



## ***Vernian Laity – Spiritual Journey 2024-2025***

The spiritual journey proposed to the members of our Association for 2024/2025 follows the steps of the Jubilee journey; the basic text, in fact, is the Papal Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee ***Spes Non Confundit***.

A personal reading of the Document is proposed, an in-depth study of the virtues with material taken from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and a “charismatic” reading of the text, followed by practical indications for our life.

We will be in communion with the Sisters who, in harmony with what was planned in the General Chapter, are preparing for the 190th anniversary of the diocesan Approval (November 27, 2025) in the Jubilee year, reflecting on the theological virtue of HOPE, allowing themselves to be guided by the Bull of Indiction, *Spes non confundit*, read through the eyes and heart of Mother Antonia.

Theme: ***Pilgrims of Hope .... In the footsteps of Mother Antonia!***

### STEPS OF THE JOURNEY:

1. Let us personally read the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee *Spes non confundit*;
2. Let us delve deeper into the theme of virtues (from the CCC nn. 1803 – 1829);
3. Let us reflect on the virtue of Hope ... in particular IN THE LIFE OF MOTHER ANTONIA!
4. Thinking back to the life of Mother Antonia, how she lived this virtue, let us reread the text with her eyes and with her heart!

### 5. PRACTICAL INDICATIONS:

- let us live some celebratory moments as the Vernian Family;
- in this year we commit ourselves to living, in a particular way:

A. The virtue of **HOPE** (*Spes non confundit* – in particular nn. 3,18-19):

*Do I cultivate this virtue in my heart?*

*Is it present in the way I live the situations that arise in everyday life?*

*Do I commit to witnessing it in my family and in the environments I frequent?*

B. The virtue of **PATIENCE** (*Spes non confundit* n.4):

*I reflect on knowing how to wait ... what are my expectations?*

*Do I expect to have everything right away?*

*Am I patient with my family, with the people I meet at work, in the Parish ...?*

C. **FORGIVENESS** (*Spes non confundit* n.23):

*It is a long, demanding, precious journey ...*

*I ask myself, in all sincerity, before God: do I know how to give and receive forgiveness? Are there people with whom I need to be reconciled?*

*I read and meditate on nn. 187-190 ("The beauty of asking for forgiveness") from the Encyclical "Dilexit nos" by Pope Francis.*

D. Let us reflect on "**The signs of the times**" (*Spes non confundit* nn. 7 - 15): do we know how to scrutinize the *signs of the times* and interpret them in the light of the Gospel? Can we convert them into signs of hope?

In particular, let us reflect on PEACE FOR THE WORLD:

"May the first sign of hope translate into **peace for the world**, which once again finds itself immersed in the tragedy of war. Oblivious to the tragedies of the past, humanity is subjected to a new and difficult trial that sees many populations oppressed by the brutality of violence. What is still lacking to these peoples that they have not already suffered? How is it possible that their desperate cry for help does not push the leaders of nations to want to put an end to too many regional conflicts, aware of the consequences that can result at a global level? Is it too much to dream that weapons will be silent and stop bringing destruction and death? **The Jubilee reminds us that those who become "peacemakers will be called children of God" (Mt 5:9). The need for peace challenges everyone and requires the pursuit of concrete projects.** May the commitment to diplomacy not be lacking in order to build with courage and creativity, spaces for negotiation aimed at lasting peace." (n. 8)

Are we committed to being "peacemakers" in our everyday lives? In what way? What concrete gestures do we make?

E. Let us strengthen our bond with **MARY**:

“Hope finds its highest witness in the Mother of God. In her we see how hope is not vain optimism, but a gift of grace in the reality of life.” (n. 24)

This spiritual journey requires a **very powerful tool**:

**PRAYER!**

***We all want to live a virtuous life ... but we are well aware that it is not an easy thing!***

*A humble, constant and daily prayer to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is necessary, an openness to Grace, to be able to live these virtues, lead a morally good life, grow in the art of **forgiveness**.*

*Let us implore the Holy Trinity and Mary, the great grace of “**Peace in the world**”.*

*Can I carve out moments of silence and prayer during the day?*

*Am I able to pray “together” with my brothers in Jesus?*

N.B. Attached is the in-depth material for this journey.





## ***Lay Vernians – Spiritual Journey 2024/2025***

### ***Pilgrims of Hope ...in the Footsteps of Mother Antonia!***

#### **Material to deepen the journey**

#### **STEPS OF THE JOURNEY:**

##### **1 - PERSONAL READING OF THE PAPAL BULL OF INDICATION OF THE JUBILEE:**

###### ***SPES NON CONFUNDIT***

Let us read and meditate calmly on the text, trying to enter into the atmosphere of the Jubilee. The Holy Father, from the beginning of the Document, introduces us to the theme: HOPE!

