DON'T BE AFRAID

The gentle revolution of Providence



Letter from Father Massimiliano Parrella to the Calabrian Family

Verona, 26 November 2026

Anniversary of the Foundation of the PSDP Congregation

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Letter from Casante to the Calabrian Family
By Father Massimiliano Parrella and Silvio Ciappi

Edited by the PSDP Communications Department

Verona, 26th of November 2026

To my dear Calabrian Family,

Brothers and sisters in Christ, men and women religious, laypeople, consecrated persons and co-workers, young and old, volunteers, guests, and friends of the Calabrian Family throughout the world, *Shalom*!

On this anniversary, as we mark the 119th year since St. John Calabria founded the first *Casa Buoni Fanciulli*, I am writing this special letter to you all.

The journey we began together with *Artisans of Providence* (2022) has led us to deepen our identity as a charismatic family, whose mission is to translate our founder's insights into a way of life suited to the present day.

In harmony with the journey of the Church, our attention has turned to the great themes of peace, explored in *Shalom. Shoots of Peace* (2023), and hope, reflected upon in *Spes Unica Deus* (2024).

In my letter *The Strength of the Meek: The Power of the Defeated* (2025), I felt the need to bring our charism into ever-closer dialogue with the situation of the contemporary world, proposing meekness as the key to understanding our times.

The 2026 letter originated precisely from an important and meaningful dialogue with one of our colleagues, **Silvio Ciappi.** He is a criminologist and psychotherapist, a lecturer in psychology at the Salesian University, and a long-standing adviser to our social initiatives - but above

all, a friend of the Calabrian Family, deeply fascinated by the extraordinary relevance and vitality of our charism amid the decline of today's relational and educational landscape.

The idea behind this letter - that the charism of Fatherhood and Providence is perhaps the most powerful key we have today to **changing the narrative of fear** and war, and the choices that stem from them - resonated deeply with Silvio Ciappi's perspective, as his keen eye is trained to observe and understand the miseries of the human soul.
It was from this shared perspective and collaboration that I wrote this text.

I should warn you that this is not an easy journey. It reaches into the deepest layers of what shapes our actions and, even more than the theme of meekness, calls us to a profound conversion.

For this reason, I intend **this letter to accompany us from November 2026 until the next General Chapters,** which will take place in spring 2028.

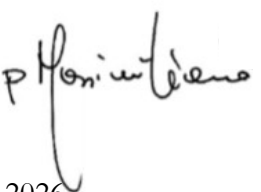
Over the coming year, the entire Calabrian Family will be engaged in a process of pre-Chapter reflection. I therefore do not plan to issue another letter during this period. Instead, I would like this "**Do not be afraid" to continue accompanying and guiding us,** naturally alongside the central theme that will shape the *Instrumentum laboris* of the General Chapters.

As always, the words that Silvio and I offer are but a humble attempt to highlight how **the Word of God is the powerful beacon from which every step we take draws its strength.** This light is further illuminated by the charismatic vision of Saint John Calabria, who, with extraordinary clarity, continues to point us towards the path we are called to follow.

I believe this is a meaningful way to commemorate the anniversary of the blessing of the first seven "good boys" who went to live in Vicolo Case Rotte, back on 26 November 1907.

It was not a romantic moment, but a decisive surrender to Divine Providence - an act of trust **set in motion within Saint John Calabria a new and gentle revolution:** the revolution of Providence, of which we are still today, both witnesses and guardians.

In Christ, I bless you!
Your brother and father
Massimiliano



Verona, 26 November 2026
Anniversary of the Foundation of the Calabrian Family

"I ask when it will be that man
will be able to learn to live without killing
and the wind will rest."

Francesco Guccini
(Italian singer and songwriter)

from *Song of the Child in the Wind (Auschwitz)*
(1967)

PROLOGUE

1. We all stumble at times. We fall through life like weary leaves, lose our way, and sometimes find ourselves standing still, simply watching life pass us by – like a child lying in a cradle, gazing up in wonder at the mystery of the sky. We think we are all-powerful, that we can overcome life and withstand all that it takes from us. And yet, there are moments when our voice falls silent, when desire fades, and when we are crushed by loneliness in a world that seems only to count its dead. Sometimes, fear becomes the only way to face life. We stop loving life because we have lost our sense of wonder.

Fear takes root when a person can no longer trust.
And when trust disappears…
We stop truly living. We stop loving. And we stop giving ourselves to others.

2. We live in an age of profound disorientation: an age of disenchanted and lost young people, of new wars and resurgent forms of totalitarianism, of a globalized, finance-driven economy that is gradually sweeping away the artisan and the human dimension of work. All of this contributes to a pervasive climate of mistrust and instability. Even the human solidarity that lies at the heart of community is steadily and dangerously eroding away. One of the consequences is fear: the instinct to retreat into a bunker while war rages all around us, both in the world beyond us and within ourselves.

3. The pandemic has undoubtedly contributed to the emergence of our contemporary fears. Yet it is not the only source. Ongoing geopolitical conflicts have also awakened a profound fear of the unknown – or anxiety – rooted deep within our existence. The world seems to have lost some of its boundaries.

Boundaries have a dual nature: while they can provide a sense of identity, and protection, they can also become barriers that divide, restrict, and exclude. What do they exclude us from? They exclude us from freedom, a luxury that not everyone can afford.

This crisis of identity generates a sense of disorientation, anguish and widespread fear. Digital society has capitalized on this culture of fear, constructing a virtual world in which relationships and encounters are 'faked' – a kind of panacea for a world marked by fear, boredom and shame.

Fear extinguishes life.

4. Life is the freedom to give oneself to another, just as a mother and a child share a secret bond between them: the intimate language of affection. No human being comes into existence alone; at least one other person is needed. There must be at least two people for a man and a woman to come into being. It is through relationship that identity, autonomy, and trust begin to take shape. This is how life unfolds.

"Do not be afraid," those young mothers' hands seem to say. "I am here to hold you; nothing will happen to you." Fear, by contrast, means withdrawing from others: it is the moment when hands let go, leaving us to sink into a lonely and resentful solitude.
Fear, too, can become the unwitting mother of violence.

5. A frightened animal may lash out and bite. Human beings can do the same. Therefore, fear breeds suspicion, mistrust and a tendency to turn against anything and anyone we perceive as different from ourselves. The 'like us' replaces the 'Other'. Anyone who does not share our characteristics – our ethnicity, social background or ideas- quickly becomes an 'enemy'. Fear creates invisible enemies: the poor, the dispossessed, countless people arriving by sea, or those fleeing from lands scarred by hatred and violence.

6. Violence can also be exercised 'by proxy': we hand it over a leader rather than wielding it ourselves. Cruelty can take other forms too – in arming others, in choosing not to see, or in simply remaining indifferent.
When people cease to trust one another, another danger emerges: the temptation to identify with the leader or dictator of the moment, someone who believes that s/he embodies history. This represents the heart of totalitarianism: people overwhelmed by the burden of freedom retreat into identity-based bunkers, embracing

xenophobic and racist ideologies of intolerance that ultimately reject freedom itself.

7. Humanity loves bread more than freedom; it loves miracles and authority more than freedom of faith and free will. These are Dostoevsky's unsurpassed words in *The Grand Inquisitor*, the extraordinary tale within the tale contained in the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. The scene is Seville during the Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth century. The old Inquisitor has Jesus arrested, accusing him of having come to bring humanity life and freedom, while arguing that people do not truly love freedom. They would rather follow the one who gives them the bread of the earth than the bread of heaven. They need someone to worship, backed by tangible proof – the Miracle – rather than faith grounded in inner conviction and solidarity. And they long for someone to decide for them what is good and what is evil, relieving them of the burden of responsibility. Jesus listens in silence. Then he approaches the old Inquisitor and kisses him. Jesus offers no words, only a gesture. The troubled cardinal releases him, saying, *"Go away and never come back*." Jesus' gesture is love given freely; it is the bread of heaven; it is solidarity and non-violence in the world. It is communion with fellow human beings, even when we are face to face with your worst enemy.

