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HOPING TO BE A PILGRIM

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TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

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PASTORAL LETTER FROM  
THE ARCHBISHOP OF SANTIAGO

COMPOSTELA HOLY YEAR 2021



## Dear pilgrims:

1. When I invited you to participate in the Holy Year of 2021, I did it in a situation quite different from the current one after Covid-19. I am aware that now, as I offer you this reflection, great part of the world population is affected in various ways by the pandemic caused by the corona virus. This word has become an unwanted but daily guest in every home.

2. Many of you who will come to Santiago may have lost loved ones. You will walk with tears in your eyes, but your steps will not waver because they are firm in the one who assures you *"I am the Life"* (Jn 14:7). St James the Apostle, witness of the suffering and risen humanity of Jesus, is waiting for you in this Holy Year to embrace your pain and to be embraced by you.

3. For this reason I am convinced that the call of faith will have very vivid echoes of hope in a pilgrimage that has an international character.







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# 1. A SUFFERING LAND

1.1. “How could we sing the Lord’s song” when “my tears have been my food day and night”

Ps 137:4 and 42:3

4. The Latin etymology of «jubilee» adds nuances of happiness, joy or praise to the original biblical meaning of «yobel», the lamb horn whose sound was used to announce an exceptional year dedicated to God. But how can we announce a new jubilee year in the desolate landscape left by the pandemic that has tragically and unexpectedly changed the



lives of so many people? In just weeks, many of their projects were reduced to nothing. It was like waking up from a bad dream to see reality as a nightmare that took away their jobs, altered their daily lives, and even worse, ended the lives of loved ones in some families.

5. This pandemic has made us more aware of our vulnerability and of the fragility of our lives. One could perhaps have a heroic attitude towards an identifiable enemy, but how to behave before something invisible to the human eye, undetectable in ordinary contact?

6. It is not necessary now to delve into the sufferings derived from this situation, which for many of you, pilgrims, have become part of your baggage for the journey: mortality that has skyrocketed, especially, but not exclusively, among older people; tiredness to the point of exhaustion in healthcare workers; social distancing which only allows seeing loved ones through online conversations, even to the point of depriving some of a last goodbye - a painful situation for both the one who has left and the one who could not wave him or her off; fear in those who would like to leave home but do not want to infect or be infected, and fear in those who would like to stay home but can't, because society's sustainability depends on them and their work; an economic and employment crisis, whose effects we are only beginning to see but which will undoubtedly lead to new and serious suffering, especially in the most vulnerable parts of the population.



7. For Christians, there is one more loss, all the more painful since it has also coincided with the very special liturgical period of Lent and Easter. Churches have been empty and, in many cases, closed. The Christian community has not gathered to celebrate their faith. We bishops can hardly remember in our individual or collective history a sadder decision than suspending public worship with the presence of a community of the faithful of the people of God. This decision was, of course, not guided by fear, but only by charity; not because of the fear of being infected, but because of the urge not to become transmitters of the infection.

8. Faithful Christians have been deprived of the sacramental body of Christ. Pastors too have been deprived of the physical presence of the body of Christ that is the Church, even though they have continued to celebrate in the privacy of their churches, chapels or homes. It is true that the Church is mystically and spiritually present even when a priest privately celebrates the Eucharist. But, without a doubt, the people of God are an essential element, even in absence, for the full and manifest expression of the sacramentality of the Church in its nature and in its acts. The Church like a river has continued to flow and to reflect our astonished faces in its waters as it continued its course - a Church humble and close to the human and spiritual condition of people, bearer of salvation and hope.



