

OMI Annual Retreat, 2018



WAITING ON GOD

My soul is waiting for the Lord, I count on his word.
My soul is longing for the Lord, More than watchman for day break
Let the watchman count on day break And Israel on the Lord. Ps.130:5-7

This Psalm counsels waiting as a spiritual attitude in life. The Psalm is a cry from the depth of the heart for God to pay attention. It is a Psalm of longing, a prayer that aches for the Lord more than the night watchman longs to be freed from his dark lookout.

As the watchman counts on the arrival of the light of dawn, so the psalmist waits hopefully for the Lord.

What keeps him going is his conviction that when dawn approaches it will dismiss the dark; likewise the Psalmist counts on his belief in who God is – the one in whom there is full of redemption.

If the Lord truly is our redeemer, we have reason to wait in hope. And we wait, not so much because of who we are, but because who we believe GOD is.

The attitude of waiting, however, is not a very popular one in present day culture. To wait is a *counter cultural activity*.

WORK AND IDENTITY

One of the characteristics of our culture is the prize we put on work, on achievement, and on career. In Capitalist societies we are judged, more and more, by what we do, by what we produce, by our job or career.

The worst affliction that can befall you is to be made unemployed or retired.

There are religious and priest who have not stopped working during their life. For them moving from achieving to receiving, from activity to waiting, from leading to being led this alarms
Some people who are afraid of what might emerge in this time of stillness.

We live in a culture of immediacy, a culture, a culture hungry for instant results and quick fix, a people whose desire for the new has to be transformed into the present tense. We want it now.
Why wait when you can get it now?

The world of advertising is a world of voices and images soliciting and insisting that what we want is what we need and all of it can be purchased now.

The present generation is a generation of moment; if it isn't happening now, it's no good. There is little tolerance for things that don't work, not least relationships. We dispose effortlessly not only

of gadgets that no longer work or are outdated, but of relationships that seem worn out, where there is no longer any pay off.

And we have become more skilled at recycling old cans, old papers, plastic, also old friends, old people.

Many young people are cautious of entering into life-long partnership, promising each other, before an assembly, committing themselves to each other “till death do us part”

This is understandable because right round them they see marriage breakdowns.

People have grown accustomed to immediate gratification: why wait?

And often when we get what we want, trying it out or buying it in the hope we will be satisfied at last, the vacancy is not filled.

That experience of dissatisfaction is often characteristic of our world of consumerism.

“Last Christmas I sat inside a fashionable department store, watching the shoppers come and go. Most of them, I thought, had come not to buy things they already wanted. It was as if they had come looking for something to want- something that might fill a nameless need, even if only for a moment”

And so the hunt goes on for something that will satisfy the hunger inside us. Our hunger for the immediate is insatiable. The faster the better; the best of course is express.

We have fast foods, microwaves, mobile phones, Wi-Fi, etc... we want to download the world immediately, to have everything instantly available.

For many, waiting is regarded as a waste of time, it is an empty landscape where we are and where we want to be.

In our society there is a direct correlation between status and waiting. The more important your status, the less you have to wait.

Waiting reminds us that we are not in charge, that we cannot command instantly whoever it is we see, so we have to wait. And the people who have to wait always are the poor.

WAITING NOT TO BE AVOIDED

We know that there are experiences in life when waiting cannot be avoided.

We can recall some of our images of waiting;

- Young parents wait with growing expectation for the birth of their child.
- An old man sits in a nursing home, still waiting for the day when his family will visit him.
- Waiting for the bus. Train etc...

We now from our own experience that waiting is part of life, and there is no life without it.

- All of us waited to be born, we waited to be nourished, we waited to be named, and we waited to be loved. Love and waiting are very close.

One of the signs of lack of love in family life and community life is when we do not have time for one another, when we never spend time together or wait together. We can be people who are always on the way somewhere else. People are rushing off, heading off, hurrying to commitments, to something *over there*.

People greet people on their way out not looking at each other, their eyes are hungry for the exit.

Yet we chose community life because we choose to live together, to work together, rather than wait alone.