*Everyone hopes. In the heart of every person there is hope as a desire and expectation of good, even without knowing what tomorrow will bring. The unpredictability of the future, however, gives rise to feelings that are sometimes opposed: from trust to fear, from serenity to despair, from certainty to doubt. We often meet discouraged people, who look to the future with skepticism and pessimism, as if nothing could offer them happiness. May the Jubilee be an opportunity for all to revive hope. (n.1)*

##### **2 - INSIGHT INTO THE VIRTUES FROM THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (CCC)**

To properly develop the spiritual lines of this year, it is MOST NECESSARY AND ESSENTIAL to reread and “refresh the memory” of some fundamental points of our Catechism. It is an exercise that each one should do with patience and humility.

The points are those cited below:

From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: ARTICLE 7 - THE VIRTUES n. 1803

I. The Human Virtues n. 1804

Distinction of the Cardinal Virtues n. 1805.

1806 *Prudence*; 1807 *Justice*; 1808 *Fortitude*; 809 *Temperance*

The Virtues and Grace n. 1810 - 1811

II. The Theological Virtues n. 1812 - 1813

Faith Nos. 1814 - 1816

Hope Nos. 1817 - 1821

Charity Nos. 1822 – 1829

### **3 – LET US REFLECT ON THE VIRTUE OF HOPE... IN THE LIFE OF MOTHER ANTONIA!**

To introduce ourselves to this passage, let us reread No. 3 of the Document:

“Hope, in fact, is born of love and is founded on the love that flows from the Heart of Jesus pierced on the cross: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom 5:10)

**And her life is manifested in our life of faith, which begins with Baptism, develops in docility to the grace of God and is therefore animated by hope, always renewed and made unshakable by the action of the Holy Spirit.**

It is in fact the Holy Spirit, with his perennial presence in the journey of the Church, who radiates the light of hope in believers: He keeps it alight like a torch that never goes out, to give support and strength to our life. Christian hope, in fact, does not deceive or disappoint, because it is founded on the certainty that nothing and no one can ever separate us from divine love: "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [...] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom 8:35.37-39).

**This is why this hope does not give way in difficulties: it is founded on faith and is nourished by charity, and thus allows us to move forward in life".**

These words illuminate and are reflected in the life of Mother Antonia.

As stated in the pages of the *Positio*: "From the documentation collected to reconstruct her life and her mission, we reach the moral certainty that all the virtues were practiced by her in an excellent, even heroic, way. And this from a very young age, when she lived in a family".

Let us delve deeper, in particular, into the theological virtue of Hope.

From the *Positio super vita, virtutibus et fama sanctitatis* (Vol. I, pp. 126-128)

Accompanied as it was by a singular exercise of faith, the virtue of hope has always acted on the Servant of God as a driving force capable of making her overcome every obstacle.

This theological virtue, whose proper object is God desired above all things, is reflected in the life of the Christian as a joyful certainty of being His children and is expressed in the serenity of the soul. This is what is noted in Antonia Maria Verna: *the contemplation of God in prayer gave her that unalterable serenity of which the texts of the Ordinary Process indicate.*

“Her face was always serene,” she was seen as “always tranquil,” “calm and full of confidence in God,” “never troubled in the face nor discouraged.” The “sweetness”, the “great goodness”, the “patience and solicitude” in helping the “poor suffering people”, the “act of kindness/tolerance” unchanged even in the face of adverse circumstances are attitudes underlined here and there in the testimonies; they reveal a spirit at peace in hope, if one thinks that they were accompanied by the continuous difficulties and conflicts that interfered with the fulfillment of her mission.

Her struggle for the fate of the Institute was constant and very insidious, capable of making anyone else cease and desist. The light of faith and the comfort of hope have always been her faithful companions. These are not simple assumptions, but realities derived from concrete facts of her entire life, transmitted without uncertainty and ambiguity by the tradition that also flowed into the first biographies of the Servant of God.

Referring to the Napoleonic period when the Servant of God suffered the first rejection, Sr. Riccarda Longoni [1] observes that the planned dispersion of religious institutions nor the state of servitude to which they were subjected have “been able to remove from the heart of how our Antonia fervently loved Jesus”; indeed, hope stimulated her in her apostolate, revived “the ardent desire to save souls and therefore the thought of the foundation and of her Institute”. (...)