I. THE HUMAN BEING TODAY: NOT EVIL, BUT AFRAID

"The angel said to the women: "Do not be afraid!"
For I know that you are looking for Jesus,
who was crucified."
(Mt 28,5)

8. **We have not become wicked. We have become more afraid.**

What is life?
This is the question at the heart of one of the most unsettling works of great Russian literature: Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov*. Oblomov spends his days lying on the sofa. Neither his friend Stolz nor Olga, the beautiful twenty-one-year-old woman who loves him, can persuade him to get up. He seems indifferent to everything around him; nothing stirs his interest. He has no concern for newspapers, politics, or the wider world, and he even keeps women at a distance. "When does one actually live?" Oblomov wonders. "Before doing anything?"
Boredom feeds fear.

9. In many ways, Oblomov is the prototype of many young men and women today – people who have lost any clear sense of purpose. His boredom has become our boredom. Boredom is a kind of yawn in the face of everyday life, the world around us, and the people in it. It is what happens when our capacity for wonder begins to fade. When there is nothing to do, when life becomes an

"Oblomov-like" existence of endless inactivity, it can seem easier to lose ourselves in a crowd – whether physical or digital. We seek refuge in fleeting interests and temporary connections: a WhatsApp group, a circle of friends on social media, small forms of companionship that offer a kind of relief from a deeper and more pervasive sense of isolation.

Boredom extinguishes desire.

10. Boredom makes us crave *non-things* – desires already shaped by others. Simply possessing what everyone else wants becomes, in itself, a definition of happiness.

Happiness consists in the possession of goods already desired – not things we have imagined for ourselves, but things placed before us by the technological system. These desires do not arise from the imagination. And without imagination, we find ourselves wanting only what we have already seen and consumed.

Boredom causes the world to wither away. It is no longer a world that awakens our curiosity or invites us to discover its richness, its variety and its colors. Boredom is also part of that *digital loneliness* that has replaced human 'relationships' with virtual 'connections'.

11. Dante offers a powerful image of boredom when he speaks of the slothful in *Inferno* – sloth is, in fact, a form of boredom. At first, Dante's punishment may seem excessive. Why should someone who is merely bored deserve hell? His answer, however, is severe: the slothful person, by withdrawing from the world, is in some sense turning away from the life-giving presence of God within

creation itself. To deny the world is, ultimately, to deny life itself. Sadly, Dante's insight seems remarkably relevant to our own time. **Fear feeds on shame.**

> "To one he gave five talents, to another two,
> and to another one, to each according to his ability.
> Then he went away."
> *(Mt 25,15)*

12. We fear competition, risk, and the possibility of ending up among the losers. It seems safer, then, not to compete at all – to reject the promises that life offers and bury our own 'talent.' In a society governed by fear, we become like little soldiers hiding in a trench, struggling to step into the open and expose ourselves with all our imperfections and vulnerabilities. A society of fear feeds the shame that comes from feeling inadequate or like a failure, especially in the world of social media.

13. In the world of winners, losers lose their value. **Even pain can only be displayed, rather than truly expressed, because admitting we are in pain can be seen as a sign of weakness**.
Let us consider the younger generations. In a 'palliative' society – one that seeks to eliminate or avoid pain – we are expected to perform well, always smile, attract others, and project an image of happiness.
Being excluded becomes a double punishment: not only are you poor, but you are also excluded from the world of wealth and privilege that, at least apparently, seems increasingly accessible to everyone.

Let us consider the queues outside trendy venues and the endless social media videos of people waiting to get in. This herd mentality can extend even to eating ordinary food or visiting modest places, simply because they have become fashionable experiences rather than because they are really worth it.

> "A few days later his younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living."
> *(Luke 15,13)*

14. The so-called FOMO – Fear of Missing Out – is a very common dread in today's world. Everyone except you has been there, has tasted that food, and so on. Eating, like having fun, becomes part of discovering a city, part of an *experience* that proves you belong to it. And *if you are not seen* it can feel as though*, you do not exist*. In the world of the winners, feeling alive means constantly proving that you can measure up. If you do not want to be excluded, *you must* appear 'happy.' Otherwise, you risk being left behind. And if you cannot keep up with the winners, the high achievers, the paths that open up may be those of bitter loneliness, exclusion from the community, or refuge in a digital world where genuine human relationships disappear. Hence, depression and other conditions associated with isolation and exclusion may emerge.

15. Another path is to declare 'war' on the world, to lose 'faith' in humanity and in human solidarity, and to join the ranks of the conspiracy theorists who embrace ideologies rooted in conflict, social hatred, and exclusion.

II. THE FIRST FEAR: THE MAN IN HIDING

"I heard the sound of you in the garden, and
I was afraid, because I am naked; and I hid myself"
(Gen 3,10)

16. **Fear breaks the relationship.**
Here we encounter humanity's first words after the fall from Heaven. It is not a justification, nor a plea for forgiveness, or a cry for help. It is an expression of fear. The Hebrew word is **yare',** a fear that is not merely an emotion but an existential experience of rupture. Immediately afterwards comes **va'e□ avè**, "I hid myself."
Fear leads almost immediately to withdrawal, refuge, and a breakdown of relationships. It is significant that man does not say "'I have sinned" but rather "I was afraid." In the biblical account, this means that **the first consequence of evil is not moral but relational.** Guilt comes later; first comes the breaking of the bond. Fear is the true beginning of exile. God has not changed; it is humanity's perception that has changed. Previously, the man walked with God in the garden; now he sees God as a threat. Fear distorts our image of God, and once God is distorted in our eyes, so are the world and the people around us. Fear severs the relationship.

"The woman whom you gave to be with me,
She gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate."
The Lord God said to the woman,
"What have you done?" The woman said:
"The serpent tricked me and I ate."
(Gen 3, 12-13)

17. People seek a den, a refuge, even a pack, when they are scared, a place where they can retreat from whatever or whoever threatens them. Scripture reveals this very attitude of excluding others by shifting responsibility onto them: *"The woman whom you gave to be with me … the serpent tricked me…"* It is already a process of fragmentation, of losing our sense of "us". Frightened human beings struggle to recognize the Other and take refuge among those who are like them. However, the idea of 'our own kind' can become a defensive construct: we surround ourselves with people who do not challenge us, and do not let us go beyond the boundaries of our certainties.
Even in the Encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, the Holy Father calls us not to be afraid of our fellow human beings, particularly refugees and migrants *"forced to move because of poverty, violence, climate change and environmental disasters. The way a society treats them reveals whether its idea of justice is guided by fear or by fraternity"* (Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas,* no. 81).

18. The pack is not a community. In Scripture, community emerges from a call and a promise, whereas a pack arises from fear. A community shares bread; a pack shares an enemy.
The pack is a form of pseudo-communion. It is not founded on a covenant but on survival. In the pack, there are no single faces, only a mass: no names but a function, no relationships, only reactions.
The pack has no true sense of 'we,' because the biblical 'we' can emerge only in the presence of God. Without the Father, there are only isolated 'I's' standing side by side.

"Lord, teach us to pray, as John
taught his disciples." He said to them:
"When you pray, say: Father..."
(Luke 11, 1-2)

19. This is where the Lord's Prayer takes on its profound significance: it is not a devotional prayer but an anthropological revolution. *"Our Father"* means that we recognize the others as brothers and sisters even before we decide to choose, understand or love them. It is not a feeling but a theological decision.
Our neighbor is not necessarily someone who is like us. The Greek word **plesios** does not refer to someone who resembles me, but to someone who is close to me in the reality of life.

"But a Samaritan, while travelling came near him;
and when he saw him, he was moved by pity.
He went to him and bandaged his wounds,
having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him
onto his own animal, brought him to an inn,
and took care of him."
(Luke 10, 33-34)

20. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus makes a radical shift in perspective: our neighbor is not simply the person who is close to us, but the one who chooses to draw near. Proximity is not a condition but a movement – a movement that comes at a cost, because it requires us to bridge the distance, step beyond ourselves, and overcome our instinctive fear. Here, Christian *agape* is at stake: It is not rooted not in affinity, but in crossing the boundaries of difference.