We need to believe that in community something is happening here and not there.

We live together, we pray together, we eat together, we share together the fortunes and misfortunes of our life.

We have lost the art of being together without a task to focus on, without an agenda to plough through, without a business to transact.

Being present to one another, waiting time together in shared space, makes many of us uneasy.

And we long for solitary space of our rooms and gadgets.

Many of us living in community, the practice of waiting together around a common meal, a social time have become some memory of the past. We prefer to be being alone in our rooms. This has become the common trend.

WAITING FOR NEW LIFE

Abraham and Sarah

The ancient story of our faith give begins with two great figures of faith. Abraham and Sarah are the most ecumenical figures in the history of religion-they are wanted and claimed by three major faiths.

- These two old people are God's original accomplices.
- At a time when people the same age are already well retired, Abraham and Sarah begin a new life by leaving their own place and country for a great adventure.
- They leave their settled town life and become nomads, without a clue where they are going.
- Their only fixed point is in their heart, their belief in the promise of God.
- The old couple are the original pilgrims, our ancestors in the faith.
- The story of our faith begins with two old gypsies who set out on a journey without maps, travelling on a word of promise.
- The Israelites call him "our father Abraham" (Gen. 12:3)
- Abraham was 75 when he was called. An old age pensioner. Sarah was 65years old.
- Long past child bearing age and has been afflicted with barrenness all her life.
- God promises these two that they will be a new beginning, a fresh start, and become ancestors to peoples whose number will be countless as stars. THAT IS THE PROMISE.
- And it takes another 25 years before the promise is fulfilled.
- Both are exhausted with waiting: they begin to suspect that the "not yet" really means "not ever".
- So they decide to take things into their own hands and move to plan B, to arrange the birth through Hagar.

- Why bother holding out for God's promise when you can arrange what you yearn for yourself? To avoid all the waiting for they go for quick fix.
- They want to make life happen, not let life happen; they want to manage it all themselves because they are tired of living this in-between life, in no man's land, between the promise and the delivery.
- This quick fix threatens to break up the family. With her new authority, the slave-girl mocks her barren mistress whom she hopes to replace.
- And Sarah mistreats Hagar badly and she runs away.
- The family that was once united in waiting together in hope has become dysfunctional, suspicious, jealous and fearful.
- Both women become victim and victimizer.

PROMISES AND EXPECTATIONS

- When events in our life are not going according to plan, when our hope seems wrecked, we all share our doom-laden outlook with others.
- We can look at our prospects as a religious community and end up sharing only our disappointments and misery.
- All we do is gather together to concelebrate in hopelessness.
- But the Word of God always come to contradict hopelessness: that is why it is called Good News.
- It takes us beyond the boundaries of our own limitation, and challenges us to face the future in the power of God's Word.
- The Word addressed to Abraham is in the form of promise. But none of us can have faith in a promise unless we can see that what is promised is a real possibility for ourselves.
- Believing in promises shapes the way we look at ourselves and the way we look at the future.
- By their nature promises speaks of events yet unfulfilled; they refer us to a future of accomplishment and invite us to wait in hope. If you never risk hoping, you never need wait.
- If we are to believe the promises of God, we have to imagine ourselves differently, see ourselves in a new light.
- We fail because we fail to imagine, we are not able to imagine differently. We can get stuck with who we are and what we are and where we are.
- We can become transfixed by the present muddle, expecting nothing more exciting than the same kind of time being endlessly repeated.
- We can stay hugging the familiar shores.
- But the WORD OF GOD invites us to go out into the deep, into the deep of promise.
- Some people cancel the future of promise because they do not believe anything will be really different.
- The future is open, no matter what age we are, no matter what condition or shape we are in-a truth dramatically illustrated by Abraham and Sarah.

FAILURE TO IMAGINE GOD'S PROMISE.

- When Abraham is ninety-nine he hears the promise again (Gen17:15-16)
- After twenty four years of waiting, it is all too much; it is absurd.
- Abraham fails to imagine Sarah and himself as real parents, the waiting and the hoping seen a vacant pastime. It is not only that they are asked to believe in the birth of their son, they are to imagine themselves differently as parents of this new life.

