Annual theme 2025: A Courageous Journey

Life is a search for who you are in relation to yourself, what you really want, and what you believe in. It’s about learning and continuing to believe in the wisdom that has been, and is still being, handed down to us. It’s an experience that you wish to share and contribute to.

To make this happen, we need places where people who are also searching can meet each other, people who are searching for and providing inspiration, who desire nearness and can also offer it to others. Places where people are connected to daily reality and can add something to it, so that the simple things of daily life are suffused with love and community on this our shared planet.

**A courageous journey** is a spiritual inward journey as well as a physical journey, at times accompanied by others. It offers an opportunity to reflect on yourself, on life, and on our place in the world. It encourages us to take a moment to consider our constantly changing circumstances and to find and maintain balance.

It also makes us aware of our mutual interdependence and the importance of community, in the present as well as the future. It is a guideline for a life full of fulfilment, love, harmony, and solidarity, seen from a broader perspective that we in the Apostolic Society refer to as religious humanism. The goal is simply a full and fulfilling life for all people who wish to inhabit the earth in love, regardless of where exactly they live on the planet.

The overarching theme **A Courageous Journey** is divided into four subthemes spread out over four quarters:

1. January/March  **- Inner journey**

*Who am I, who do I want to be, and how can I picture that?*

In this period, the focus is on searching for your inner self: who am I, who do I want to be, and how can I picture my deepest desires? It stimulates us to reflect on ourselves and to take a hard look at personal challenges in order to achieve greater insight into ourselves and a perspective that can guide us.

1. April/June **- Travelling together**

*Who are my fellow travellers and how do I feel connected?*

This quarter focuses on strengthening our connections and sense of community with others travelling with us on the road of life. By embracing differences and strengthening solidarity, we feel a deeper connection and try to achieve mutual understanding as this is the only possible path to a loving society.

1. July/September **- An overarching perspective**

*What does it mean to be part of something bigger?*

We are part of something bigger and therefore wish to live more consciously and focus on the relationship between the individual, the community, and the world around us. During this period, we wish to reflect on our place in time and in the world, and wish to strengthen our shared responsibility for the well-being of humanity and the earth.

1. October/December **- Roots and wings**

*After reflecting: where do I stand and what is my new horizon?*

In the last quarter, we look at the balance between the richness of being rooted in traditions, on the one hand, and our ability to be open and free to explore new perspectives, on the other. Inner growth requires transformation whereby you integrate your past into the present and then create space to face the challenges of the future with renewed courage and vision.

Some examples to illustrate the various subthemes are given below. The list is not exhaustive but can hopefully serve as inspiration for various types of messages (weekly letters, campaigns, meetings, discussion evenings, lectures, events etc.).

Re 1

* **Inner journey**

A courageous journey is not only about taking physical steps but in particular about the inner journey that you take. Discovering yourself and what your deepest longings are plays a crucial role. The journey brings you into contact with the duality of life, such as rest and unrest, and helps you to deal with (or endure) imbalance and structural challenges such as sickness or burnout. After all, reflecting on yourself, where you come from, and who you actually are or wish to become deep within yourself can also be accompanied by confusion and doubts, including the less pleasant sides of yourself such as helplessness and despair. But in the long run, increased insight into yourself also strengthens your sense of personal identity as well as a beckoning perspective.

(*keywords: self-reflection, self-discovery, psyche, personal identity, longings, imbalance, challenges, doubts, insight, purpose, and meaning*)

* **Imagination**

Stories and myths stimulate our imagination and play a key role in our spiritual and mental growth. This type of creative imagination is part of the art of living that helps us in dealing with the various challenges as well as joyful moments in our lives. They open up new perspectives and inspire us to embrace life to the fullest. Although they can sometimes also lead to confusion and unrealistic expectations, as a result of which we can become disappointed when real life does not reflect our ideals, they more often reveal new insights to us that were previously hidden. The end result is a new and very personal narrative, which gives us renewed courage to take new steps and decisions towards a more hopeful future.

(*keywords: stories, myths, imagination, spiritual transformation, mental transformation, personal story, art of life, disillusionment, reality, ideal, vision, revelation, future, inspiration, creativity, and new decisions*)

* **Carrying the burden**

A courageous journey also means becoming aware of the baggage that you are carrying. You learn not only to carry your burden but also to let it go when necessary. What am I carrying and why? Do I really need it all? Can I perhaps lighten my load or do I need to add something to it? Becoming more aware of your burden makes it easier to deal with it. This can sometimes be painful, as you may be confronted with old wounds that have not yet fully healed or still need reconciliation and forgiveness. Although the passage of time often helps the healing process, such confrontations can actually give you the opportunity to acquire new insights and give past experiences a new place in your life. This, in turn, creates space for renewal and growth.