“Her unshakeable hope then appears very bright – writes Canon Bertini [2] – in all the trials, the battles, in very painful situations” that accompanied the foundation until 1828 and 1835. The Servant of God “never wavered, never failed. When a path was closed, when everything seemed irremediably lost, she serenely and confidently began her attempts again” always devising new ways, involving charitable people and tirelessly repeating her questions to the Government.

Her “firm trust” is in God and in his “promises”. (...)

She had the hope of the heart that rests in the certainty of faith and “waits” for circumstances to indicate the path to take.

The firmness of her hope reveals in her the conviction that God was leading her where she felt called. She did not always see clearly towards which future she was headed; sometimes, writes Mother Claret de la Touche, [3] she had to “seek the will of God in the darkness that enveloped her on all sides”. (...)

With his way of presenting with a few touches the life of the Servant of God in what most characterizes her, Vallosio describes the virtue of hope in this way. “She hopes only in Him, completely abandoned to her most steadfast hope” for which “she does not lose her way”. She lives “safely”, carries out with

“patience” the duties of her state and with “heroic patience” she manages to found her Institute; “always with the same intrepidity of spirit, with the same constancy, with the same zeal, she continues her charitable enterprise”. “She hoped for complete victory only from Him”.

A “victory” that went beyond earthly difficulties. In her troubled life, Vallosio continues, she was sustained by the certainty that the God she loved so much “had to welcome her for all eternity”: an “instant she had longed for”. She instilled this theological Hope in the sick, exhorting them “to live only for Him” and preparing them to die at least “with resignation”.

Above every activity and interest, God and his glory, heaven, eternal life were her constant aims; her last exhortation to her daughters on the point of death was: “Work with eternity in mind”.

This text taken from the *Positio* provides us with an essential and profound picture of how the Foundress lived this virtue in a heroic way, a fact confirmed by the Testimonies collected for the Process and also evident in the *Votes* expressed by the Theological Consultors during the Congress, held on February 20, 2009.

#### **4. THINKING BACK ON THE LIFE OF MOTHER ANTONIA, ON HOW SHE LIVED THE VIRTUE OF HOPE, LET'S TRY TO RE-READ THE TEXT WITH HER EYES AND WITH HER HEART!**

Let's consider some points:

##### **A. Patience**

“Patience, also a fruit of the Holy Spirit, keeps hope alive and consolidates it as a virtue and a way of life. Therefore, let us learn to ask often for the grace of patience, which is the daughter of hope and at the same time supports it” (n.4).

Patience does not mean to suffer or to endure. The biblical patience to which the Pope refers means something else: it means having the courage to face situations and therefore having the ability to know how to wait. Hope includes waiting and therefore waiting requires from each of us also that feeling of patience which is the tenacity with which we see the passing of time, but we do not fail in the certainty of the hope that has been given to us.

Mother Antonia knew how to “wait”; she cultivated the gift of patience in her heart.

She waited for propitious times for the foundation of the Institute, without becoming discouraged; she waited during the time spent in Montanaro, in exile .... “...the perseverance and patience that the Servant of God demonstrates in this and other trials that accompanied the foundation of the Institute cannot come from anything other than a profound assimilation to Christ who, in order to fulfill the will of the Father, submits himself to annihilation, accepts passion and death. Nor can her secluded silence be attributed to weakness or passive acceptance.”

It is important to ask: what feelings did she have in her heart during these “waits”? How did she live these times? Certainly not with resignation, with discouragement ... Indeed, in the dark moments of her life she learned to develop patience, this virtue closely related to hope.

When circumstances required it, she asked for help and advice from wise people, without having that rush to act that would have, perhaps, led her to decisions that would not have benefited the good of the Institute; she had patience in waiting for answers from ecclesiastical and civil institutions.

Vallosio reminds us that with “heroic patience,” she managed to found her Institute and also that “she lived with patience, the duties of her state”.

She also has this patience towards the people she meets: with children, with girls; it is the patience of God’s times!

She knew well the patience needed in the journey of conversion of a soul, in bringing back to the right path people who had lost it, the patience to know and accompany young people to help them discover the vocation placed in their heart... the patience of “inner work”.

## **B. The Signs of the Times**

“In addition to drawing hope from the grace of God, we are also called to rediscover it in the *signs of the times that the Lord offers us*. As the Second Vatican Council states, “it is the permanent duty of the Church to scrutinize the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the Gospel, so that, in a way suited to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions of men about the meaning of the present and future life and about their mutual relations” .[4] It is necessary, therefore, to pay attention to the great good that is present in the world so as not to fall into the temptation of believing that we are overwhelmed by evil and violence. **But the signs of the times, which contain the yearning of the human heart, in need of the saving presence of God, ask to be transformed into signs of hope**”.