- Abraham's failure is a failure of imagination: he wants to settle for what he knows, for what is present, for the here and now, not for a future he cannot imagine any more.
- Abraham is already a parent; Ishmael is here, whereas the promised son is still nowhere around.
- But God refuses the old man, insisting that Sarah will have a son.
- And he sees not a vision but a joke- which is why he laughs. He becomes fixated with what is; he has stopped dreaming of what can be; he becomes obsessed with his own poverty, his own emptiness, and, above all, the huge absence that dominates his life.
- That is why he asks God to settle for the makeshift present, not the future of dreams.
- But God insists that he will establish his covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear next year (Gen.17:21)

WAITING AS PROCESS

- The story of Abraham and Sarah, our ancestors in the faith, is a story of tenacious endurance. It is not a straightforward, painless story of waiting; the story is nuanced by the couple's despondency, their diminishing energy, their worry about time running out, the sheer fatigue of waiting, and their determination to make alternative plans when the only thing they are asked to do is WAIT,
- Yet they hold on, however shakily, to the dream that God has for them; they never give up completely.
- The day comes when they become what they wait for, loving parents of the gift of new life.
- Abraham and Sarah are not only our ancestors in the faith but our teachers. They teach us that waiting in hope, believing in God's dream of us, is not a squandering time but hallowing time.
- In that time of waiting we are being formed. Waiting is our formation. What God does in us while we wait is as important as what we wait for.
- *Waiting is the process of becoming what God wants us to be. And becoming takes time; there is no becoming without it.*
- Like Abraham and Sarah, we have to learn to trust in God's providence that good will emerge from all this in God's time.
- His clock different from our clock (2Peter 3:8-9)
- Often we want God's gifts, but not his timing; we want the penny but not the minute, we want Isaac but not the twenty-five years of waiting.
- "A hope that is seen is not a hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it in patience." (Rom.8:24-25)

WAITING FOR GOSPEL

- Luke sets the stage for his Gospel story by situating the events he is recounting in time and place.
- Abraham and Sarah, waited on a word of promise to take flesh in the midst of their lives. That attitude of waiting eventually becomes the dominant one for the faithful in Israel.
- Most people will give up waiting on God and attend to their own business.
- Luke will open his Gospel with representative figures of this humble and lowly people, those who are left behind, who put their trust in God and wait on God's promise.
- As the story of old Israel began and ended with waiting figures, so the story of the new Israel begins with waiting figures.

- Luke opens his Gospel with the story of Abraham and Sarah, retelling it through the aged couple, Zechariah and his barren wife Elizabeth. Luke builds a bridge back, to connect his new story of Israel to the old story of Israel using four waiting figures, ZECHARIAH, ELIZABETH, SIMEON AND ANNA.
- Mathew opens his Gospel with a genealogy. Luke is much more dramatic, choosing to open his Gospel with a spectacular disturbance in the Temple.
- To be a priest you had to be born into the priesthood, and there were so many thousands of priests ready to officiate at the temple that they were divided into twenty-four courses, each group serving for two weeks every year.
- There were two sacrifices a day, morning and afternoon, and the presiding priest was chosen by lot. Zechariah has got his chance by lot to preside at the temple liturgy. Zechariah waited for this moment (Lk. 1:8-10)
- Zechariah has won his once-in-lifetime chance after waiting so long. What happens? Poor Zechariah is cut short in the middle of it.
- Something unexpected happens and takes over. As he was waiting for this chance he was also waiting for his child for a long time.
- The angel announces that the waiting is over (Lk. 1:13) The waiting is almost over: Elizabeth is to have a child, the one who is afflicted by barrenness all her life will give birth to a child.
- Zechariah interrupts “excuse me, but how can I be sure of all this? Have you seen my wife and see myself old people”
- Zechariah does what Abraham did before him: he focuses on basic biological laws and the couple’s impressive arithmetic.

