual edifice”.

Accompaniment of and among sisters - Sr. Marina Mejía T.

## In Chapter 2 on Union and Charity of the Sisters among them,

Again, she tells us:

“True Charity will lead them to cordiality, graciousness, mutual admonition and deference in all things. It will invite them to bear with one another in their weaknesses and imperfections... to judge other’s actions favorably or to excuse the intention when they cannot justify their actions”

It is evident that this work of sanctification will require from each one of us the perseverance which is helped and encouraged by the messengers announcing the presence of the fire to consume the gift.

There is an attitude of perseverance given only by love! However, perseverance will not be enough, it must be preceded by a complete honesty and truthfulness of our life.

The original gift with all its purity and enthusiasm must be preserved to the end, otherwise it would mean that the birds of prey have succeeded in spoiling and stealing part of that gift.

It is the perseverance given to us by love, by the trust and certainty that can keep us awoken until the coming of the Lord.

However, I know that my love is nourished by faith and trust in His promise and that it is sustained by the certainty of His love and fidelity.

The king David is a clear example of it in Psalm 132:

“O Lord remember David  
and all the hardships he endured  
and the oath he swore to the Lord,  
his vow to the mighty one of Jacob:

Not to enter tent or house,  
not to climb into bed.  
not to allow himself to sleep,  
not even close his eyes,  
**until he found a place for Yahweh,  
A home for the mighty One of Jacob!!”**

This attitude of David is the one that each one of us had the day of our Religious Profession!

But we can never forget the response given to David by the Prophet Nathan: “Should you build me a house to dwell in?... The Lord also reveals to you that **he will establish a house for you!!”**

It is more than clear than the work of my sanctification will not be the result of my work! The Lord will do the whole work through my Sisters in my community thus preparing His coming to that house He himself has built!

Let us ask the Lord to help each one of us to assume this attitude, to spend the rest of our lives protecting and defending our gift until the fire of His love can consume it for His greater glory,

Accompaniment of and among sisters - Sr. Marina Mejía T.

convinced that each one we meet in our life is a messenger of His love, His care and concern for us! Let us ask of Him, to be able to believe that through them, it is He, Himself who is building this house where He will dwell!

Then we will accept with gratitude all the messengers that He may send into our life, and we will know for sure that the promise of the Lord, like for Abraham, will be fulfilled. We will receive the land promised! We will, as much as possible, here on earth, fulfil in ourselves, the greatest desire of our Mother Foundress for each one of her daughters:

**“To Know Jesus Christ and His Mysteries.”**