



THIS MONTH MUST BE THE FIRST OF ALL MONTHS FOR YOU: EX 12,2

FOREWORD

This Lectio will give us the opportunity to learn about Jewish values, prayers, liturgies and festivals: this opportunity is to be treasured in order for us to better understand our own Christian Easter Liturgy, as well as our own following of the Lord, according to various aspects that the Jewish religion highlights in a very peculiar way.

A good disciple is *he who can draw out of his treasury both old and new things*.

As far as our own relation with the Jewish Scriptures and tradition is concerned, as well as with the people who treasured for us the Law and the Covenant, we must have an attitude ready to be integrated and enriched by them, an attitude that is able to perceive both the roots and the novelties of our faith; we must rest assured that we will not be able to appreciate all the richness of the New Testament if we are not familiar with the ancient Scriptures:

I believe that the Bible resembles a big cello with four strings for melodies: the four strings are the four gospels. However, if the cello consists just in the four strings, its sound will be very feeble. A sound-box is needed to give to its sounds their greatness, colour and warmth.

The Old Testament is this sound-box, allowing the gospels to vibrate as they should.

The melody, contained in the singing of the Beloved Son, can be heard if the former and the latter relate to each other.

Daniel Attinger

THE KEYS OF TIME

*The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt,
'This month must be the first of all the months for you,
the first month of your year'.*

Ex 12,1-2

The first command, the first of God's statements
setting His people free,
refers to time.

God gives Israel the keys of time.

God gives back to a people who had been enslaved,
whose time belonged to its masters,
the liberty to determine its own time,
the days to gather as a people,
working days and the days of rest.

And also the liberty to determine the days of meeting with that God who saved them,
to acknowledge, in time, who made them free,
a time to make memory of their own history.

It is a commandment, a law, defining the calendar;
a law according to which human time must be measured
in harmony with God's time.

This command is the first true commandment that the sons of Israel receive as a nation, and it is so important that in his commentary to the Pentateuch the Medieval exegete, Rashi, says that these lines should have been the opening lines of the whole Torah, given that the primary function of the Torah is to present Israel with a system of laws.

In fact, these lines inaugurate the whole world of the Torah, and introduce the very notion of commandment.

NEW MOON

Rashi relates that since Moses could not understand what the Lord meant by this command, God had to devise a new method of teaching, as we do with children with learning difficulties. He took Moses out at dusk, and showed him the slender new crescent moon, and told him that when he saw it like that he would have to consecrate that day, and that day should be the beginning of this month:

God showed Moses the new moon rising and said: 'When the new moon is rising, that will be the beginning of the month for you'. A text never loses its literal meaning. God was referring to the month of Nisan. That month would mark the beginning of the calculation of months. Moses was not sure about the precise moment when the new moon would rise, that is, how it should be visible in the sky to be consecrated, given that God had said: 'When you see it in this phase, you will consecrate the new month'.

The Jews celebrate the Creation of the World on the day of **רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה** *rô's hāššānâh*, the Jewish new Year's Day which falls on the first day of the month of Tīšri.¹

The second Creation of the World, that is, the Exodus from Egypt, begins with the commandment to arrange Time, by promulgating the Month-head and consequently the calendar.²

¹ In 2015 it was celebrated from the dusk of September 13 to September 15.

² The Jewish calendar is based on the lunar cycle. The lunar month, that is, the period between one New Moon and the next, is 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes, 3 seconds and one third. Given that a month must be made up of whole days, there are months of 29 days and months of 30 days. A twelve-month year is made up of 354 days, eleven less than the solar year. This difference entails the fact that every year *Pesaḥ* (Passover) would fall 11 days before than the previous year, and sooner or later it should be celebrated in winter. In fact, given that the Torah specifies that it must fall in the 'month of spring', one month is added (the month of Adar is doubled) seven times in 19 years (for instance, in 2015). Therefore, two decisions must be made: whether a month must be of 30 or 29 days; and whether a year is 'embolistic' (made up of 13 months) or not. The perpetual lunar calendar as we know it was promulgated in the year 4119 (358-359 AD) by Hillel II, on account of the diaspora of the people and of the impossibility of maintaining an independent juridical system, able of proclaiming the *Rô's hōdeš* (the Month-head). The perpetual lunar calendar is a satisfactory but not the ideal and original solution. For more than one thousand years the Jewish tribunals looked for witnesses testifying to the rising of the New Moon (J. Pacifici). According to the Talmud, the current names of the Jewish lunar months were introduced when the Jews returned from Babylon:

I	Nīsān	March-April
II	'Iyyār	April-May
III	Sīwān	May-June
IV	Tammūz	June-July
V	'Āb	July-August
VI	'Ēlūl	August-September
VII	Tīšrī	September-October
VIII	Ḥešwān	October-November
IX	Kislēw	November-December
X	Tēbēt	December-January
XI	Šēbāt	January-February
XII	'Ādār	February-March

Jewish thinking teaches us that a very great spiritual force is contained in this command. In order to perceive it, we must go back to the text of Genesis, Day 4, when God creates the stars. This day is very important in the sequence of Creation:

God said,

*'Let there be lights in the vault of heaven
to divide day from night,*

*and let them indicate festivals (וְלַמּוֹעֲדִים לְאֹתוֹת וּלְיָמִים w^ehāyû l^e'ōtōt ûl^emô 'ădîm),
days and years.*

Let them be lights in the vault of heaven to shine on the earth.'

And so it was.

*God made the two great lights: the greater light to govern the day,
the smaller light to govern the night, and the stars.*

*God set them in the vault of heaven to shine on the earth,
to govern the day and the night and to divide light from darkness.*

God saw that it was good.

Evening came and morning came: the fourth day.

(Gn 1:14-19)

In the series of seven days of Creation, this day is apparently anomalous.

It is said that on the first day God created light.

Only on the fourth day He creates the sun and the moon.

When on the first day God creates light, He creates the time of the cosmos, a time which is indefinite and indistinct, a simple switch from day to night and that's it.

The sun and the moon come afterwards, because they have a definite function, not just the indefinite alternation of the cosmos but, as the text says, "let them indicate festivals, days, years".

Through them the time is no longer the indistinct time of the cosmos, but the beginning, therefore the transformation of the time of the cosmos into the time of history.

Thanks to the sun and the moon, we count months, years,

we can distinguish seasons, festivals,

a day from the next,

a certain time from all the others.

By observing the moon we learn when it is time to sow and when it is time to harvest and, above all, by observing the moon we know when it is time to celebrate festivals.

The stars created on the fourth day are the beginning of human time

and of that time which is peculiarly human, that is, liturgical time,

given that it is the time that connects man to God through the festivals.

God created the space which will later welcome man,

and creates the time in which the meeting between Himself and man will be celebrated.

He creates the festival of the meeting between Himself and man,

the day on which Love is to be remembered.

This is the reason why the days of creation of life and subsequently of man as the apex of all living creatures, come only after the creation of stars, that is, after time has become human.

This allows us to go even deeper into the meaning of this first command, into the gift of freedom that is contained in it.

According to rabbinical thinking, the ראש חודש *Rô's hōdeš*, the Jewish Month-head, is closely linked to the root of the verb חָדַשׁ *hādaš*, to renew, to make new: the month is renewed. On the contrary, the sun is linked to the yearly dimension, שָׁנָה *šānâh*, which comes from the root שָׁנָן *šānan*, to repeat, to say over and over again.

The year, represented by the sun, is characterized by repetition, לְשָׁנוֹת *lišnôṭ*, while the lunar month is characterized by renewal, חֲדָשׁ *ḥiddûš*. These dimensions characterize also the relationship between Israel and the Lord.

The sun is characterized by repetition, by being always the same, while the moon is characterized by renewal, change, growth.

Repetition and renewal are the two ways we perceive time in, but also the ways in which we can focus on the Lord's Torah and put it into practice.

On one hand the Torah needs repetition:

Let the words I enjoin on you today stay in your heart.

*You shall tell them (וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם) *w^ešinnantām* to your children, and keep on telling them, when you are sitting at home, when you are out and about, when you are lying down and when you are standing up.*

Dt 6,6-7

On the other hand the Torah needs innovation, discovery.

The time of the slave belongs to his master: it does not extend to the future; plans are forbidden; it is focussed on the present and on the fulfilment of a particular need of his master's.

Freedom consists in taking back time,
and the free man is he who is able to renew time.