## 1.2. “Be alert at all times”

Lk 21:36

9. However, the closing of the churches has certainly not meant the closing of the Church. Parish priests have not deserted their flock, and have remained available to those who need material or spiritual help; they have accompanied the dying and the deceased in their farewell towards the Father’s house, with particular boldness in the case of hospital and health centre chaplains. Some of the priests have been present through digital media, streaming the Eucharist and other celebrations or offering reflections and comments to support the hope of their parishioners. Some might say with suspicion that these are signs of vanity from those who, deprived of a people to guide, need to be present in the media; on the contrary, these are signs of pastoral haste to maintain contact with a community, a family formed throughout the ordinary course of the year. The Church is both universal and local; thus, it makes sense, even theological sense, that the Christian faithful follow celebrations broadcast from their own local community, be it diocesan or parochial.

10. Many lay people have paradoxically reinforced their awareness of belonging to the Church. This belonging does not spring from dependence on pastors, but is given by the sacrament that makes us



all equal members of the Body of Christ. They have exercised their baptismal priesthood by praying in their homes. And they have been able to make a sacrifice of thanksgiving (the meaning of “eucharist”) in the blessing of bread at the beginning of their meals, although obviously not in its sacramental sense.

11. An excellent part of this Church that does not desert its mission or flee before the wolf of contagion fear are the numerous volunteers who have not missed a single day in their commitment through *Caritas* or other associations or as individuals, so that this already bad situation does not prey in the weakest in society.

### 1.3. “While people say to me continually, ‘Where is your God?’”

Ps 42:3

12. Overwhelmed by something as apparently insignificant as a virus, it is not surprising that we try to make sense of all this. After all, such a global threat to humanity cannot be the result of a mere natural mutation. Perhaps it is a message that nature sends us so that we return to simpler, less industrialized lifestyles. Or, who knows, it could be a physical manifestation of the social ills of globalization. Anything is in order not to recognize that the same nature that enables us to exist as a species is the one



that allows a pathogenic organism to adapt to the human habitat and use our bodies to multiply and transmit itself.

13. Some have also attempted to explain this unusual situation from a theological perspective. This is nothing new. The disciples of Jesus, seeing the man born blind, ask: *"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"* (Jn 9:2). It would seem that we, who like to have control over everything, feel powerless and lost in the face of the misfortunes that come naturally to us. We need to put a face on suffering, not in the sense of behaving humanely towards those who suffer, but because we feel safer and less threatened if we can discover an intention in what causes our ills.

14. Couldn't this be a message from God? In these weeks thoughts of all kinds have circulated on social networks, with very varied theological interpretations, but which have in common a religious content... or better an atheist content. Perhaps God is turning the back on a world that had previously forgotten or renounced God. Or God is punishing a sinful humanity, as in Noah's time. Or maybe God is testing the faith of his children. Or, quite simply, God is showing that we don't matter to him because he doesn't even exist, as some are probably thinking. The curious thing is that these types of responses have been given since Biblical times, so that the same event, such



as defeat in battle or a plague, can mean that God has punished us, has abandoned us, or is testing us.

## 1.4. “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me”

Jn 14:1 and 27

15. *The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test Jesus they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He answered them, ‘When it is evening, you say, “It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.” And in the morning, “It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.” You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.’* (Mt 16:1-3).

16. Above all, it is necessary to use good sense in our words and not be blinded by the immediacy of the situation. This is not the first time it happens, nor will it be the last. Epidemics, even of a wide territorial extension, have occurred from the earliest times to recent times. We do not need to go as far as the Middle Ages and Modern era plagues which killed more than half of the population in some places. About a century ago the so-called “Spanish” flu ruthlessly hit much of the world population.



17. Another aspect of our reactions worth reflecting upon is that such epidemics or similar catastrophes seem to question our convictions only when we live them up close, but leave us intellectually calm when they happen thousands of kilometres from our modern societies. It is as if fragility and precariousness of existence were circumstances that we take for granted in “poor” countries, but that challenge our beliefs when they affect us in “rich” countries.

18. Without a doubt, it is difficult to reason when our life is threatened in its existence and its manner of existing. It might seem like we are arguing about the composition of water while we drown in the ocean. However we must be careful that the pandemic does not carry away our ability to think rationally along with so many lives and trust in human relationships. We believers must also preserve rational thinking, avoiding theological hysteria that, ultimately, shows us a distorted face of God.