WAITING IN PASSION – THE PASSION AS CENTRAL STORY

- The Gospels are all targeted on one principle story about Jesus. His Passion and death. Three passion predictions MARK 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34 focus on the passion, the way of suffering that cannot be avoided.
- First one at Caesarea Philippi, next at Galilee and the final one on their journey to Jerusalem. What is going to happen in Jerusalem is part of the predetermined plan of God.
- In Mark’s gospel the disciples do not understand Jesus in his lifetime, no one understands Jesus until after his death. Only one does after his death and he is not a disciple but a pagan soldier. “Truly this man is a Son of God. Mk15:9
- Jesus’ identity is recognized when he is exposed as the object of cruel attention in his passion. All that the centurion could see was not the active Jesus but the victim having things done to him.

WAITING IN GETHSEMANE

- This is the last time Jesus and the disciples are together in the Gospel of Mark. Scene begins with Jesus and his disciples entering together and ends with going their separate ways. Disciple’s chronic failures to pay attention to Jesus’ passion.

- Jesus' gradual alienation from his own community as he struggles to discern and accept Father's will. At Gethsemane Jesus prays "take this cup away from me. But not my will but your will be done" (Mk 14:36)
- Jesus is waiting for his prayer to be answered. Jesus is waiting for the time of terror to begin. Jesus is disconnected, he asked his disciples to wait with him and pray, to wait together as a community. But his disciples excluded themselves from his drama of attentive waiting.
- They do not wait and watch with Jesus, they do not wait and watch with each other. Often part of the burden of suffering is that people do not talk to one another. They are together in family or in community still they can remain isolated and mute, sharing their pain with no one.
- The disciples find it hard to keep up, may be they are tired, or drunk after Passover meal or not worried about anything. They might have even found it hard to swallow the suffering of their beloved leader who is begging for an escape. They might have found it extremely difficult to see a man who has done many miracles is looking hopeless.
- It is difficult to wait with those who suffer, to pay attention to their plight, to be attentive. Can I stay with my suffering Brother or Sister?
- Yet Jesus' prayer eventually turns away from escape to surrender. He chooses to be there where he is right now. He is prepared to remain at this painful juncture, waiting patiently. Through his prayer he comes to a decision not to flee from agony, but to endure the agony.
- Jesus believes that the suffering could be overcome if and only accepted. Feeling of abandoned by God will be conquered only if he endures it. THERE IS NO QUICK FIX, THERE IS NO FLIGHT FROM PAIN.
- The disciples abandon him and run away. ***The story of Gethsemane is the story of Jesus' waiting in isolation. Gethsemane is an image of sorrowful waiting, of being present to the prospect of what people will do to you, but it is also a story of resolve to endure, literally to hang in there.***
- Half the world lives in Gethsemane and the other half is asleep. It is difficult to stay awake to the sufferings of others and to wait with them. We want to get on with life, as if life is somewhere else.
- Gethsemane for Jesus is a crucial decision; he is going to wait it out. During his life time ministry Jesus is presented as Subject of what is done, and during passion he is presented as the Object of what is done.
- MINISTRY – SUBJECT
 1. ***He teaches with authority***
 2. ***He preaches the kingdom of God***
 3. ***He heals the sick***
 4. ***He raises the dead***
 5. ***He eats with tax collectors etc.***
- PASSION –OBJECT
 1. ***He is handed over by Judas***
 2. ***He is arrested and led away***
 3. ***He is abandoned by his disciples***
 4. ***He is denied by Peter***
 5. ***He is handed over to be crucified***
- One of the most frustrating things about being a victim of violence, suffering at the hands of hostile people, is that the things happen to you over which you have no control. When you are victim of violence you are no longer in charge. Other people make decisions for you and do things to you. You are left to suffer the consequences of their actions.

- Jesus is exposed and vulnerable to everything people want to do to him, he is no longer in control. Power not exercised throughout his passion.
- IN THIS WHOLE EPISODE JESUS IS MOVING
 - FROM WORKING TO WAITING
 - FROM ACTION TO PASSION
 - FROM GIVING TO RECEIVING.

