



# ASH + WEDNESDAY

EXTRACTS FROM THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY RETREAT - DAY 1

## We contemplate Jesus...

Opening song: [Ashes - Tom Conry](#)

Throughout the Gospel, we see him always in contact with his inner self: he got up early in the morning to pray. (Mk 1:35; 6:46; Lk 22:39) These encounters with the Father focused Jesus on his condition as the Son, which was the main crossbeam that supported the whole of his life, the secret spring that made it fruitful, the rock that gave it consistency. And then, every circumstance, situation or relationship in the midst of his ordinary life became for Jesus an occasion for contact, for remembrance, supplication, for praise or thanksgiving.

Jesus responded to his Father with a whole, single, undivided heart, "seeking and desiring nothing but his God". Jesus left behind any pretence of doing his own will, any foresight, strategy or self-seeking. Jesus was beyond all worry or concern and could say with the psalmist "One thing I ask of the Lord, this alone I seek: to dwell in God's house all the days of my life..." (Ps 27:4)

## We remember Sophie...

We hear these texts of the Constitutions as words which she herself addresses to us: "Keep Jesus Christ at the center of your lives," (25) "Center your life on his Heart" (103), "...Simplicity which springs from the calmness of a soul who seeks and longs for nothing but her God..." (C.1815, # 348)

We entrust our "return journey" to that Center that unifies us, to that Source that quenches our thirst.

*Excerpt from the Gospel*

***"Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven [...] But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."*** (Mt 6: 3, 6).



## Everything has turned into ashes!

The ashes on our foreheads reminds us of the fragility of our human condition. Let us enter into communion with the fragility of lives whose destiny can be overturned by a cannon shot, by the breaking wave of a tsunami... Everything turns to ashes... Flee for your life. And walk in step with unfailing hope.

The conversion to which the Gospel calls us is literally a turning of the heart. How can we, like the poorest people, turn resolutely towards hope in the future, towards change, towards God's mercy?

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down! (Isaiah 64:1)

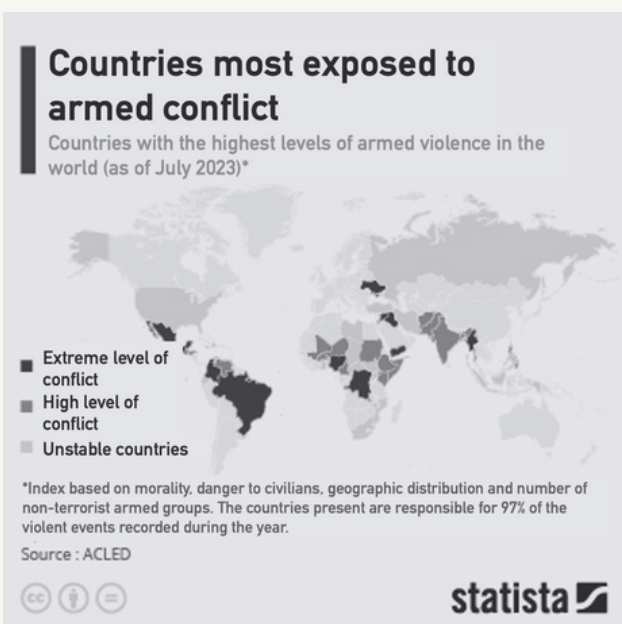
*Reading together of Psalm 50...*

### Prayer of intercession:

"Ashes": We pray to you for all the dead we know, for those who have died on the migration routes, for the victims of traffic and war, that they may rest in Peace. We pray for their families: console them.

Father, help us to build a single human family, like pilgrims in the desert sharing the same food. Each of us brings the richness of our beliefs, our way of loving, and our resilience. Open our hearts to learn from the human wisdom of the most disadvantaged.

***Lord, help us to return to our hearts, to your heart.***



*"Repent, and believe in the good news."  
(Mark 1:15)*

We can use this map of the world, showing all the countries currently experiencing conflict, and pray: give us your peace, guide us towards Peace, and infuse us with concrete steps to build peace. Give us the strength to be peacemakers every day... come and cleanse our hearts!

Closing song: [Taizé - Bleibet hier](#)