19. Without delving now into the complex problem of evil and the possibility of making suffering compatible with faith in a good, wise and powerful God, we must start from two premises. One is philosophical and the other one is religious. The first premise is that the same natural laws that allow our existence as humans are those that allow human beings to be subject to threats from our environment, including disease. Without the chemistry that makes possible the existence of



contagious and potentially lethal viruses, human life would not exist either. The second premise is that God is not the great conjurer who pulls the strings of history. A believing gaze is capable of discovering in events a divine message. Yet we cannot think that God is the one who causes wars, floods, famines, or epidemics.







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## 2. ON THE WAY TO THE HOLY YEAR

### 2.1. Continuing the preparation for the Holy Year

20. These and many other things did not cross our minds last December, when there was hardly any news of a new infection in a region of China unknown to many. My pastoral letter “Leave your land. St James the Apostle waits for you” which appeared then in preparation for the Compostela Holy Year 2021, aimed at a society that no longer seems to be ours.

21. Roads that were full of pilgrims not long ago are now deserted. Shelters no longer welcome



walkers seeking a faith encounter with St James the Apostle; more than a few of them have been converted into temporary accommodation for homeless people or displaced health workers. Our homes, a warm refuge that welcomed us when we returned from work, today seem like strange prisons that make us feel like foreigners in our own home. Now we live surrounded by an uncertainty that makes us distrust everything and everyone and makes it difficult to trust the future.

22. With all the suffering that surrounds us and that we evoked earlier, the issue of how to face our vital and pastoral celebration of the Compostela Jubilee Year may seem insignificant. Still, it is something that we need to consider, since we do not know when or how we will be able to recover our life, which probably will not be the same we had until now.

23. Right now, the future is conditioned by the idea of "*suspend and postpone*": many pastoral, cultural, social, and sports events are suspended and others are moved to new dates. The Compostela Jubilee brings together the deepest biblical and Christian tradition of the Lord's Years of Grace. More than ever it wants to be a time for joy and liberation, an opportunity to start again, thanks to the mercy of the Lord, a loving and provident God who accompanies and cares for his people. That is why I wanted to



share these reflections in light of the new events with you to continue preparing ourselves for this jubilee event, which surely gathers and manifests the deep desire of so many hearts.

24. Our pastoral concern when calling for the Compostela Holy Year 2021 must be to creatively *transform* our new reality according to the spirit of the book of Revelation. We ask ourselves, *what does the Lord of time and history, the Alpha and the Omega, say to those who make the pilgrimage in this tribulation?*<sup>1</sup>. Like Saint John the evangelist, we get a response today: *“Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive for ever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades”* (Rev 1:17-18). *“See, I am making all things new... these words are trustworthy and true.”* (Rev 21:5).

25. With this confidence given by Scripture we are to interpret these events as Jesus did for the disciples at Emmaus. Furthermore, we must revitalize our roots on the apostolic tradition to recognize “that faith is the supernatural capacity to grasp and live the reality of the mystery of Christ in the world, that Christian hope is the supernatural capacity of the heart to make of Jesus an exact and sure ideal worth living with all the consequences, and that charity is the free capacity that we are granted in

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Book of Revelation Chapters 2 and 3, 21 and 22.



Christ to be able to unite our life in Him, and with Him in God by filial love”<sup>2</sup>.

## 2.2. *To see with God’s eyes:*

“All things work together for good for those who love God”

Rom 8:28

26. First, the current situation offers the opportunity to draw lessons for our way of understanding reality, for our relationship with things and people and for our lifestyle and action. Saint Paul said that *“all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose”* (Rom 8:28), but he was aware that things were not going well and were not happening as he would have wished. It is the love of God that puts good where, in the eyes of the world, there is only evil. Love that is sincere is always divine, even when the subject is not aware of it. With love evil becomes an opportunity to develop service, welcome, care, solidarity; in a word, charity, which will never end (cf. 1 Cor 13:8).