"The people refused to listen to Samuel's voice
and they said: 'No! Let there be a king over us,
so that we also may be like other nations..."
(1 Sam 8, 19-20)

21. When humanity becomes a flock, it craves a leader. This is a recurring theme throughout the Bible: Israel's demand for a king is a demand of a fearful people. Fear always demands a strong leader, a guarantor, someone willing to take the risk on our behalf. Yet, this is the opposite of faith.
Faith does not eliminate fear; it leads us through it.

III. GOD TEACHES US NOT TO FEAR

"The Lord appeared to Abraham at the Oak of Mamre
while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent
during the hottest part of the day."
(Gen 18,1)

"Hospitality is where paths cross."
Edmond Jabès,
The Book of Hospitality

22. Throughout Scripture, one imperative repeats like a recurring thread: "**Do not be afraid"** – in Hebrew, **"al tira."** These words are not merely advice; they are an act of creation. God does not simply describe a condition; he opens up a possibility; He does not offer a theory; he brings a story to life.
"Do not be afraid" – He tells Abraham, in the darkness of an unfulfilled promise.
"Do not be afraid" – He tells Moses, standing before the sea with no apparent way forward.
"Do not be afraid" - He tells the prophets, called to speak words no one wants to hear.
What unites these encounters is a profound intuition: God does not eliminate risk; He teaches us to trust in the midst of it.

"You will treat the alien who dwells among you
just as you would the person who was born among you.
You shall love him as yourself,
for you were once aliens in the land of Egypt."
(Lv 19,34)

23. Here, the theme of hospitality comes to the fore. The Old Testament is shaped by an anthropology of passage: Abraham is a nomad; Israel is a people forced into exile; and the Promised Land is always received as a gift, never definitively possessed. In the biblical vision, the human being is, by nature, a guest. Therefore, hospitality is not a moral act but an expression of faith.
To welcome the stranger is to recognize that I, too, was once a stranger: "You shall love the stranger, for you were once a stranger in the land of Egypt": **hospitality is memory made flesh**.

24. In a world scarred by shipwrecks, wars, and forced migration, this word takes on dramatic significance. Hospitality is not merely a social concern; it is a theological principle: humanity is a crossroads of paths. And we are all made of the same fragile, vulnerable substance, sharing this earth.
In the biblical vision, there are no closed identities, but rather identities in relationship. The journey unfolds through the act of walking; it is something we experience, never something we can possess.

25. **God does not ask us to be strong.** This is a crucial correction, especially in the face of a distorted spirituality. God does not create heroes, but people who are capable of trusting Him.
This lies at the heart of the charism of Saint John Calabria: Providence is not an abstract concept but a living

relationship; it means placing ourselves wholeheartedly in the hands of the Father.
God asks us to **trust** – to live without trying to control everything,
to **reach out** - to step beyond ourselves;
to **share** – to embrace the logic of generosity;
not to **bury our talents** – to resist the temptation to live defensively;
to **broaden our horizons** – to refuse to let fear define the boundaries of our lives,
to **recognize that we are on a journey** – to accept that we are never complete.
Providence does not eliminate uncertainty; it dwells within it.

"Do not be afraid. Go and do what you have said...
for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel,
the jar of flour will not be used up,
the jug of oil will not go dry..."
(1 Kings 17, 13-14)

IV. JESUS: "DO NOT BE AFRAID"

"Suddenly, a great storm came up,
and the waves were crashing over the boat
so that it was almost swamped.
Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion."
(Mark 4, 37-38)

26. Here we come to the heart of the message: Jesus' words "do not be afraid" are not psychological or a form of emotional reassurance; they are a revelation. Jesus expresses them amid the storm, over the waters, in the face of the resurrection. The words are the same, and the circumstances in which they are pronounced are always marked by limitation, chaos, and death. The decisive insight is that Jesus does not calm every storm; rather, he makes himself present in the midst of the storm.

27. Fear belongs to the realm of the unlived: the servant who is afraid hides his talent; Peter, overcome by fear, begins to sink; the disciples, gripped by fear, flee. Fear paralyzes the flow of life. Yet the Gospel breaks with this deeply human logic of fear, revealing that we cannot preserve life by avoiding risk, but by facing it head-on.

"Many rebuked him and told him to be silent,
but he only shouted all the louder,
"Son of David, have pity on me!"
(Mark 10,48)

28. In the Gospel, there are so many examples of such existential resistance: the Persistent Widow, the Bleeding Woman, and the blind Bartimaeus – all people who refuse to give up. What saves us is not the absence of fear, but the courage to risk ourselves.
"Do not be afraid" does not refer to a psychological state, but to an opening to faith. Without these words, we remain trapped within our own ego.

29. Modern individuals are oppressed by a more subtle form of fear, that of being relentlessly performative and, consequently, that of not being good enough. The Gospel challenges this logic by reminding us that life is a gift, not a performance to be measured or perfected.
Rather than being oppressed by an external tyrant, modern individuals exploit themselves, striving to become ever more 'productive' and 'optimized'.

30. This form of self-limitation does not eliminate pain; rather, it transforms it. It becomes a source of understanding, and wounds become openings. Providence does not spare us suffering but teaches us to see it as a place where God passes through our lives.
If we eliminate pain, we also lose our capacity to love; moral numbness is one of the most dangerous forms of fear in contemporary society.
Do not be afraid: the starting point for faith and a life fully lived.

31. What does it mean to live without fear? It means returning to life as it is, accepting the limits it imposes, along with its suffering and pain.
But pain – as the Greeks taught us – can also be a source of learning. We often learn far more from suffering than from happiness. Our wounds can become remarkable openings through which we glimpse the wounds of others.

32. This pain is also necessary for us to find delight. At the same time, when we are not able to wait experience renunciation, our desires become demands.
Waiting and suffering connect us to our shared humanity. They give us the impetus to rise above our circumstances, imagine the possibility of redemption, and discover a deeper, more complete form of happiness.

33. We must not be afraid of life, but learn to accept it as it is, because it is a marvelous gift. When we learn to embrace life in its precariousness, fragility, innocence, and vulnerability, we begin to recognize its sacred nature.

"If only I touch his cloak, I shall be healed."
Jesus turned and saw her, and he said, "Take heart,
daughter! Your faith has healed you".
(Mt 9,21-22)

V. FEAR KEEPS US FROM TRULY LIVING

"Therefore, out of fear I went off
and hid your talent in the ground."
(Mt 25, 25)

34. The path we risk finding ourselves on is tragically one-directional: from fear to defensiveness, from defensiveness to isolation, and from isolation to barrenness.
The fundamental problem is not evil itself, but rather life that has become fruitless. This is a crucial theological insight. In the Gospel, what Jesus condemned is not so much sin as barrenness: the talent hidden away, the net never cast, the step never taken.
Fear breeds defensiveness, defensiveness leads to withdrawal, and withdrawal results in barrenness. This dynamic seems almost inevitable unless a word comes to break this cycle.
A life that has come to a standstill is a life that has ceased to trust. When life stops moving forward, obsessive thinking takes over. We no longer live life but seek to control it - and control is always a form of fear.

"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.
Therefore, if the Son sets you free,
you then will be truly free."
(Jn 8, 32;36)

35. Here, emerges the theme **freedom**. Freedom can be frightening because it opens up possibilities beyond our

control. For this reason, people try to limit it by building defenses, only to end up losing the life they seek to protect. Freedom requires compassion, and this is a profoundly evangelical and Calabrian dimension.
Freedom is not individualistic but relational: we are truly free when we see in the other not a threat, but a revelation.

"When the Lord saw her, he was filled with compassion,
and he said to her, "Do not weep."
Then he said, "young man, I say to you, arise!"
And Jesus gave him to his mother."
(Luke 7, 13-15)

36. **Tenderness** is a radical act; it means laying down our arms before the other. It is not a sign of weakness but a form of strength that refuses to force. In this way, freedom becomes 'freedom for', rather than 'freedom from,' no longer freedom from something, but freedom for someone.

37. This marks the transition from defensiveness to care, and here we find the very heart of the charism: to become men and women who trust in Providence is to learn to not in a constant state of self-defense, but in a spirit of self-giving.
Fear closes us in, while trust in Providence opens us up. This is the very heart of the Christian life.