(n.7)

Mother Antonia lived her time to the full. She sensed its evils, its needs, she sought remedies, she worked with every means to “oppose the ruinous torrent, to stem the rampant vice, to dispel the darkness of ignorance, to inform the ages of youth to virtue and, once led astray, to lead it back to God”. (Cf. Vallosio 3). She did not let herself be overcome by evil, by darkness; she knew how to transform the signs of her time into signs of hope.

The Pope also speaks of the importance of offering signs of hope to the sick, to those who find themselves in particularly difficult living conditions, underlining how the Works of Mercy are works of hope, which awaken feelings of gratitude in hearts. We also find this trait in Mother Antonia, “her heart was cruelly torn by the sight of so many unfortunates abandoned without help in their misery, without relief in their troubles, almost forgotten by everyone: she was all love, forgetful of her own, she only studies the needs of others and how to meet them”. (Cf. Vallosio 5).

## **C. Abound in Hope!**

**We need to “abound in hope” (cf. Rm 15:13) to bear credible and attractive witness to the faith and love that we carry in our hearts; so that faith may be joyful, charity may be enthusiastic; so that everyone may be able to give even just a smile, a gesture of friendship, a fraternal look, a sincere listening, a free service, knowing that, in the Spirit of Jesus, this can become a fruitful seed of hope for those who receive it.** (n. 18)

Mother Antonia abounded in hope .... Let us think of her life testimony!

Her face always looked serene, ready to listen, help, advise... in that style of generosity that was hers, drawn from the mystery of the Immaculate Conception.

#### **D. Reasons for our Hope**

**But what is the foundation of our hope? To understand it, it is good to dwell on the reasons for our hope** (see 1Pt 3:15).

I believe in eternal life!

“By virtue of the hope in which we have been saved, looking at the passing of time, we are certain that the history of humanity and that of each of us does not run toward a blind spot or a dark abyss, but is oriented to the encounter with the Lord of glory”. (n. 19)

Let us meditate on the spiritual Testament of Mother Antonia:

*Always work with Eternity in mind.*

*Oh! How willingly one leaves the earth*

*When it has never served other than as a ladder to go to God*

*and bring him glorious conquests!*

*How sweet is the moment of meeting such a good Father!*

*Courage, O daughters, O sisters, be faithful to your vocation!*

*The Crucifix, the Tabernacle, the Rosary,*

*These are your weapons, your towers of strength ... your true comfort.*

#### **E. Forgiveness.**

“Forgiving does not change the past, it cannot modify what has already happened; and yet, forgiveness can allow us to change the future and live differently, without rancor, spite and revenge. The future illuminated by forgiveness allows us to read the past with different eyes, more serene, even if still furrowed by tears” (n.23)

Forgiveness in the heart of Mother Antonia!

In the Testimonies collected several times it is emphasized that in her, there was never rancor towards those people who had made her suffer so much. She was a peaceful soul and also invited the Sisters and the people she cared for to live in this peace.

“Was she ever disturbed by persecutions? The complaints she uttered were not against the persecutors, but were fervent prayers to God, for their repentance; for she would have patiently suffered a thousand martyrdoms to win them over to Him.” (Cf Vallosio 10)

Even Mother Antonia's eyes, at times, must have been filled with tears, because forgiveness does not take away the pain, but helps us to read the past with different eyes.

## **F. Mary!**

"Hope finds its highest witness in the *Mother of God*. In her we see how hope is not vain optimism, but a gift of grace in the reality of life. Like every mother, every time she looked at her Son she thought about her future, and certainly those words that Simeon had addressed to her in the temple remained engraved in her heart: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against - and a sword will pierce your own soul too" (Lk 2:34-35). And at the foot of the cross, while she saw the innocent Jesus suffer and die, even though she was struck by excruciating pain, she repeated her "yes", without losing hope and trust in the Lord. In this way she cooperated for us in the fulfillment of what her Son had said, announcing that he would have to "suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mk 8:31), and in the torment of that pain offered up for love, she became our Mother, Mother of hope. It is no coincidence that popular piety continues to invoke the Holy Virgin as *Stella Maris*, a title expressive of the certain hope that in the stormy events of life, the Mother of God comes to our aid, supports us and invites us to have faith and to continue to hope". (n.24)

Mother Antonia entrusted her vocation and her small Family, from the first steps, to Mary.

The story of the statue of the Madonnina, before which the Foundress and the first Sisters prayed, is well known. From the Timetable of the first Community, it is clear that after dinner the Sisters prayed the "Ave Maris Stella".