The Jewish word for 'festival' is מוֹעֵד *mô'ēd*, plural מוֹעֲדִים *mô'ădîm*. In his more ancient root מוֹעֵד *mô'ēd* denotes a special moment, a meeting between two parties: the New Moon is not only the moment when the moon once again receives the sun rays, but also the moment when the moon meets the sun once again, and once again it receives the new rays of its light.

In the same way, God wants His people to look for Him, to find Him over and over again and be illumined by the new rays of His light always and everywhere, along the course of its history, overcoming the shadows and darkness.

The moon which finds the sun once again is but a model of man encountering God.

The moon's renewal is an image of renewal and should prompt each and every Israelite to renew himself at the beginning of each month.

מוֹעֵד *mô'ēd* literally means 'meeting': the commandment of Exodus prompts us to fix a date for our own encounter with God.

'This month must be the first of all the months for you...

This New Moon will be the beginning of renewal *for you*.

It is *for you*.

The *Rô's ḥōdeš*, the Month-head, recalls to the Israelites' minds their commitment with God. It is a reminder that prevents them from going away from Him, from becoming strangers to Him, from inadvertently becoming less and less available to receive the light of His Spirit.

If that encounter did not take place, the heart would become darker and darker exactly like Pharaoh's, hardened even in spite of the most wonderful signs and of the most exciting wonders. And a re-birth would be impossible for it.

The Jewish liturgy celebrates the beginning of each month with the מוֹסֵף רֹאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ *Mûsāf Rô's ḥōdeš*. In the texts of that liturgy the Month-head is described as a time of atonement, purification, redemption.

The age of the Month-heads You gave to Your people, as a time of expiation for all generations, through the pleasing sacrifices that were presented to You, and scapegoats that were sacrificed in order to obtain Your pardon: they were a reminder for all the people of the nation, a reminder that saved them from the enemy's hands. (...)

Our God and God of our fathers, let the new month happily bring us happiness and blessing, gladness, joy, salvation and consolation, nourishment and wealth, remission of sins and forgiveness of faults, commitment to good deeds and to the study of the Torah; You predestined Israel to be Your people among the nations, and You gave it the law of the Month-heads:

*May You be blessed, O Eternal, who sanctify Israel and the Month-heads.
(...)
We pay You homage,
because You are the Eternal, Our God, God of our fathers;
we thank You for the life that you are granting us, but which is in Your hand indeed;
we thank You for the soul that You preserve in us, but which is in Your power;
we thank You for the miracles You perform every day
and for the wonderful charity that we receive from You all the time.
In the evening, in the morning and at midday noon we thank You for all that,
good God, whose clemency is everlasting;
clement God, whose mercy is infinite;
we always confided in You.
You, the Eternal, our God, never disappointed us;
You never deserted us,
You never turned us down. (...)
For all these things,
may You be blessed in eternity and may Your name be exalted, our King,
may all the living creatures pay You homage,
giving praise to Your good name in all sincerity.
May You be blessed, O Eternal,
whose name is good and to whom it is good to pay homage.*

This is a time of the **תְּשׁוּבָה** *t'sûbâh*, when one has to convert himself; the time is ripe for going back to God.

This is the monthly time of *t'sûbâh*, as the moon recalls each man and woman to be born once again, to renew all of his or her ways.

The New Moon prompts the pious Israelite to change.

The New Moon is a proof that even when the faithful flies away from God, he can and must look for Him once again and join the rays of His light once again.

Of course we are not speaking of astrology or witchcraft, or of pagan or esoteric rites: I think it is important to stress that this, to Israel, has become a commandment, a **מִשְׁוָה** *mişwâh*.

The New Moon derived from archaic rites. In the primitive societies, where the natural phenomena in general and the lunar cycle in particular were very important, men were scared when the moon disappeared, fearing that it would never come back, and were happy when the moon became visible once again.

This rite became a commandment, a legal statement made by the rabbinical tribunal, the *Bêt Dîn* which, basing its decision on two witnesses, proclaimed the Day of the New Moon, the *Rô'š hōdeš*, the Month-head, the day on which the new crescent moon appeared. At the time of the

Second Temple, that is, in Jesus' times, the priests used to send out two observers who had to watch for the new moon to appear, then they had to go back and report to the Sanhedrin, which proclaimed that the following day was a festival.