VI. FEAR STOPS US FROM LOVING

"Then Jesus said to him,
"Put back your sword into its place".
For all who take the sword shall die by the sword."
(Mt 26, 52)

38. **When we cease to trust, we begin to defend ourselves, and when we become preoccupied with self-defense, we gradually lose our capacity to love.** Fear takes root in mistrust: in the suspicion, the other might overwhelm us, wound us, or deprive us of something we believe is rightfully ours. When life ceases to flow freely, it arms itself with fear. It is as tough life were turning against itself.

39. For Jesus, the antidote to death was never fear, nor could it be. It was the freedom of the soul, the spirit within us, and the power of love. Jesus taught that it is possible to be dead even while still alive. He was the one who told his people that his God was not the God of the dead, but that of the living.

"Have you not read what God said to you:
"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,
and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead
but of the living!" When the crowds heard this,
they were astonished at his teaching."
(Mt 22, 32-33)

40. Trust is the first relational response children learn when entering the world. They need their mother's hands

to feel protected - hands that not only meet their needs but also offer that warmth and tenderness that every human being longs for.
When children experience trust, they naturally learn to explore the world, to love it, and to cope with the inevitable frustrations it brings. Trust is the innocent gaze through which we first learn to see the world.

41. Trust means to allow ourselves to be surprised by the footsteps of unexpected guests, neighbours and wayfarers.
It means rediscovering our capacity for wonder, and refusing indifference in the face of suffering. It means holding little 'Hope' - the daughter of a boat and a rape - and keeping our doors open to the many orphans who have come to us from the sea.
Trust is the courage of the meek and the freedom of an open heart.

How many times have we fallen, only to rise again?
Only in this way does trust save us from the ambiguities of the world, from its complications. Trust opens us up to the world.

"Each person is defined by the nature of his love.
Do you love the earth? You will be earth.
Do you love God? What can I say? That you will be God?"
(St Augustine, Commentary on the First Epistle, *Treatise II, 14)*

42. **You are what you love.**
An ancient and profound thread runs through the writings of the Church Fathers, offering a surprisingly relevant perspective on the nature of fear.

This is not a marginal reflection, but a central insight: fear arises not primarily from our circumstances, but from the way we love.

43. St Augustine expresses this with disarming clarity: we are defined not simply by what we think, but by what we love. And when love becomes mere attachment, fear arises. Not because the world has suddenly become more dangerous, but because our hearts have become attached to what we might lose.
If we treat what we love as absolute, we will live in fear of losing it. If we build our life on what is transitory, we will live in the anguish that everything we cherish might one day be taken from us.

44. Seen in this light, fear is nothing more than the shadow cast by an unhealthy love. It is not an emotion to be eliminated, but a sign to be understood. It reveals where we have placed our heart.
Augustine does not call us to stop loving, but to love fully. Only a love that is rightly oriented can set us free from fear.

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, is Lord alone. You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. So that things will go well with you and that you might enter in and take possession of the good land that the Lord promised to your fathers, just as the Lord has promised."
(Dt 6, 4-5;18)

45. Loving God does not mean seeking refuge in religion, but rediscovering the right order of things. When God is at the center of our lives, we can love everything else without trying to possess it, or defend it obsessively.
In this way, fear finds its proper place -– not because life becomes easier, but because we no longer need to cling to everything we are attached to. True freedom begins here: in the ability to love without becoming a slave to what we love.

46. This Augustinian insight echoes, in various forms, throughout the tradition of the Church Fathers.
The Desert Fathers, radical men who chose to strip themselves of everything in their search for what truly matters, arrived at a similarly clear conclusion: those who possess nothing have nothing to fear. This is not a call to poverty as an ascetic ideal in itself, but rather a clear-sighted understanding of the human condition.
To possess is to be attached, and every possessive attachment gives rise to fear. The fear of loss, the fear of being robbed, the fear of being threatened. The more we accumulate, the more anxious we become about protecting what we have. Gradually, life becomes a constant exercise in self-defense.

"Freedom and happiness of soul
Consist in genuine purity
and detachment from transitory things."
(St Anthony the Abbot)

47. The Church Fathers made this dynamic clear: fear does not arise from having nothing, but from being attached to what we have.
People who have nothing to lose are truly free - not because they are indifferent to life, but because they are not enslaved by what they possess. Their sense of security rests not on material things, but on a relationship that no external circumstance can take away. In this sense, evangelical poverty is not a form of deprivation, but a path to freedom from fear.

> "I do not know whether anyone has ever succeeded in not enjoying praise. And, if he enjoys it, he naturally wants to receive it. And if he wants to receive it, he cannot help but being distraught at losing it."
> *(St John Chrysostom,* Treatise on the Priesthood, *Book V)*

48. At the same time, the Church Fathers are under no illusions. They understand that fear is not only linked to material possessions, but also to approval, recognition and a favorable image of oneself.
John Chrysostom highlighted a crucial point: we are often afraid because we live under the gaze of others. We seek their approval, acceptance and recognition, and this makes us vulnerable. A disapproving glance, a careless word or a negative judgement is enough to unsettle us. Here, fear arises from our dependence on the opinions of others and our need to be seen by them.

49. Evangelical freedom, then, also means freedom from the fear of judgement. This is not indifference to others, but a deeper sense of rootedness.
When our worth no longer depends on how others see us, but rests on a gaze that transforms us and gives us a sense of belonging, then we can live without the fear of being exposed, excluded or rejected.

"He who lifts himself up is no longer held back by any servile fear, but, leaving behind the feeling of fear, he progresses in love until he attains the perfection of the soul."
(Gregory of Nyssa, Life of Moses, *II, 320)*

50. *Gregory of Nyssa* introduces another fundamental insight: fear often arises from an incomplete knowledge of God. We fear God when we do not truly know him, when we perceive him as a limitation, a force that seeks to control us, or even a threat. But when we grow in our relationship with him and come to recognize that God is not against us but for us, fear gradually gives way to a different kind of reverence- what the Fathers call filial reverence.
It is not the fear of a slave, but the reverence of a child. It does not paralyze, but gives life. It does not shut us in, but opens us up. It is the recognition of a greatness that does not crush, but sustains us. Here lies a crucial distinction: faith does not abolish fear, but transforms it, turning it into relationship.

"Created things, precisely because they have
a beginning subsequent to their creation,
must be inferior to the One who made them...
Just as a mother may offer solid food to her newborn
from the very beginning, yet the child is not able
to receive it, so too God could have offered perfection
to man from the very beginning, but man was not
capable of receiving it, being still an infant."
(Irenaeus of Lyon, Adversus Haereses*, Book IV, 38, 1)*

51. *Irenaeus of Lyon*, too, offers valuable insight into the roots of fear through his profoundly positive understanding of the human being. For him, humanity is a work in progress, called to become fully what it is meant to be. Fear arises when this journey is interrupted, when a we close ourselves off, when we cease to grow. It is a form of regression, a return to childhood in a negative sense of the word: not the trusting openness of a child, but the defensive attitude of someone who seeks only self-protection.
Salvation, then, is not an escape from reality, but a process of maturation. It means becoming men and women capable of embracing life without being crushed by it.

52. This tradition offers a powerful synthesis: **fear is not the fundamental problem, but a symptom of something deeper**. It points to an unhealthy love, an obsessive attachment, an incomplete knowledge of God, an excessive concern on the opinions of others, or an interrupted growth.

The Fathers do not seek to overcome fear directly; instead, they address its underlying causes. They reorder love, free us from unhealthy attachments, purify our vision, and teach us how to build right relationships. In this way, without denying fear, they gradually strip it of its power over us.

53. On closer examination, this ancient wisdom resonates remarkably with the entire journey we have traced: fear arises when we struggle to trust, when we put up defenses, when we hold back, when we close ourselves off. We overcome not through sheer willpower, but through a deeper transformation: learning to love truthfully, to let go, to trust, to live within a relationship that no longer needs to be defended because it has already been freely given.
In this sense, the Fathers do not offer a technique for overcoming fear, but a vision of humanity and of God that makes fear no longer necessary. For when we discover that we are children, that we no longer need to conquer everything, defend everything, or prove ourselves, we become free at last to truly live.