WAITING FOR AN ENDING – GOSPEL OF JOHN

- It is one thing to be locked in a room with no exit.
- It is another thing to choose to lock yourself in a room, because you live in the absence of the one you love, you live in fear, hurt and disappointment.
- This is the picture of the early Christian community that John portrays, after the death of Jesus (Jn. 20:19)
- A community hiding behind locked doors. They failed to follow their master until the end of his journey and now they have become runaways from real life.
- While Jesus was still among them he prepared them for his final departure (Jn. 13:33ff)
- John shows Jesus speaking to his disciples before his arrest for the last time. Jesus assuring them, that he has to go, and cannot follow him.
- But they will be not be orphaned. Jesus assures them of an advocate. “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me”(Jn.14:1)
- Our routine work of everyday takes place without much fun fare and without great sense of drama. But the same become very emotional and memorable when it is done for the last time.
- Writings and sayings of St. Eugene our beloved founder are important to us, more so in the case of his last saying before his departure “Charity, Charity, and charity”
- Our founder has said many things but his last statement is very important, because that is his last desire of his followers. Therefore it is very special to us.
- Most of us will not know the last moments of our life.
- In his final discourse John portrays Jesus as someone who is aware of the effects that will trouble his disciples after his departure.
- “Listen the time will come, in fact it is here already; When you will be scattered each going his own way and leaving me alone” (Jn,16:32)
- Disciples are tired of his long discourse. They had to face the sudden death of their beloved one. They will be left alone a big absence.
- How will Jesus’ final departure affect the way they see themselves and the directions they take.
- An experience of profound loss always makes us question our identity.
- In the understanding of John it will be the work of the PARAKLETE, who will re-establish the apostolic community. “I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever”(Jn.14:16)
- The Advocate will be the gift that will replace Jesus and the power that will re-found the community.

- It is a future promise before that disciple had to face the loss of Jesus. Sometimes the losses we face are so great that they never seem to go away. At times the loss can reduce us to silence so we become dumb witnesses.
- The gift of the spirit to the community of Jesus' followers. In John's gospel the apostles are sad because of the departure of Jesus. They are aware that they will have to face the future in his absence. But it is for their good and advantage, otherwise they cannot receive the ADVOCATE. This advocate will console them at the demise of the beloved one.
- John also speaks about granting of the Spirit at the foot of the Cross (19:28-30), water and blood symbolizes the gift of the Spirit.
- On Easter Sunday evening Jesus appears to his disciples and breathes his spirit on them (21:22-23) Jesus shows his wounds and asks Thomas to touch him. Wounded Jesus appears to the wounded community.
- In the last hours of his earthly life, Jesus had been abandoned, betrayed, and handed over, accused, tried, condemned, led away to kill and to bury. But God raised him up on the third day, from the powerlessness of the tomb.
- Now the risen Jesus does the same for his followers. He liberates the wounded community.
 - CAN WE GO BEYOND OUR HURT?
 - ARE WE IN A POSITION TO SERVE OUR PEOPLE EVEN THROUGH WE STILL CARRY TE WOUNDS OF OUR HURT?
- The risen Christ breathes on his disciples the breath of God. He exhales the energy of God and the disciples inhale the energy of God. This breath of God will open the door to a life with others. The breath of God will not take away their wounds; it will enable them to go beyond their wounds, to reach out to others and to proclaim liberation.

WAITING FOR AN ENDING - GOSPEL OF LUKE

- Luke concludes his gospel by painting a picture that the apostolic community must wait for the gift of God, prayerful waiting for the Spirit –Pentecost.
- For Luke time between Ascension and Pentecost is a time of prayerful expectation for the gift of God. Luke moves his story from a community shattered by the violent death of Jesus to a community, preaching in the name of the Risen Lord.
- The disciples' experiences of loss to their new attachment to the Lord.
- A community that stays and waits-to-a mission charged community. How did this happen? The power of the Spirit. Like in John here in Luke too *the gift of peace marks the beginning of this new community.*
- In John Jesus asked his disciple to touch and see, in Luke Jesus eats before their eyes. In Luke Jesus gives a mission “preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all the nations”
- It is not enough to have the memory of Jesus, not enough to have a mission, above all you need the Gift of the Spirit, until then WAIT (24:49)
- The risen Jesus departs, leaving behind human unfinished community. The ascension marks the fulfillment of Jesus' mission. It leaves the community however, as in-between people. They are

between their loss and their future mission, between their past experience as followers of Jesus and their hope of being a community of Spirit.