27. In the darkness of night Christ’s light illuminates us. How many times does thirst lead us

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<sup>2</sup> J. ORDOÑEZ MARQUEZ, *El Evangelio en la vida de la Iglesia, I. Oración y vida litúrgica*, Toledo-Ávila 1989, 416.



to find the fountain even when in the night! And although *“my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways”* (Is 55:8), we should not fear because *“even the hairs of your head are all counted”* (Mt 10:30). In this situation, there is one thing we always desire: human tenderness. We must not allow our spirit to become ill and weak. In this sense I think that pilgrimage towards God, towards oneself and towards others, including the Jacobean pilgrimage, will help us to strengthen our spirituality with its penitential and conversion to God aspects that are characteristic of this pilgrimage.

2.3. *To strengthen the roots:*  
*“They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither”*

Ps 1:3

28. Those who trust in the Lord *“are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither”* (Ps 1:3). Pilgrimage to the tomb of St James during Holy Year will help us return to the fundamental Christian fact, to identify with the person and history of Jesus, and to bear witness



that Christianity is a fascinating way of living our humanity as we make sense of our existence. The teaching of the apostles, guarantors of the witness of the whole Church, is to live in a spirit of communion. This spirit is made explicit in the inner union of hearts manifested in unity, in the same spirit, in sharing goods and in prayer whether it be communal or private, of supplication, of praise, or of thanksgiving, as we see reflected in Christian pilgrimage.

29. Religious feeling will never disappear – one cannot delete from the human heart the promise about one's life that always borders on mystery. In the midst of our reality we are granted confidence by knowing that we are called to collaborate in the Church, although her destiny does not depend on us. We depend on Christ who tells us: *"apart from me you can do nothing"* (Jn 15:5), as Saint Paul manifests when he writes: *"I can do all things through him who strengthens me"* (Phil 4:13). The fruit is never in our hands. Success is not included in the mission, but this certainty should not lead us to indifference, to passivity or to be prisoners of our own projects. We have no excuse for not bearing fruits of holiness that glorify God. Reality is always bigger than our schemes. Life itself is a vocation that must always be lived with Christian hope. It is time to be with the lamps on (cf. Mt 25:1-13) even though the wait is long. Such a Church will prophetically challenge and never disappoint.



## 2.4. To believe in order to perceive the light of the Risen Christ in the darkness of pain

30. Christian faith does not make promises of a better future at the expense of present reality. It is not a dream in which to take refuge when considering the burden of life. Believers in Christ suffer with those who suffer (cf. 1 Cor 12:26). They take their neighbour's pain seriously - it moves them and pushes them to do something about it. In this Holy Year faith urges us to respond to the lacerating impact of the pandemic on our fellow citizens.

31. Faith does not need suffering to have value. It does not "trade upwards" when human beings are suffering, nor does God patiently await us behind misfortune so that we end up worshiping him. Our pain is God's pain<sup>3</sup>. He wanted to become one of us experiencing our same pain and our same death. He has given his life so that we have it in abundance.

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<sup>3</sup> "God cannot suffer, but he can *suffer with*. Man is worth so much to God that he himself became man in order to *suffer with* man in an utterly real way—in flesh and blood—as is revealed to us in the account of Jesus's Passion. Hence in all human suffering we are joined by one who experiences and carries that suffering *with us*; hence *con-solatio* is present in all suffering, the consolation of God's compassionate love and so the star of hope rises.": BENEDICT XVI, *Spe salvi*, 39.



32. In the storm our faith on the Yes of God must remain serene. That Yes does not make us immune to misfortune. Faith is not a kind of individual lifeguard or is reserved for moments of difficulty; on the contrary, it makes us leave our personal and institutional refuges to make this Yes of God present in all the painful corners result of the pandemic. Remaining in the faith implies to stand up and follow in the footsteps of the Crucified One. He is truly present in those who saw how the ground on which their lives rest cracked.