"As long as there is fear of punishment,
there is no love of justice.
If you do not do evil merely out of fear of punishment,
you do not yet love what is good.
When love begins to dwell within you, fear is driven out,
for fear causes suffering and love brings joy.
He who fears is like a prisoner; he who loves is free;
fear constricts the heart, love expands it."
(St Augustine, Commentary on the First Epistle of John, *Treatise IX)*

VII. FEAR DEFORMS GOD

"And what about Heaven?
Is there a Heaven?
"I believe so, madam, but sweet wines
nobody wants them any more.
(Eugenio Montale,
"Satura", 1971)

54. Sweet wine seems to have fallen out of fashion. Instead, the world is awash with gall and bitterness, with conflict, everyday fears and anxieties, and a pervasive sense of indifference. We seem to prefer bitterness, even though Providence has prepared a feast for us.
Consider the younger generations: numbed by the uncertainty of the present, they struggle to imagine a future—the sweet wine of providence and hope.

"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again.
But whoever drinks the water that I will give him
will never be thirsty."
(Jn 4, 13-14)

55. The bitter cup of indifference, boredom and the loss of any sense of future deform the image of God, reducing him to just a presence among many, a kind of 'consumer good', in a hopeless present inhabited by men and women who have lost their sense of life's mystery.
Fear does not arise as a reaction to an encounter with God; rather, it is often generated by the preconceived image we have formed of him.

Distorting the image of God means leading men and women away from Him, leaving them spiritually arid.

> "His master replied, "You wicked and lazy servant.
> So you knew that I reap where I have not sown
> and gather where I have not scattered!
> Then you should have deposited my money
> with the bankers, and on my return I would
> have gotten back my money with interest.
> Therefore, take the talent from him
> and give it to the one with the ten talents."
> *(Mt 25, 26-28)*

56. In this spiritual drought, God risks being perceived as a 'harsh master', as we see in the Parable of the Talents. The servant is afraid because he sees his master as harsh and demanding. When we perceive authority only as the force that punishes, we will always choose security over freedom, driven by fear. We will cease to be creative, and experience responsibility as an unbearable burden. Yet, in the Parable of the Talents, God invites us to take risks because He believes in us more than we believe in ourselves. What God offers as a gift, however, becomes something the servant fears; he perceives it as a threat.

57. The God of the Living is not a threat, but a firm foundation who tells us: "Go and face the world." He invites us to embrace love, to trust one another, and to take responsibility, even for our own failures.

Life is meant to be lived to the full, yet fear paralyzes us. Boredom traps us in passivity, while shame makes us overly vulnerable to the judgement of others. In this way, we end up failing to embrace fully the life we have been given.

58. **What matters is not how much we have received, but what we choose to do with what we have been given.**
This is true for those who have struggled throughout their lives; those who have fallen; those who find themselves alone. Those who, against all odds, find the strength to begin again and rise to their feet; those who have learnt to accept life as it is; those who patiently allow their wounds to heal; and those who, despite having so little, still find something to give. **In all these human stories, life has never ceased to flow**.

59. We can all make mistakes, but true strength – like that of Don Quixote – lies in finding the courage to get up however absurd or bewildering life may sometimes seem. We can rediscover ourselves, even after a lifetime of struggle and suffering, because when we truly embrace life, nothing is ever lost.
The only real mistake is to bury our potential for the fear of judgement and failure.

VIII. WHAT WE HAVE BECOME

60. Today, the world does not need further explanations. It already has too many. Nor does it need more analysis, commentary or opinions. It is saturated with them. **The world needs free people.**
What is unfolding before our eyes goes far beyond a geopolitical crisis, a complex moment in history or a difficult transition to understand. It is something much deeper: a revelation of what we have become.

> "A priest happened to be traveling
> along that same road, but when he saw him
> he passed by on the other side.
> A Levite likewise came to that spot and saw him,
> but he too passed by on the other side."
> *(Luke 10, 31-32)*

61. We witness the wars, the bombings, the bodies buried beneath the rubble, the children dying, the cities reduced to ruins, and yet we continue with our lives as though nothing has happened, undisturbed. We eat, we work, we plan our days, and we discuss trivial things, while real life is being destroyed before our very eyes.
This is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of all.
It is not violence itself that is frightening, but human capacity to get used to violence. We have developed an increasingly sophisticated form of moral anesthesia.
We are no longer scandalized.
We no longer pause.

We no longer allow what we witness to change us.
We watch it and then we carry on. And this is far more disturbing than war itself.
War destroys bodies, but indifference destroys us from within. It strips us of our capacity for compassion, it dulls our ability to respond, and numbs our feelings.
It turns us into mere spectators. And a spectator never changes the course of history.

62. Today, the real problem is not simply that violent people exist, but that so many others have got used to violence. They simply adapt.
They make excuses.
They shift responsibility onto others.
They retreat into their own little worlds, determined not to let anything disturb their peace.
Of course, this is a form of surviving. But it is also a form of surrender. Every time we get used to evil, we lose a little of our humanity. Every time we fail to respond, we allow evil to become ordinary life. And once evil becomes normal, it becomes more difficult to resist.

"Thirdly, building a world in which everyone can flourish requires shared responsibility and courage. No one can single-handedly bear the weight of the challenges the world is facing, just as no one is so weak that they cannot play their part."
(Leo XIV, Magnifica humanitas*, no. 13)*

63. The world today does not need people who simply speak about peace. It needs people who refuse to grow accustomed to war, who refuse to accept that such suffering is inevitable, who refuse to reduce human suffering to statistics or turn death into just another news story.

The point is not to understand everything. It is to refuse to become complicit. And the most widespread form of complicity today is not active involvement, but indifference.

It is carrying on as though nothing has happened.

It is preserving our own peace of mind while others lose everything.

It is refusing to let ourselves be touched by the suffering unfolding around us.

But allowing ourselves to be touched comes at a cost.

It means **stepping out of neutrality, taking a stand and being willing to change the way we live**.

Hence, we prefer to stay safe. Yet when the world is burning, a life devoted to preserving our own comfort is no longer truly a life. It is merely survival. And the Gospel has never called us merely to survive.

IX. THE REVOLUTION OF PROVIDENCE

64. Saint John Calabria does not begin by analyzing frightened people. He does not study fear nor does he reduce it to a psychological condition. He begins with God. This, in itself, marks a radical shift in perspective, since we are naturally inclined to begin with ourselves – with our wounds, weaknesses and limitations. Saint John Calabria, however, reverses this way of thinking: what lies at the heart of everything is not human fear, but God's faithfulness. And it is from this conviction that he approaches everything else.

65. **If God is truly our Father** – and not simply a familiar religious expression – then **life is not a minefield through which we must cautiously find our way, but a place where we can live freely and confidently**.

"Oh, my dear ones, respond, respond to this calling and live as worthy children of this Opera. Be prepared to go into the world. Remember that a terrible battle awaits you, for the world and the society in which we live in these dark times. Darkness does not welcome the light. For this reason, you will have to struggle very, very hard. However, do not be afraid. You will leave this house with God's blessing, strengthened by his divine grace. You will surely triumph, and your lives as true young Christians will become a light to the many who still live in the shadows of darkness and death. Let's keep in mind these words this evening: he who trusts in himself is lost, but he who trusts in God can do all things."
(St John Calabria, THOUGHTS AND MAXIMS, 22 October 1919)

66. This is what makes all the difference. It is not a spiritual detail, but a shift in logic. If God is truly our Father, we can cease to live in constant fear; if we do not, then we have stopped trusting in Him.
Saint John Calabria does not develop this conviction through books, but through the reality of life: when there is nothing, when there is no bread, when there is no money left, when young people arrive from the streets with no name and no past.
It is precisely in these circumstances that his faith in Divine Providence takes shape – not as a religious ideal, but as something real, tested by experience and lived to the full.