- **BETWEEN MEMORY AND HOPE THEY WAIT**
- The story at the end of the Gospel is unfinished: they still have to wait for an ending to this in-between time. They have to wait inside the huge absence of their Lord.

WAITING IN ABSENCE

- Why do innocent people suffer? Where is God?
- Many die due to lack of pure drinking water, why?
- Many children die due to malnutrition why?
- There is global war, absence of peace in some parts of the world.
- People suffer can we justify? Refugees landing in other countries seeking asylum while a few countries welcome them many refuse to accept them. Can we allow them to die?
- Naturally we protest against the futility of avoidable suffering. Much suffering can mutilate people. Suffering can make people lifeless; as a result they can end up lonely, isolated, and excluded.
- God becomes the first casualty in such moments. In any chaotic situation my natural question would be “my God, my God why have you forsaken me” During such absence there is nothing to love. The one we would love is not there, so we are inconsolable.
- When I am struck with a serious sickness question is why me? What did I do to deserve this? From where do I get these questions? I feel that I have become God’s victim-inside there is an accusation that God is a sadist, who is arbitrarily imposing suffering on people.
- In the midst of our suffering, we may appear to be coping in the eyes of the family but still we can feel hopeless and disable inside, living in a void. Our energies are crippled, hope scattered. At this juncture we do not enjoy life, we become not interested in anything. Feeling that God is the architect of my down fall. “Lord why do you reject me? Why do you hide your face? (Ps.87:15)
- Amidst suffering when we look for God we are silence- a vacuum- an absent.

WAITING IN ABSENCE

- At the end of Luke’s gospel Jesus leaves behind his disciples. Jesus has gone back to his father. This is strange time for them between the absence of Jesus the presence of the Spirit. They do not know what to do? They experience vacuum. They are powerless to re-organize themselves. They had to do something and that is to WAIT WITHOUT DOING ANYTHING- to sit with their powerlessness, being moved from action to passion, to stay with their poverty. Just spending time in waste staring at things.
- The disciples are charged not to minister, not to build anything but to wait in the absence of their loved one in HOPE.
- God’s Spirit will move them to mission.

TODAY HISTORICAL JESUS IS ABSENT BUT WE HAVE

1. The community
2. The memory of Jesus
3. The Spirit.

WAITING FOR THE SPIRIT.

1. The community of memory Acts.1:4-5, Acts 1: 14 waiting in prayer for the power from on high to come down.

- Apostles – covering public ministry until passion.
- The women of Galilee – covering passion, death and empty tomb
- Mary and brother of Jesus – covering early life of Jesus.

This group brings together the beginning of Acts. They form the basic community of Memory, the witnesses of Jesus' full story. They wait together and pray for the outpouring of the Spirit.

2. The community of Spirit. Upon receiving the Spirit, the community of memory becomes the community of Spirit and functions as witnesses. It happens on the Jewish feast of weeks, Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. This agricultural feast takes theological meaning reminding them of the covenant at Mount Sinai, choice of Israel as God's people which happens after fifty days of exodus.

Luke makes use of this event as the founding of the Christian community, through the gift of the Holy Spirit; waiting comes to an end with the re-founding of the community.

Luke shows the effects of the Spirit in the ministry of the disciples (preaching, healing, persecution etc.) Church moves from Jerusalem to the Greco-Roman pagan world. Now the disciples speak the language of the people, and there is communion unlike at the tower of babel. Paul speaks and the people of 16 nationalities are able to understand him in their own language. (Acts. 2:23-24, 33)

3. The community of memory and Spirit.- Luke carefully draws the picture of the church as a community of memory and Spirit.