33. The Gospel does not lead us to resignation or naive triumphalism. Our faith is born from the life of Jesus in Galilee giving his life for the Kingdom of God, and from his dedication to the end with his death on the cross in Jerusalem and his resurrection. Christians should hurt for the pain of others more than anyone else, but that pain will never be a stumbling block or scandal to give up their trust in God: his love has been crucified and is alive for everyone. Therefore, Christian faith is indeed the most human realism. Our hope is serene: it knows for sure that nothing will separate us from the love of God manifested in Christ Jesus, not even this temporary death (Cf. Rom 8:39).

34. Christians know that the worst of deaths is not the one that can take this life from us, a life by nature fragile and temporary, finite and subject to limitations. The worst death is the death of the heart that despairs of God's mercy and is



indifferent to the neighbour: *“you have a name for being alive, but you are dead”* (Rev 3:1). We ask about this death in the prayer that Jesus taught us: *“deliver us from evil”* (Mt 6:13).

35. In this Holy Year of grace and reconciliation the light of faith beams out from the house of St James the Apostle; it is the unshakable faith that God has placed in this suffering humanity for which his Son gave himself to the limit. It is proof of God’s faithfulness to the point of dying for us. In these moments of darkness, one can best perceive the only true light, the Risen Jesus, the crucified love of God for us.

2.5. *To love: the Christian faith speaks with the hands, because it is “faith working through love.”*

Gal 5:6

36. Dear pilgrims, I encourage you to contemplate the figure of Christ on the mullion of the Portico of Glory which shows the palms of his resurrected hands. In them you will recognize the imprint of the Father’s definitive Yes to his Son Jesus Christ, and to all of you, his children. When the Apostles were overcome by fear the open hands of the risen one were a sign



that the Father's love is stronger than death: *"Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself"* (Lc 24:39). They are the same sign for us today. With them, Jesus Christ is saying to you: *"Peace to you"* (Jn 20:19). Whoever contemplates these hands with the Apostle's faith will be able to recognize in them all the weight of the world's pain and the realism of its hope. The one offering his hands has himself experienced the death that has filled our cities and towns with mourning and can say to us now: *"I was dead, and see, I am alive for ever and ever"* (Rev 1:18). In his resurrection everyone lives on his eternal present and their names are recorded in the book of life, even if they have died in the most complete solitude of our hospitals and residences. Our lives are inscribed on God: *"See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands"* (Is 49:16). All the names are in the glorious wounds of the Lord.

37. We cannot have nice-sounding words for those left without the basics and without the work that fed their families. The Christian faith speaks with the hands, because it is *"faith working through love"* (Gal 5:6). In these times of tribulation, let us remain in the faith, which is not a quiet individualistic fervour, but becoming neighbours of those who today are crying out in their daily life *"You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your record?"* (Ps 56:9). Let us make their prayer our own so that the unanimous supplication of the whole Body of Christ may come out with more force than that of the lonely despair of many of its members.



38. This Holy Year is a providential occasion to reconcile ourselves with God and with our brothers and sisters if we unite to our prayer our active concern for those suffering the most. For this reason, let us not forget *“to protect the orphan, the widow”*, so that when we present our prayer we do not receive this answer: *“even though you make many prayers, I will not listen”* (cf. Is 1:5-17).

## 2.6. *To hope: Seeds of the Kingdom for a better humanity*

39. The current efforts to alleviate the consequences of the pandemic show the best of humanity as individuals collaborate with each other for the common good. This is a glimpse of the Kingdom announced by Jesus. The coordinated work of scientific teams from different research centres foresees there will be a hoped-for remedy for the pandemic.

40. Isn't this fact a sign for Christians of the harmony wanted by the Creator to which all humankind is called? This cooperation does not render void the question of whether we are only capable of this effort when the way of working of the most developed societies are in danger. As never before, we are aware that we live in the global village, not only because of the new technologies, but also due to the sharp awareness of a “global health”.