67. For him, Providence is not religious expression used to reassure us saying, "everything will be all right." Instead, he is convinced that God acts within reality: He works through human hands, faces and relationships, and that He enters into situations of poverty rather than keeping them at a distance. This is what makes his faith so radical: it does not remove risk, but faces it without fear.
It does not protect against uncertainty; it embraces it.
It does not spare us hardship; it gives it meaning.
This is where his charismatic strength emerges: **life is not something to be defended at all costs, but something to be entrusted to God.**
We often tend to protect ourselves, accumulate, withdraw control, and build up safeguards. Saint John Calabria, by contrast, chooses to trust, to make himself vulnerable, to

surrender, and to take risks. Not out of naivety, but because he has taken the Gospel seriously.

68. Below, I would share a complete homily by Saint John Calabria, which I believe may help us explore this concept more deeply. It may seem simple at first glance, but it is far from simple; indeed, it holds the key to understanding everything:

69. "*The Holy Gospel, which the Church offers us today for our spiritual nourishment, recounts us how the Blessed Jesus was in a boat with his disciples, when a sudden storm tossed threatening to sink it.*

> "He then got into the boat, followed by his disciples.
> Suddenly, a great storm came up on the lake,
> so that the boat was being swamped by the waves.
> But he was asleep. And so they went to him
> and awakened him, saying, "Lord, save us!
> We are going to die!"
> *(Mt 8, 23-25)*

This boat, my dear friends, in which Jesus is present with his disciples, is an image of the Church's condition in this world: constantly exposed to dangers, temptations, storms and tempests. How much Satan did to crush and destroy the nascent Church of Christ! Jews and Gentiles, kings and princes, the powerful and magistrates, priests and ordinary people, - all rose up against her. United in their opposition, they did everything in their power to attack this boat, which is the Church.

70. At that time, my dear friends, the mere name of "Christian" was enough to provoke the fury of tyrants and turn their hands against the faithful. Yet, how was this storm, this struggle, overcome? Through virtue, patience and the blood of the martyrs. For, as Tertullian rightly observed, the blood of the martyrs became the seed of new Christians. Indeed, the descendants of those who had humiliated and persecuted the Church, and sworn to destroy her, would come to take pride in building her up, sustaining her, spreading her, and defending her.
Even today, there is no shortage of godless people and new tyrants seeking to wage war against this Barque of Peter, against the Church of Christ. Yet, all their efforts are, and always will be in vain, for Jesus himself has said: 'The gates of hell shall never prevail against it'. Enemies rise and fall; but the Church endures.
What grieves the Church most deeply, however, is the war waged against her by so many of her own children - by Christians who have been raised, nurtured and sustained by this tender Mother. Instead of consoling her through their truly Gospel-inspired lives and virtues, they wound her heart through their scandals and their shameful examples. You, my dear friends, my beloved children, must always strive to live as faithful and obedient children of this Mother. May our lives be a constant testimony, a steady light that guides and enlightens so many of our brothers and sisters who, through their actions, continue to bring sorrow to the heart of this Mother.

71. This boat also an image of our own soul. As long as we live in this world, we will inevitably face headwinds and fierce storms. Crosses, trials and dangers mark Christian life. Let us press on with courage and perseverance, never allowing sorrow or suffering to

overwhelm us, because they are the many steps that lead us up to Tabor, that is, to Heaven.
Indeed, let us always remember that if we wish to be true followers and friends of Jesus, we must be prepared to suffer - and to suffer greatly.
The saints of the Old and New Testaments were despised, driven into exile, slandered and subjected to every kind of torment. As St Paul reminds us, they endured mockery, scourging, chains and imprisonment; they were stoned, sawn in two, put to the test and killed by the sword.
This, my dear friends, is what awaits Christians! And what storms and struggles, what trials and sufferings must those who leave the world behind to follow Jesus be prepared to endure!

72. *Oh, dear Brothers, our mission is sublime; it is divine. And precisely because it is so, we must endure and be prepared to suffer: both inwardly and outwardly.*
As St. Paul tells us: "All who live in Christ must endure persecution." Come on, we are not alone: Jesus is with us. Even when it seems that Jesus is asleep, we must remember that, in his apparent silence, Jesus is watching over us all. All we need to do is live by faith - always by faith! Do you know, my dear ones, when Jesus truly sleeps? When our faith is weak, when it is sluggish.
At times, it may seem as though Jesus is asleep. When this happens, my dear ones, we must recognize that we are going through tough time and we must respond with even greater faith.
May we never have to hear Jesus reproaching: 'You of little faith, why are you afraid?' If until now we have not been people of faith, then let us begin today. And whenever we feel overwhelmed by the storm, let us follow the example of the Apostles and turn to Jesus.

With a single word He will calm that storm, and we will be strengthened and at peace, and we will be able to move forward, always forward, along the path of holiness. And the more we surrender to God, the more authentic our holiness will become.
With the words of St Augustine, I exhort you: give the Lord carte blanche! Give the Lord complete freedom to act in our lives and allow ourselves to be guided by Him in all things. Then, everything will work for our good.
Let us have faith, placing our complete trust in God! Let us follow the example of Job, who declared that nothing, not even death itself, could shake his trust in God. And see how God, in turn, comforted him, transforming his trials and sufferings into a new season of prosperity." (St John Calabria, COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL, Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany)

73. This passage makes it clear that the faith Saint John Calabria speaks is neither a form of inward-looking devotion nor simply a spiritual virtue. It is, above all, a concrete way of living.
When fear takes hold of the human heart, it inevitably drives us inward, making us defensive and hesitant, and leading us to weigh carefully whom we can trust and whom we must keep at a distance.
Trust, on the other hand, opens us up. It makes us vulnerable. It strips away our defenses.

74. For this reason, in Calabrian spirituality, Divine Providence does not arise far from human vulnerability, but precisely in the midst of it. Not in ideal circumstances,

but in a boat shaken by the storm. Not beyond poverty, but in the very heart of it.
It is precisely there that the Gospel ceases to be theory and becomes flesh, relationship, trust renewed day after day.

75. This also transforms the way we see the Poor. They are not a social problem to be solved, an emergency to be managed, or a burden to be kept under control. Rather, the Poor are where God teaches us to trust.
It is there that we learn to overcome our fears. The Poor strip us of our defenses, challenge our sense of security and compel us to have genuine relationships. It is through this experience that we realize that true security does not lie in material possessions, but in human bonds; not in control, but in trust.

76. *"The Opera of the Poor Servants is great in the eyes of God, and we are still only at the beginning. You will see what the Lord will accomplish. But the secret to fulfilling His will lies in this: remaining faithful to our true spirit, which consists of great faith, deep love for the Lord and for souls, profound humility, a sincere awareness of our own nothingness and misery, and complete trust in God, who assists us and is always with us. We must never forget that we belong to Him, and that our first calling is our own sanctification, followed by the service of souls, especially the poorest, the abandoned and the destitute. These are God's favorites and must therefore be our treasures, our most precious pearls.*

77. *Dear Father Stanislaus, Christ loves souls, and He wants us to love them as He does. Jesus sacrificed His life for them and asks us to do the same, if necessary. Give yourselves as a gift to everyone, so that you may lead everyone to Jesus.*
I particularly commend the children to your care, especially the poor among them. From its very beginnings, the Opera has devoted itself to these dear little souls. May the words of Jesus always serve as a reminder and a warning to us: "Let the little children come to me." Woe to the servant who neglects this chosen flock of the Divine Shepherd.

78. *Along with the children, I entrust the Poor to your care. I know that you have many of these whom God holds dear: the poorest, the uneducated and the abandoned. Jesus himself speaks through them! The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has sent me to preach the Gospel to the Poor. Father Stanislaus, I entrust the poor to you. Love them for their poverty. They may sometimes be ungrateful, but have compassion on them, and never cease to love them. They belong to Jesus and eventually they will come to Him. If the Poor, if these souls do not come to us, no, let us not weep or give way to useless lamentation. Instead, let us go in search of them, crossing mountains and valleys, making our way through thorns and brambles to find these lost sheep. Let us use every means, seize every opportunity, bear them patiently, and persevere in prayer and sacrifice. Jesus will be with you and with us. One day He will bless our efforts and bring their souls to salvation."* (St John Calabria, Letter to Fr. Stanislao Pellizzer, 7 June 1938)

79. Thus, we come to understand that, for Saint John Calabria, **Providence** was never simply a spiritual

concept or a religious consolation in times of difficulty. Rather, it was a **tangible way of living the Gospel:** a radical choice to live in the world without allowing oneself to be ruled by the fear of scarcity.