In our own times, in spite of the fixed calendar, the proclamation of the ראש חודש *Rô'š hōdeš* takes place in the synagogue on the Sabbath preceding the beginning of the month: that Sabbath is called שַׁבַּת מְבָרָכִים *Šabbāt meḇārē kīm, Šabbāt* of the Blessing (of the new month).

As you can see, it is not an ancestral rite or a lapse into astrology, but rather a commitment, a response to God's command.

To sum up, God shows the light of the moon, but men have to fix the beginning of the months accordingly. Every gift from God turns into a commitment for man.

In the Jewish liturgy, at the beginning of each lunar month, the Blessing of the Moon, בְּרַכָּה הַלְבָנָה *b'ṛākāh hall'ḇānāh*, is recited, preceded by Psalm 148 and followed by Psalms 121 (120) and 150.

It is recited standing, according to the teaching of Rabbi Yishma'el: "If the sons of Israel deserved to be admitted to their Father in the heavens once in a month, that would suffice". He said to Abayie: "This is the reason why we must stand when we recite prayers."

Blessed are You, O Eternal, our God, king of the universe, who by His utterance created the firmament, and by a breath of His mouth all their multitude. He established a law for them and a period of time so that they would not change their role, exalted and happy to do their Creator's will, who acts in truth and in whose deeds is truth. And to the moon He told to renew itself, crown of honour for the Jews, whose destiny is to be renewed like the moon, and they will honour their Creator for the glory of His kingdom.

Blessed are You, O Eternal, who renew the months.

May it be a good omen for us and for Israel in its entirety.

Blessed is He who formed you,

He who made you,

He who established you,

He who created you.

This command precedes the exodus from Egypt. It is a command that precedes the birth of Israel as a nation.

It is a message of hope, growth. It is the message of an encounter with God, and encounter which is permanent but, at the same time, must be continually renewed. For a people who is forming itself, there is nothing more important than being aware that it can change and renew itself, each member as an individual, and all the people together as a community.

It is not enough for the moon to be in conjunction with the sun. The spirit of Israel must be one with the spirit of its God. Here the importance of the New Moon, of mō'āḏīm, of dates, of special days, is announced! What are the mō'āḏīm? They are the encounters, as the Hebrew term etymologically reveals, the meetings, the conjunctions of Israel with God. Consequently, the meaning of that first mišwāh, of that first sign, becomes evident as an annunciation of the peculiar lifestyle of the Lord's people. That first mišwāh opens the way to the understanding of all the others: there are some laws in the sky, laws which are regular and wonderful, established by God in the cosmos. However, those laws in the sky are hints, signs and models of the laws on the earth. As there are heavenly bodies which conform themselves to God's will, on the earth there are men who – through laws both divine and human – have to find out about God's will, be one with God once again, raise the earth to heaven in the harmony of Creation and moral will.

Israel must be the first to acknowledge those laws, and its people must find out on which days they may be reconciled with God. Israel, that is about to start its life as a people, must be the

first to learn about the secret meaning of life; as the stars renew life by their cycle, thus paying an implicit homage to their Creator, so by its laws Israel must learn to renew the meaning of its life, it must be one with God's will, it must learn to understand the eternal renewing of the human spirit, which becomes pure and holy by staying close to God, the Model of all purity and holiness.

Rav Riccardo Pacifici

THE GOOD SEASON

The sons of Israel had to mark this month as the first one, and had to count the following months consequently, up to the twelfth month. This guaranteed the memory of the event, of God's extraordinary deeds. In fact, by mentioning the month, the miracle which happened in that particular month comes to mind.

This month is the first one because it reminds of God's redemption for His people.

This commandment stresses the fact that the People of Israel's mind is focussed on the Exodus experience. In the same way as the days of the week have no names but 'first', 'second', 'third' and so on, so that the Sabbath may be pre-eminent, the names of the months are simply a reference to the month of the miracles and redemption, to the whole Exodus experience on which the whole faith in God is based.

To establish a calendar is a very important step on the path to freedom. A slave is not the master of his own time. When God creates a calendar, I am implicitly affirming that time is under my control: my days of rest, my festivals, my working days and solemn times are all under my control.

Rahmanides (Ramban) 1194-1270 AD

To calculate time, to number the months starting from Exodus...

It is the first of all the months, the first season of all seasons, the first year of all years, because it is God's command: *'This month must be the first of all the months for you.*

That month, that time, is the measure of any other time: in that month, in the events occurring during that month, God created the world; and in that month the Exodus and Israel's Passover took place.