41. Still, the scenario caused by a pandemic that, by definition affects everyone, gives hope for a better humanity. Our children, also victims of this situation, have kept reminding us of this throughout. They, who are the future of our societies, looked expectantly at the outside world through the windows wishing and hoping to go out and play with their friends. Without a doubt, *“it is to such as these”* who look at the world in this way, with hope, *“that the kingdom of Heaven belongs”* (Mt 19:14).

42. Undoubtedly, *“the principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use, [...] a golden rule of social conduct”*<sup>4</sup> must rule in these moments when everyone’s health is at risk. Scientific knowledge is a basic good. *“Scientists, precisely because they ‘know more’, are called to ‘serve more’.* Since the freedom they enjoy in research gives them access to specialized knowledge, they have the responsibility of using that knowledge wisely for the benefit of the entire human family”<sup>5</sup>.

43. This Holy Year reaches out to the consciences of those who feel they are disciples of Jesus consecrated to scientific research, so that to the best of their abilities they direct their efforts towards the

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<sup>4</sup> FRANCIS, *Laudato si’*, 93.

<sup>5</sup> BENEDICT XVI: *Address To the members of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences*, 6 November 2006



common good and share them according to true *scientific justice*. *“To loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke”* (Is 58:6) including those conditioning and limiting their research to turn it into an instrument at the service of transnational corporations. Millions of lives depend on this.

44. Applied health sciences knowledge, including patents that can save millions of lives, cannot be just another product only accessible to the richest societies. *“Development will never be fully guaranteed through automatic or impersonal forces, whether they derive from the market or from international politics. Development is impossible without upright men and women, without financiers and politicians whose consciences are finely attuned to the requirements of the common good”*<sup>6</sup>.

45. The words of Jesus to his disciples after the mother of James and his brother Juan asked him for the first places of the Kingdom, acquire all their relevance today: *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave”* (Mt 20:25-27).

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.*, *Caritas in veritate*, 71.



## 2.7. To build a culture of care

46. The coronavirus has been developed by nature. But there are other “viruses” that also kill and are generated by our lack of freedom, when it becomes slave to short-term ambitions and interests. That same ambition is behind the social injustice that ends our planet’s biodiversity and creates a breeding ground for new viruses and pandemics like the one we are suffering from. *“Due to an ill-considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of this degradation”*<sup>7</sup>.

47. The new situation generated by the pandemic has demanded self-discipline and responsibility. These values had to be translated into very concrete and daily behaviours that had previously gone unnoticed. The health of others also depended on their observance. This new experience reaffirms the need to constantly consider what model of society and culture is being promoted. When individual will and its successes are displayed as the genuine expression of freedom, how can one stop the inertia of individualism so that, in the middle of the storm, the ship turns towards the common interest? What land will welcome the seed of mutual care and responsibility, if social justice values have not been cultivated in it?

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<sup>7</sup> FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*, 4.



48. We cannot fail to acknowledge in all of this personal responsibility, but also institutional and political responsibility. Human freedom does not grow spontaneously like a spore. It develops and matures nurtured by responsible austerity and sacrifice for others. Thus, the current situation issues a warning we cannot ignore: to prevent pandemics and respond when they arrive well-prepared health systems are as necessary as societies with a culture of care. Neither can be improvised.

49. I stressed in my pastoral letter for the Holy Year that our western culture cannot throw away its religious tradition like an old-fashioned bundle. It is true that this tradition does not have a monopoly on values. However, it strengthens them with an unconditional foundation, beyond cultural circumstances and political agreements. Alongside institutions our societies need a sap that conveys these values for our citizens, legitimizes them with deep and transcendent roots, and promotes them as non-negotiable beyond our fragile consensuses. To bring human beings together we need an axiology that goes beyond a mere social contract that can be dissolved when no longer useful or profitable. True, *“the sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath”* (Mk 2:27). However, for the Sabbath to be valid beyond the high tides of history and to be liberating for all without exclusion, we need Jesus Christ, the only *Lord of the Sabbath* (Cf. Mt 12:1-8).