80. This is why his unwavering concern for the poor was not rooted in social philanthropy, but in a theological vision: **the Poor are not simply the recipients of the mission; they are the very place where God preserves the heart of the Gospel**. It is alongside the little ones, the least among us, the "abandoned and destitute" people that we discover whether we truly believe in God's fatherhood. For in the presence of the poor, all pretense of possession, efficiency, calculation and self-sufficiency inevitably fall away.

81. In the end, one decisive question remains: **do we truly trust the Father?** Saint John Calabria understood that the greatest crisis would not be material poverty, but the loss of trust in God. For this reason, he asked his religious not merely to help the poor, but to love their poverty - that is, to recognize in their vulnerability an opportunity for the Gospel to take root, a path to conversion and, in a sense, **a living sign of Providence**.

82. For John Calabria, Providence is not an extraordinary miracle, but something woven into the fabric of everyday life shared with others. It is bread that becomes a meal, a home that becomes a family, and a little that becomes enough.

It is a **quiet** yet immensely powerful **revolution**, because it strikes at the very roots of fear. Those who live by Providence are not people free from difficulties; rather, they are people who do not let fear govern their lives. They continue to live, to love, to give of themselves, even when circumstances might seem to call for withdrawal and self-preservation.

83. This attitude is profoundly prophetic in our own time. In a world that seeks to protect itself, arms itself, closes its doors, makes distinctions and excludes, **trust becomes an act of resistance**.
To trust is to swim against the tide.
To trust is to make oneself vulnerable.
To trust is to choose to live without retreating behind walls of self-defense.
The real question is not whether we experience fear, but whether we are willing to go on living under its control. In the end, **Providence does not take away our fears; it frees us from their power**.

X. HAVING FAITH

"The next day, he took out two denarii and gave them
to the innkeeper, saying, 'Look after him,
and when I return I will repay you
for anything more you might spend."
(Luke 10, 35)

84. **Fear arises when we lose our ability to trust. Faith is not merely an idea; it is a genuine act of entrusting to God.**
To entrust means to take on a responsibility, to be accountable. As we see in the Parable of the Talents, we often misunderstand what it means to entrust something to another. We tend to think of it as simply letting go and leaving someone else to do the job.
When someone entrusts us with something precious – a human life, a project, a mission, a hope – they do so because they believe in our ability to take care for it. We cannot just stand by and do nothing. We are being called to look after it, to be responsible for it, to take risks.

85. Responsibility is the natural response to faith. To be responsible means to get our hands dirty for those who turn to us for help, to struggle and take risks, because those who do not fight for something have already lost it. Those who bury their talents, however small, bury their lives. When we truly live, we must accept the possibility of failure and acknowledge our vulnerability, while recognizing that life is still worth the risk.

Placing our trust in God and in life does not absolve us of our responsibility to do our part.
Fear makes us forget that everyone has a role to play in this world. It makes us forget that every life matters, that the death of a child is never simply a matter of chance, and that true freedom means knowing how to set limits on our own freedom and respects those of others. Fear, on the other hand, recognizes no boundaries; it seeps into every aspect of our life.

86. **The opposite of faith is not doubt, but fear.**
And the opposite of fear is not courage, but freedom.
To be courageous, we must first be free. Freedom means having the courage to stake everything on our own way of understanding life and to be the best expression of who we are.

87. Freedom is also intimately connected to *beauty*; perhaps it is beauty itself. It stands in direct opposition to the mentality of the pack. A truly free person has no need to conform to collective thinking. We can join forces with other free and open-minded people, sharing the determination to look towards the future.
Faith, then, becomes one of the ways in which freedom finds expression. It is a liberation from the illusions of the global village, and from the fears that bind individuals to the crowd. Faith becomes trust and enables us to face uncertainty and move beyond it. Without trust, freedom would remain paralyzed by doubt. To trust means choosing to act despite the risks. It means refusing to give

into fear. It means looking up at the stars and believing they will not fall, trusting that even in the deepest silence of the night, a small light will always guide us.

88. **To trust is itself a form of prayer.** In Aramaic, the word "Amen" carries meanings such as 'to believe', 'to trust', and 'to support'. The same word is also associated with doorposts and the steady hands of an artisan.

XI. UBUNTU

"Come to me, all you
who are weary and overburdened,
and I will give you rest."
(Mt 11,28)

89. So what are we to do? If we wish to free ourselves from the pack mentality that feeds on fear, from the destructive feelings of boredom and shame, and from dangerous tendency to identify with those who lead the pack stirring up fear and contempt, we must return to the very roots of our humanity.
The pack represents a regression, a return to an earlier stage of humanity's development. It is a gathering of human beings reduced to their animal instincts, finding satisfaction only in tearing their prey. In such a world, there is no room for compassion, no place for the recognition that "the pain of the other is also my pain," and "the happiness of the other is also my happiness."

90. To free ourselves from the grip of the packs and the totalitarian ideologies, faith points the way towards **freedom, meekness, kindness and tenderness**—qualities that are essential to understanding and embracing the journey of life.
Tenderness is the attitude of
someone who stays close …
someone who does not become defensive…
someone who does not run away…
… Because he or she has nothing to be afraid of.

"In an era that favors speed and fragmentation,
the human person still yearns to receive care
and recognition from attentive minds, kind words
and hands capable of tenderness."
(Leo XIV, Magnifica humanitas*, no. 239)*

91. **Tenderness** means welcoming the others in their humanity and diversity. It means recognizing the vulnerability and purity of life, embracing its inherent value. It is a way of looking at the world with openness that let us extend our gaze to all creation and all sentient beings, recognizing ourselves as a part of a wider community and a shared humanity. We are called to love those around us, those who are close to us, even when reaching out to others is difficult – particularly those we might prefer to avoid and those who are different from us.

92. This is the challenge of Jesus' original message: **to draw near to others, to become a neighbor to everyone,** recognizing that we are made of the same human substance.
Sometimes, a ray of sunshine is enough to overcome fear, as well as a circle of people who come together and still talk to one another.
Indeed, faith is something we must experience together. Trust is the interconnection of at least two people. Therefore, we are not meant to walk through life alone.

93. **Ubuntu! 'I am because we are'.**
In the Bantu language, these words express a profound sense of belonging to a shared humanity: I cannot be at peace if my neighbor is suffering.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are the only way for humanity to go forward. This was the path embraced by the South African Archbishop and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond Tutu. In his efforts to heal a nation deeply scarred by the horrors of apartheid, he did not choose revenge, but he pointed the way towards dialogue, non-violence and restorative justice.

94. In this sense, Providence is not simply a gift from Heaven; above all, it takes shape through the mutual support that people offer one another.
God needs our hands, joined in a common purpose. **Providence unfolds within the community: food meant for one becomes a table around which all can gather.**

95. Providence offers us **a gentle revolution** for the times we are living in. It compels us to change our perspective. It reminds us that human beings are naturally inclined towards altruism, and generosity and our sense of belonging can overcome selfishness and fear.

96. There must have been a moment in human history when people first began to look after one another. Perhaps, many years ago, a group of people sat in a circle, facing one another. Sitting together, they could watch over one another's backs.
They began to care for one another, and strangers gradually became familiar faces. In one another, they recognized their shared human nature. This first act of mutual *recognition* laid the foundation for what would eventually become the idea of justice.

97. Through the glances they exchanged, the people gathered in the circle began to recognize what they shared and what made them different. A sense of sociability took shape, along with an awareness of both likeness and difference. The person before them was no longer just another living creature, but a fellow in whom they could recognize themselves.
They could look at one another, smile or frown, become distracted, reach out to shake hands or come into conflict. Slowly, they learned to communicate. Each began to discover oneself through the reactions of others. They began to seek each other out, to feel both desire and fear, and to learn how to assert themselves and defend themselves. The gazes of the others became the mirror through which they could see and recognize themselves.