- Church forever is identified with the dangerous memory of Jesus Christ, who he was, what he did and said, his values and preferences, his passion and death and resurrection. All these give the Christian community its roots and direction.
- We gather as a community of memory at the Eucharist. At the Eucharistic prayer after institution narrative we say that we come together to remember the death and resurrection and when we take part in the great amen we become the community of Spirit.
- The community (ecclesia) in the eyes of Luke is vibrantly lined through a chain of people and faith back through the Apostles to the person of Christ. We always gather in the name of Jesus. Community must be grounded in personal attachment to Jesus.
- But the church is more than a memory, for it lives in the faith of the Lord. While attaching to the memory of the past looking for the direction, it is a community of Spirit too.
- Without the Spirit the community can be reduced to a museum (lifeless treasure). Therefore while holding to the past be open and move forward. When memory is embalmed mission turns to dull obligation.
- Memory will not solve problems but Spirit will guide us to seek answers for our problems. The Spirit will be our guide. Future need to be faced in the living power of the Spirit. Early

church when met with a problem it looked to the guidance of the Spirit “It has been decided by Spirit and by us” (acts 15:29).

- Must honestly face new challenges it encounters, in the power of God’s Spirit.
- “The church that must have eyes for what is ahead and for what is past” St. Bernard.
- There will be problems, tensions, conflicts in our communities, parish, and mission station. How do we handle? Are we divided and get into group mentality. Looking at each other with suspicion, distrusting and not ready to listen to one another. We need each other; we are neither a community of memory nor a community of the Spirit but rather **A COMMUNITY OF MEMORY AND SPIRIT.**
- Both are essential, while being rooted in Jesus we move forward reading the signs of the times.
- The Apostolic church moves to the gentile territory (Acts 8:29- 16: 6)

WAITING AND ANXIETY

- At every Eucharist, after the “Our Father” we pray to protect us from all our anxieties, as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ”
- The priest prays to protect the community from anxiety, so that the community might wait in hope.
- It is normal for everyone to feel anxious from time to time, but acute anxiety can be a critical obstruction to waiting in hope. Feelings of anxiety are common and quite normal in everyone’s life. Feelings of fear or anxiety are not only normal but also necessary for survival. to be wholly free of anxiety would be inhuman.
- The challenge is learning to live with anxiety accepting it as our subjective and often appropriate response to the ways we interact with people, our world. How could we do that as Christians?

STORY OF JESUS

- From Gethsemane to Golgotha we see the story of anxiety. There is no picture to say that everything was fine, no hiding of real self/pain/isolation/no cover ups. In Gethsemane we watch an anxious Jesus, greatly distressed and troubled; in his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became great drops of blood. (Luke 22:44)
- Jesus begs his friends to stay with him and begs God to release him, but to see the beggar Jesus is to be abandoned by God and his disciples, suffering the profound anxiety of separation.
- In Golgotha the anxiety of separation becomes the anxiety of abandonment in the death cry of Jesus “My God, My God why have you forsaken me”. As followers of Jesus, we see the one we recognize as our Lord suffering the anxiety of separation and loneliness, feeling utterly disconnected from those he loves; we can watch him enter the most isolated state of all, God’s forsakenness on the threshold of violent death.
- Our anxiety does not separate us from him; paradoxically it connects us to him, who loves us with an everlasting love.
- The virtue that enables us to confront and walk through the midst of our pain and anxiety is Hope. We can face up to anxiety with courage and hope, while we will never be able to remove ourselves completely from feeling anxious.