50. In a few decades, when the trail of Covid 19 is behind us thanks to social effort, scientific progress and the mystery of prayer, what will be left of the lesson we are learning today? Caring for others and respect for the biodiversity of our planet are the best social vaccine to prevent a pandemic. When we plunder the resources of nature and its inhabitants in a *carpe diem*, as if there were no tomorrow, we create our own time bomb: *“Yet it would also be mistaken to view other living beings as mere objects subjected to arbitrary human domination. When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society”*<sup>8</sup>.

51. Therefore, more than ever, the Church will have to be a field hospital, in Pope Francis’ words, to remedy the hardship of those who have been hit hardest by the social crisis and to continue promoting a culture of responsibility open to transcendence, that is, an *integral ecology*. May our faith, as that of the young Apostle James, be revitalized to enliven our intelligence and all our abilities. May it unleash our creativity so that we rebuild our societies and create new economic relations that do not mortgage the development they need.

52. More than ever, the active work of *Caritas* groups will be an expression of what we celebrate each Sunday in the Eucharist. In it Jesus gives himself to us as bread so that we can then transform our

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.



society and our culture with the oil of consolation and the wine of hope. Solidarity “is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far”, it is the “firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all”, in the words of Saint John Paul II<sup>9</sup>.

53. Alongside the Church’s justice and charity effort there is the effort of all those in civil society who are the good Samaritans of the beginning of this 21st century: the staff in hospitals and nursing homes and all those who, risking their own health, watched over the health of others. The Gospel calls us to commit ourselves to our civil society and collaborate with its structures. *“Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity”*<sup>10</sup>.

54. Dear pilgrims, may your pilgrimage help you to become sign and question for those who meet you along the Camino de Santiago or other forms of pilgrimage. May they glimpse that you left your land in order to return even more committed to it. May the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Risen One, breath on your minds and hearts to rekindle the embers of compassion and humanity of our societies.

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<sup>9</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo Rei Sociales*, 38.

<sup>10</sup> FRANCIS, *Laudato si’*, 231.







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### 3. SANTIAGO IS WAITING FOR YOU

55. Dear pilgrims, in my Pastoral Letter calling for the Compostela Holy Year 2021, I invited you to leave your land with Abraham, our father in faith, and set out on your way to Compostela, because the Apostle James awaits you. With those same reflections I would like to repeat my invitation for you to start walking.

56. We pray and trust that by then roads, shelters and churches have reopened. But even if there were restrictions, we should not miss the opportunity this Year of grace offers us to revitalize our spirituality and strengthen our hope: “*Let hope resound*” from



here<sup>11</sup>, we say to the Apostle James. The exhortation to leave our land continues, even if it cannot have a physical and external expression: it is the voice of God that invites us to leave our comfort zone in order to open ourselves to his ever new word; or to leave the land of pain in which we find ourselves buried and to allow ourselves to be enveloped by the hope of the glory of God that does not disappoint, *“because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us”* (Rom 5:5). Having to leave our land when we have been confined to our homes is a paradox worth thinking about, as such familiar space has now become uncertain. But we have to trust: *“God helps us and the Apostle James helps us!”*

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<sup>11</sup> DANTE, *Divine Comedy. Canto XXV Paradiso*, tr. Courtney Langdon (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921): *“Then toward us, after this, there moved a light out of the sphere, from which the first-fruit issued, which of his vicars Christ once left behind; and, full of joy, my Lady said to me: “Look, look! Behold the Baron, for whose sake men go to see Galicia down on earth!... Then, smiling, Beatrice: “Illustrious life, by whom the generous liberality of our basilica was once described, let Hope resound upon these heavenly heights; thou know’st that thou didst stand for it, as oft as Jesus showed most brightness to the three.”*



Entrusting you to the patronage of the Apostle James and of our Mother the Pilgrim Virgin, I greet you with affection and bless you in the Lord.

**+ Julián Barrio Barrio,**  
Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela





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