98. The transition from animal to human being marked a second birth for these early humans. Each became a reflection of the other's feelings, and in one another, they began to recognize shared emotions, affection and care. They learned to join forces, setting aside, if only for a moment, the boundaries between 'mine' and 'yours'. Therefore, the idea of peace was born.
Peace is another name for justice.
Peace is another name for Providence.
Peace begins when people are able to reach out to one another again.
Peace has its roots in Fatherhood.

99. I no longer believe in peace that exists only in words. I do not believe in solemn declarations, carefully crafted speeches or in strategies that speak of peace while preparing for something else. Nor do I believe in a peace that remains on paper, never finding its way into people's lives.
If it is genuine, peace is not an abstract concept.
It is an **attitude**. It is a way of being in the world.
And this attitude has a name: fatherhood. Not a spiritual, theoretical or idealized paternity, but a **concrete**, lived experience, rooted in the reality of everyday life.

100. **Fatherhood is the opposite of fear**.
A father does not seek to protect himself; he is willing to expose himself to risk. He does not seek to control; he takes responsibility. He does not turn away or run; he stays.
Fear builds walls. Fatherhood builds bonds. Fear divides, excludes and seeks self-preservation. Paternity welcomes, takes risks, and accepts the possibility of being hurt.
And today, **the great tragedy is not simply that wars are being fought. It is that fatherhood is so profoundly absent**. There is a lack of men and women willing to bring life into the world, to nurture and protect it, to defend it without claiming ownership over it. We are lacking people who feel responsible not only for their own lives, but also for the lives of others.
Peace does not grow where people speak eloquently about it. It takes root wherever someone chooses to care.

101. **Peace is not the opposite of war; it is the opposite of indifference**. And indifference is always a form of being orphaned.
When we do not feel we are children, we cannot become a father or mother. Therefore, we live in a constant state of self-defense, driven by the need to accumulate, control and protect ourselves out of fear. However, when we discover that we are children, when we experience a supporting and never-ending paternity, everything changes.
We no longer need to defend ourselves constantly.
We can begin to live for others.
We can begin to nurture life.
We can begin to build peace.
And peace is never an individual achievement. It is always an act of creation.
Those who know themselves to be children choose not to break the chain of life, even when everything around them seems to urge them to do so.

102. Today, we long for peace, but are unwilling to embrace 'paternity'. We seek security, without taking responsibility. We want order, without the commitment of relationships. Therefore, we keep talking about peace without truly building it.
Indeed, building peace requires us to give something up. It means letting go our need to being right, accepting that we may not prevail, choosing to stay even when walking away would be easier.

103. **Fatherhood means staying on**. Staying on when the other person makes mistakes, disappoints us or hurts us. Staying on when relationships become difficult. Staying on without seeking to possess, dominate or diminish the others.

Fatherhood is a force that is both fragile and immensely powerful. And it is the only force capable of bringing peace.

Indeed, war always begins when bonds are broken, while peace always begins when someone chooses to mend them. Not through words, but through life.

XII. WHERE FEAR LOSES ITS VOICE

104. The real question is not how to stop being afraid. That is the wrong question, because it assumes that fear must disappear before we can truly live. However, it never does. Fear remains.
What can change, however, is the power we allow it to have over us. It can lose its voice. Not at all once. Not through sheer willpower. But by shifting our attention towards God's perspective.
If, however, we allow fear to take hold, it can end up destroying our life. It always follows the same pattern, even when we fail to recognise it. First, fear appears as a physical sensation: a knot in your stomach, a troubling thought, a possibility that casts a shadow over everything. Then, almost immediately, it turns into an interpretation:

"See? You can't do it."
"See? It's going to go wrong."
"See? You're all alone."

That is the moment when fear takes hold. Not when we feel it, but when we begin to draw conclusions from it. And we are almost too quick to reach those conclusions, as though doing so might set us free. However, that very haste is already a form of surrender.

105. The first thing that makes a difference, then, is not courage, but time.
Those who live in fear are always in a hurry.

Those who trust learn to slow down, not because they have all the answers, but because they no longer run away from what they feel. They allow themselves to stay with it a little longer. Just a moment more.
With that knot in their stomach
With that troubling thought.
Without immediately putting up a defence.
Without trying to fix it.
Without trying to silence it.

106. In that moment, something subtle happens: **fear is no longer everything**. It becomes just one part of us.
Once fear is no longer everything, we can move forward. Not to defy fear or prove anything, but to return to life and dare to take a step we might otherwise have avoided, and speak a word we would have kept to ourselves; to be present where we would once have chosen to stay away. That is not because we are not afraid, but because we are no longer allowing fear to dictate our choices.

107. **This is where life begins anew:** not when we feel safe, but when we stop trying to protect ourselves from everything. Fear always makes the same demand: defend yourself. Defend your image, defend your achievements, defend your control over events, and defend your idea of how things should unfold.
Providence asks something different. It calls us to let ourselves be exposed, not to wound us, but to free us from everything we cling to, in the belief that it is what keeps us alive.

"Ours is the pressing duty to remain profoundly human. We must lovingly safeguard the grandeur of humanity bestowed upon us and revealed in its fullness in Christ, the splendor of which no machine can ever replace.
(Leo XIV, Magnifica humanitas*, No. 15)*

It involves acquiring an attitude that seeks to forge bonds of fraternity built on listening, an open demeanor, making time for each other and even wasting time together.
(Leo XIV, Magnifica humanitas*, No. 220)*

108. At a certain point, a more radical shift takes place. We stop asking ourselves whether things will work out and begin to ask whether we will stay.
Whether we will remain human, remain open, whether remain committed to the relationship, even when things go wrong.
Indeed, the opposite of fear is not security.
It is presence. Presence does not prevent things from falling apart, but it ensures that not everything is lost.

109. Then we discover something we had never expected: that **freedom does not come when fear disappear, but when we no longer need to wait for it to disappear before we can live.**
And this is not something we can force. It simply happens. It happens when, in the midst of uncertainty, we do not run away; we do not shut everything out or put an end to it.
A space opens up.
Small. Almost invisible. But real.

110. **And that is where fear starts to lose its voice**, not because it has been overcome, but because, at last, it is no longer the only voice we hear. And in that space – one we cannot control, create, or earn – we begin to recognize something.
Not a strength within ourselves.
Not a technique.
Not an explanation.
But a Presence.
One that does not raise its voice, impose itself or take away the risks. It simply remains. And quietly, it gently restores life.

EPILOGUE

"What matters is not whether we are afraid or not,
but whether we know how to live with fear
without allowing it to take control of us.
That, in short, is what courage means.
Anything else is nothing more than recklessness."
(Giovanni Falcone)

111. Perhaps, then, the real miracle is not living without fear, **but finding, despite everything, there is still someone who loves**.
Someone who stays.
Someone who keeps the door open.
Someone who keeps setting an extra place at the table.
Someone who continues to believe in humanity, even when gives them every reason not to.

112. Consequently, history is not saved by the strong, but by those who refuse to let their hearts grow hard.
It is saved by mothers who continue to bring new life into the world, even amid war. By teachers and educators who never stop believing in young people who have lost their way. By men like Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino[1]

[1] Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino were two of the most prominent Italian magistrates in the fight against the Mafia, both in Italy and internationally. They chose to continue their fight, even though they knew they were risking their lives. They were killed in two attacks in 1992.

who knew fear – and knew it all too well – yet refused to let it have the final word.
It is saved by those who continue to speak the truth when silence would be easier; by those who reach out a hand when it would be easier to clench a fist. By those who keep loving, even when love seems to make no difference.

"Do not be afraid!
Open – indeed, throw wide open –
the doors to Christ!
Do not be afraid!
Christ knows 'what is in the human heart'.
He alone knows!"
(John Paul II, 22 October 1978)

113. Perhaps this, after all, is the deepest meaning of the words "Do not be afraid" spoken by Saint John Paul II at the beginning of his pontificate. Not a call to be strong, but **an invitation to never stop being human.**
The opposite of fear is not courage. It is a life fully surrendered to love.

So yes, the world may continue to be marked by
wars,
injustices,
failures,
dark nights,
betrayals and trials.

But there will always be someone who, in the midst of the storm, keeps a small light burning.
And it is from there – always from there – that God begins the world anew.

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