ANXIETY AND PRAYER

- Prayer brings us into a living relationship with God. In prayer we acknowledge the presence of God. “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps.46:10) In the stillness of prayer we allow God of all kindness to notice us, to come close to us, to attend to us, to listen to us.
- Being there and becoming aware of God’s presence within me itself a prayer. God is not far from us, since it is in him that we live, and move and exist (Acts17:28).
- Faith is about the find of God we believe in. just as we adopt our conversation to the different types of people we meet. So we adopt our prayer to the kind of God we believe in.
- That is why Jesus taught his disciples and us to pray to God as ABBA, the one who is his father and our father. We present ourselves to God as children.
- Our speaking to father can be a groaning, murmur, grunt, cry from the heart, depression, forsaken, betrayed etc.
- In the Jewish tradition prayer meant not only praise and thanksgiving but also lamentation, screams of brokenness, fear, the halting cries of alarm and disquiet. “Do not cast me off in the time of old age, do not forsake me when my strength is spent” (Ps.71:9)
- Whatever the condition I am in, I can express myself, no human state is alien to God. Lamentations are cries from the heart, groans of anguish, and screams for help, protest against what is happening in the midst of life. These are demands from the bed of pain to God. In times of anxiety and stress (read Ps.139:1-15, 23-24)
- “One must occupy oneself with oneself; otherwise one does not grow, otherwise one can never develop, one must plant a garden and give it increasing attention and care if one wants vegetables; otherwise only weeds flourish. Meditation on one’s own being is absolutely legitimate, even necessary activity if one strives a real alteration and improvement of the situation” (Carl Jung)
- Today more people are going for meditation, and contemplation. “Contemplative prayer is nothing else than a sharing between friends: it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we now loves us” (St. Therese of Avila)
- Prayerful meditation may not free us from anxiety and tensions of life, but it will help us to develop serenity and help us to compose ourselves.

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WAITING IN JOYFUL HOPE

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- The Word of God is always effective, because of who God is; “God is no man that he should lie, no child of Adam to draw back. It is not God’s way to say and not to do. To speak and not to fulfill. For God is the same thing as to promise and to fulfill (Isa.55:10-11)
- God spoke with authority unlike other religious leaders. He was an effective healer “Say but the word, my servant shall be healed” (Luke7:7)
- The parable of the seed growing secretly (Mark 4:26-29) the parable of the sower and seed (Mark 4:1-9, 13-20)
- In the beginning of this retreat we saw how in the Bible the people waited inside God’s creative Word of promise (Abraham, Sarah, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Anna, Simeon, Mary) God promised and these waited for the promise to be fulfilled.
- The Word of God’s promise has its own life, it possesses its own creative power for accomplishment, and it is offered as a pledge to be cherished and counted on until the time of waiting is over. The promise both initiates the period of waiting and makes the waiting worthwhile. God’s Word is not a wishful thinking but a promise. Biblical waiting gives up wishing for what we think best in exchange for trusting God to deliver what is best.

WAITING TOGETHER IN A COMMUNITY OF WORSHIP

- From the beginning of the Apostolic Church, through Apostolic preaching people were invited to receive Jesus as the Christ and savior which resulted in baptism which is a sign of joining a community, that pledged to keep the memory of Jesus and move forward in the Spirit.
- From the beginning of the community had the foundational understanding that to preserve the memory of Jesus it was very essential to share in a common worship as a community and belonging to a fellowship of people who share the same faith and hope. “ What we have seen and heard we are telling you, so that you too may have fellowship with us, as we have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus” (1Jn1:3)
- The community of memory forms with the guidance of the Spirit new communities outside the Jerusalem in Greco-Roman pagan World. The members are supported by the worshipping community, sense of belonging, caring for one another.
- “Their common- union was made visible in their attitudes towards one another, in their way they treated one another in their daily life, and genuinely shared with one another.” (Fr. Eugene La Verdier SSS)
- The Eucharist is what the Christian community does while it waits, we remember and we wait together for his coming in glory. Mystery of faith..” we proclaim your death, we profess your resurrection until you come again”
- Yet the one we wait for is already present in the form of bread and wine. Eucharist is a celebration of His presence and waiting for the glorious coming (Parousia)
- Memory provides the ground for hope as the community looks back and looks forward to its future in God.

As a Christian community we live in joyful hope because we believe that Jesus Christ is our Future. Resurrection is the foundation of our hope and Christ's coming in glory is the final prospect of our hope as we wait in joyful hope for his coming.

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