

# ASH + WEDNESDAY

## MAKING A PILGRIMAGE IN HOPE

**We begin the season of Lent with good news:** beyond the darkness of the ashes, symbol of the shadows that surround us, Easter calls us to Life and Light as pilgrims of hope.

**We are sustained by a certainty:** we do not walk alone. The General Chapter of 2024 (GC 2024) reminds us that, as in Exodus, God goes ahead of us and leads us.

Throughout this Lent, in addition to listening to the Word and to the sounds of our world, we will also get to know some women of the Bible who will accompany us on our journey.

*We are preparing to enter 'barefoot' into this time of grace.*

We listen to the song: ["Descálzate" - Ain Karem](#)



### In the shadow of the Word

“But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Mt 6: 3-4)

Alms comes from the Greek root *eleos*, mercy, compassion. We ask the Lord for this in the Kyrie Eleison and he asks us to practice this compassion among ourselves and in the world. There are many ways to practice almsgiving and Pope Francis relates it to gratuitousness and selfless love:

*“Let us always have the face of the poor before our eyes and be vigilant so that the impulse of gratuitousness and selfless love that marked the beginnings of our presence in the Church is always alive and active.”*  
(Francis, 12.08.24).

**This is readily available to us in our daily lives:**

*‘I ask you to think about those everyday activities that are most connected to life: those that require us to touch bodies, hold them, feed them, clean them, care for them; those that need our closeness and time, dedication, listening, emotional support; activities that are repeated over and over again, at any time of the day; activities without which our life would be unhappy, unbearable or simply impossible.’*

(I. Zubero, Contra la necronomía)

*How does this text broaden our understanding of the word 'alms'?*

We listen to the song by Mercedes Sosa:  
[Yo vengo a ofrecer mi corazón \(I come to offer my heart\)](#)

**Women who accompany us on our journey...**

*Five women from the Gospel*

- the Samaritan woman (Jn 4: 1 - 42)
- the poor widow (Mark 12: 41 - 44)
- the woman who anointed Jesus (Mark 14: 3 - 9)
- the woman who added yeast to the dough (Mt 13:33)
- the young girls waiting for the bridegroom (Mt 25: 1 - 13)

*We can read the texts to find out*

- what each of them was holding in their hands
- how they let go of it and lost it
- what we think they 'gained' in return

In them we can see, as in an icon, a different meaning for almsgiving and what the risky gesture of losing/winning meant for them.

We read Psalm 51 (NRSV V.12 ) and repeat as a refrain:

**Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
Strengthen me with a generous spirit.**



**Blessed Lenten Season!**

*Dolores Aleixandre rscj  
Spain*