(*keywords: awareness, burden, confrontation, healing process, reconciliation, light, reflection, courage, self-knowledge, balance, emotional baggage, letting go, and spiritual journey*)

* **Sacred ground**

‘Sacred ground’: places or moments in your life of deep meaning and personal growth. These are places where people feel connected to something bigger than themselves such as areas of natural beauty, meditation centres, or other places that inspire them and lead them to reflection. The community is such a place. The meetings, rituals, and special gatherings can be moments when you share existential emotions and experiences and, as a result, feel a deep sense of connection with each other and with where you come from. Holy ground is the inner space where you can reach your deepest self and experience peace and personal growth. It can also lead to a sense of respect and compassion for the earth, since you wish to consider the earth itself as ‘holy ground’ and therefore often wish to reflect on how you can best take your place in the world in a sustainable and responsible fashion.

(*keywords: holy ground, personal growth, solidarity, nature, reflection, community, rituals, meetings, inner space, peace, compassion for the earth*)

* **…**

Re 2

* **Travelling together**

The shared path with other ‘pilgrims’ brings unexpected meetings and valuable connections. This commonality reflects the Ubuntu principle, in which the humanity of one person is inextricably linked with that of the other: ‘You are me in a different form’. It’s about cultivating a culture of caring for each other and building a future based on shared values, solidarity, and mutual support. It goes without saying that interactions between people can also sometimes lead to conflicts and confrontations, in particular when personal goals and values come into conflict with each other. The sense of sharing can sometimes come into conflict with the need for personal space and independence, which makes it even more important to keep a close watch on your own limits. But if we succeed in embracing our differences, ‘travelling together’ offers us a fantastic opportunity for further growth, for learning from each other, and enjoying each other. This allows us to strengthen our connections and develop a deeper understanding of each other, which in turn leads to a stronger sense of community and a shared future.

(*keywords: connections, Ubuntu principle, solidarity, conflicts, confrontations, personal goals, embracing our differences, growth, learning, enjoying, sense of community, shared future*)

* **Who do you come across**

‘On the road’, you will meet a diverse collection of people, each with their own story, background, history, and opinions. This rich variety can contribute a great deal to your own development, as long as you keep an open mind and are prepared to really make contact without setting any conditions beforehand. Of course you will also come across conflicting opinions and ideas. They may even resonate with your own unresolved experiences from your present or your past, and this can bring uncertainty and confusion. But this diversity can actually provide you with a valuable opportunity to learn more about yourself. By being receptive to the stories of others and integrating these experiences into your own life, you can develop a deeper sense of understanding and empathy. This, in turn, not only enriches your own life but also contributes to creating a more connected and compassionate world.

(*keywords: diversity, stories, character, the past, opinions, unconditional contact, conflicts, differences of opinion, resonance, self-development, understanding, empathy, openness, personal growth*)

* **Falling down and getting up again**

A courageous journey is a beautiful metaphor for life itself, with all its moments of disappointment and recovery. Falling down and getting up again is part of life and it’s okay, even necessary! There’s a great deal of strength hidden in vulnerability. By not shying away from difficulties and challenges, you can nurture your sense of self-confidence and resilience, as well as your trust in finding people near to you. You don’t have to do it all yourself. Disappointments can be discouraging and can strengthen feelings of failure and inferiority. But vulnerability can actually be a source of great strength. Being able to trust that others will remain close to you not only strengthens your own resilience but also makes you feel more deeply connected to the people around you. Taking the road together makes life more beautiful and more valuable.

(*keywords: disappointment, vulnerability, self-confidence, resilience, nearness, failure, inferiority, pride, expectations, courage, boldness, trust, growth, solidarity*)

* **…**

Re 3

* **Time and eternity**

The connection between the present and the future, between time and eternity, is a fascinating theme that has occupied humanity for centuries already. Time, as one of the world’s biggest mysteries, invites us to reflect on the present, our mortality within the continuity of life, and the cycles of the various seasons. Our life plays itself out within a much bigger context. Our actions and choices have an influence on future generations and the planet as a whole. Although this awareness can also lead to feelings of fear, existential despair, and melancholy, it’s necessary to reflect on these themes. It helps us to continue feeling that we are part of the ‘eternal now’ and strengthens our feeling of responsibility for all of creation of which we are a part. It helps us in finding a deeper sense of connection and meaning in our life, and in contributing to a better future for everyone on the planet.

(*keywords: time, eternity, the past, the (eternal) now, the future, mortality, cycle, generations, choices, contemplation, mystery, creation, responsibility, existence*)

* **To a sacred place**

To a sacred place: The search for a (physical or symbolic) sacred place can lead to deeply felt experiences and insights that can enrich your life. Connecting to a ‘sacred’ (healing) experience in which you use all your senses helps you acquire greater understanding and insight into yourself and your life. Such experiences promote self-reflection and transformation. Searching for a sacred place can also be confrontational: creating space for reflection and feelings can be uncomfortable and reveal shortcomings or missed responsibilities. However, taking time out to reflect every now and then is a valuable tool for developing new insights and understanding about who you want to be in your life. And that, in turn, helps you find your path in life with renewed energy and a fresh perspective.