"At the dawn of her vocation, the Virgin appeared to her in a light full of joy: the most pure handmaid of the Lord in the ineffable mystery of grace, which is her immaculate conception, would be the guide, the mother, the protection of her journey alongside Christ the Savior. Now that Mary is forever on her path, she knows, having learned it in the experience of thirty years, that the Immaculate is not only the "full of grace", splendor and poetry of the eternal love of the Father, but is the Mother of the Redeemer, crucified with him for the salvation of men. Taking Mary Immaculate as a guide and model means faithfully following her steps from Nazareth to Calvary, to the Cenacle". [4]

## **G. Hope: a Sure and Firm Anchor for our Life!**

"The image of the anchor is suggestive for understanding the stability and security that, in the midst of the troubled waters of life, we possess if we entrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus. The storms will never prevail, because we are anchored to the hope of grace, capable of making us live in Christ overcoming sin, fear and death. This hope, much greater than the satisfactions of each day and the improvements in living conditions, carries us beyond trials and urges us to walk without losing sight of the greatness of the goal to which we are called, Heaven" (n. 25).

Mother Antonia knew how to face every storm, because she was "anchored" to the Lord, because she always entrusted herself to Him. Hope was a safe anchor in her life and led her to never lose sight of the greatness of the goal: Eternity. In her Spiritual Testament she reminds us: "Work with Eternity in mind!"

## **5. PRACTICAL INDICATIONS ...**

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- in this year we commit ourselves to live, in a particular way:

A. The virtue of **HOPE** (*Spes non confundit* – in particular nn.3,18-19):

*Do I cultivate this virtue in my heart?*

*Is it present in the way I live the situations that arise in everyday life?*

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*I reflect on knowing how to wait ... what are my expectations?*

*Do I expect to have everything immediately?*

*Do I have patience with my family, with the people I meet in the workplace, in the Parish ...?*

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*It is a long, demanding, precious journey ...*

*I ask myself, in all sincerity, before God: do I know how to give and receive forgiveness? Are there people with whom I need to reconcile?*

*I read and meditate on Nos. 187-190 (“The Beauty of Asking For Forgiveness”) from the Encyclical “Dilexit nos” by Pope Francis.*

D. Let us reflect on “**The Signs of the Times**” (*Spes non confundit* Nos. 7 - 15): do we know how to scrutinize the *signs of the times* and interpret them in the light of the Gospel? Do we know how to convert them into signs of hope?

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*Let us implore the Holy Trinity and Mary, the great grace of “**Peace in the world**”.*

*Can I carve out moments of silence and prayer during the day?*

*Can I also pray “together” with my brothers in Jesus?*



The Logo represents four stylized figures to indicate humanity coming from the four corners of the earth. They are embracing each other, to indicate the solidarity and brotherhood that must unite people.

You will notice that the leader is clinging to the cross. It is the sign not only of faith that embraces, but of hope that can never be abandoned because we need it always and especially in moments of greatest need.

It is useful to observe the waves that are below and that are moving to indicate that the pilgrimage of life does not always move in calm waters. Often personal events and world events impose with greater intensity the call to hope.

This is why we must emphasize the lower part of the Cross that extends, transforming itself into an anchor, which imposes itself on the wave motion.

As we know, the anchor has often been used as a metaphor for hope. The anchor of hope, in fact, is the name that in nautical jargon is given to the reserve anchor, used by boats to carry out emergency maneuvers to stabilize the ship during storms.

Let us not overlook the fact that the image shows how the pilgrim's journey is not an individual fact, but a community one with the imprint of a growing dynamism that tends ever more towards the Cross.

The Cross is not at all static, but also dynamic, it curves towards humanity as if to go towards it and not leave it alone, but offering the certainty of the presence and the security of hope.

Finally, the motto of the Jubilee 2025, *Peregrinantes in Spem*, is clearly visible in green.

#### **Footnotes:**

[1] Sr. Riccarda Longoni (Milan, 18 Nov. 1851 – Ivrea, 27 Jan. 1930) produced the first biography on the life of the Foundress, with the intention (from her own work in 1911 and 1913) to extend the biography.

[2] Canon Pietro Bertini (1855-1937), Archdeacon of the Chapter of the Cathedral of Ivrea, was the author of a brief biography of the Foundress.

[3] Claret de la Touche (1868-1915), Superior of the Visitandine of Parella, collaborated, upon request of Monsignor Matteo Filipello, to the drafting of brief notes on the Life of Antonia Maria Verna.

[4] Olinda La Fratta, *A Furrow in the Church*, Rome, 2018.