(*keywords: sacred place, soul, healing, your deeper self, conscience, moral consciousness, ethics, godly feeling, senses, insight, meaning, feeling of responsibility*)

* **Ecology of the earth**

A courageous journey brings you into direct contact with nature, which in turn makes you more aware of your impact on the earth and your interrelationship with the environment. This contact also strengthens your awareness of sustainability and the importance of being a good ancestor for future generations ([UN Common Principles on Future Generations](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://unsceb.org/united-nations-system-common-principles-future-generations&ved=2ahUKEwiW__TV4J6HAxUmzwIHHaRADvkQFnoECBsQAQ&usg=AOvVaw2IIWkSrOU6jkbbvqYO7Abj)). Although this awareness can also give rise to contradictory feelings—since our consumerism contributes to the overexploitation of resources and the growing divide between rich and poor—it is also a powerful driver for positive change. The awareness that a sustainable lifestyle is of the utmost urgency is a source of inspiration to reduce our ecological footprint and integrate sustainability into our daily life. Together we can have a meaningful impact and leave a better world behind for the generations that will follow us.

(*keywords: ecology, earth, nature, interrelationship, sustainability, ancestor, generations, awareness, guilt, (climate) embarrassment, consumerism, overexploitation, resources, gap between rich and poor, urgency)*

* **…**

Ad 4

* **Reflection and balance**

Life is an eternal balancing act that is continually adapting to changing circumstances. This dynamic dance also plays a role in our personal lives, in which adaptation is accompanied by resistance, awareness, recalibration, falling and getting up again and starting anew. Compare this to Hans Alma’s cycle of imagination (attention - concentration - association - experiment - anticipation - expression - reflection). Accepting contradictory experiences, such as joy and sorrow, and finding a place for them in our lives, helps us maintain balance. Finding a balance is not something that can be done on demand but rather part of the art of life that often requires perseverance, endurance, and resilience in difficult times. Living in awareness means continually adapting to whatever happens and cherishing our need for harmony. Making our deepest wishes more concrete in order to reach our destination is the driving force that helps us to also conquer all obstacles.

(*keywords: reflection, balance, changing circumstances, resistance, awareness, starting anew, (cycle of) imagination, trust*)

* **Transformation: roots and wings**

An inner journey actually always leads to inner transformation. You embrace new insights and leave old patterns behind. It leads to a renewed and deeper connection with yourself, with others, and with your environment. Further development and growth, in turn, are rooted in an awareness of shared humanity and a striving to do good. In the process, you discover that your own personal transformation contributes to the well-being of the community and the world at large. The new insights strengthen your moral compass and your capacity for empathy and compassion. This in turn enables you to play a more active role in encouraging fairness, solidarity, and love in your own surroundings. Your roots make you feel connected to the traditions and wisdom of the past and the primal ground of existence. Your wings give you the freedom and inspiration to explore new roads and contribute to a future full of hope and fulfilment.

(*keywords: transformation, roots and wings, inner insights, alienation, existential crisis, balance, harmony, solid ground, vision, future prospective*)

* **Enjoying the view together**

A courageous journey also means that you get to enjoy the view. It’s actually quite special to want to be human in this way: searching as you continue on your way, together with others, in a beautiful world that you get to enjoy as a gift. It’s a path to peace and freedom that you discover, shape, and maintain deep inside yourself. It’s a path on which you follow wherever love goes and feel strongly and unconditionally connected to the other, who you also recognise inside yourself. You feel connected to the earth which you have the privilege of walking on for a while, in the awareness that the only real option is to inhabit it in love, with all the responsibility that this entails. Together, we do fantastic things on a daily basis, and it’s extraordinary to be able to share these experiences with each other. We bring peace where there is no peace, we bring forgiveness where forgiveness is needed, and we bring nearness. This awareness gives us a view and perspective that we can enjoy to the fullest together.

(*keywords: humanity, image of man, solidarity, enjoying the view, wonderment, joyful, peace, freedom, love, earth, optimism*)

* **…**

Let us experience 2025 together, filled with courage and inspiration, determined to embrace every step of our inner and outward journey. The theme ‘a courageous journey’ invites us to reflect more deeply on who we are, on strengthening our connection to others and the earth, and finding a harmonious balance between our roots and our wings. By working together for a future of love, peace, and sustainability, we can create a world in which each person feels that they are being seen and supported, and a world of inclusive diversity. Together we stand stronger, and together we can make a real difference. Let us go on this journey with an open mind while cherishing the beauty of each and every moment. On the road to a year filled with growth, love, solidarity, and joy!

Baarn, October 2024

Preparation group for theme content