That month is the measure of all that will come afterwards as far as time is concerned. All that will take place in the future will be a paschal event, from slavery to freedom, from idolatry to being at God's service, from death to life, from being scattered to being God's people.

Thus the first month of all months, the first season of all seasons, the first year of all years is a sign of the liberation of all creation from slavery to nothingness, to darkness, to chaos, to walk in all freedom towards existence and time.

B^ere'sith, In the Beginning: this is the phrase Genesis starts with, and with it, all the Scriptures, the world, history, the work of salvation.

Both the Jewish and the Christian traditions agree that the time God created the world in, the first time that marked any other time, was spring, the time when everything is renewed, and all comes to life.

Dante remembered this while, fleeing from the wild beasts in the dark wood, he started to hope in salvation, as he realized that the stars were in the same position as they were at Creation, that is, in the good season, spring:

*The time was the beginning of the morning,
and the sun was rising together with those stars
which were with it when divine love*

*moved all those beautiful things for the first time.
So that the reason why I could hope
to get rid of that wild beast
was the time of day and the good season.
Hell I, 37ff*

God, who is merciful, did not entrust the first shoots of blossoming life to the droughts of summer or to the ice of winter. He entrusted them instead to a warm season that could make them grow and mature.

Spring is the season of mercy, the season in which everything that is about to sprout can have a future and may be accompanied in its growth and maturation by the mildness of the season.

We can interpret in the same way this passage too: This month must be the first of all the months for you, even though it has to do with time, because it referred to the Lord's Passover which was celebrated at the beginning of spring. Then, in the first of all months God created the earth and the sky, given that it was convenient for the world to begin when the spring climate was favourable to all creatures. (...)

Even though it would have been easy for God to command and the earth would have compulsorily obeyed, whatever the season, and it would have produced fruit even amidst the ice and the snow of winter, warmed by the divine will, it was part of the divine plan neither to let the fields still covered in ice blossom nor to mix deadly hoar-frost and flowers.

To highlight the fact that at Creation it was spring, the Scripture says: This month must be the first of all the months for you, the first month of your year, calling springtime 'the first month'.

It was right that the beginning of the year coincided with the beginning of reproduction and that reproduction itself was favoured by a warm climate. In fact, the shoots would survive neither the torment of harsh cold nor the violence of a scorching hot weather.

St Ambrose of Milan, 'Creation', I, 4

And the good season is the season of the Exodus, the time of the Passover, of the Passover of those times and of the Passover inaugurated by the Lord Jesus, the ultimate and definitive one.

At the same time we can highlight, given that it is relevant, that that generation and those practices were started right at the time prescribed by the Law for passing from generation to regeneration.

*In fact, it was spring when the sons of Israel left Egypt,
and crossed the sea,*

baptised in the cloud and in the sea, as the Apostle said,

and at that time every year the Passover of our Lord Jesus Christ is celebrated,

that is, the passage of souls from vices to virtues,

from the passions of the flesh to grace and to sobriety of the spirit,

from the leaven of matter and from wickedness to truth and sincerity.

Therefore, to those who have been renewed, we say: This month must be the first of all the months for you, the first month of your year.

Those who receive the cleansing water of baptism definitely renounce the prince of this world, whose symbol is Pharaoh, saying: 'I renounce you, devil; your evil deeds and your dominion'. Now they will not be at his service any longer; neither will they be at the service of the earthly passions of this body of ours, nor of a perverted intelligence given that, after letting malice drown as if it were lead, they will be defended by good deeds both on their right and their left sides, and they will try as hard as they can not to be overcome by the stormy waves of this world.

St Ambrose of Milan, 'Creation', I, 4

CHRÓNOS AND KAIRÓS

The Greek word for *time* is *chrónos*.

Chrónos was a Greek god, Zeus' father. Someone prophesied to him that one of his sons would dethrone him. Then, every year, he used to eat his sons so that the prophecy would not come true. Zeus managed to escape death thanks to a trick by his mother Rea. Once he was a grown up, he defeated his father *Chrónos* and compelled him to vomit all the sons he had eaten.

This myth gives us an idea of what time is in our view.

Chrónos is a time made up of seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, seasons, years, it is what marks the flow of life towards its end, the 'place' where we are confronted with finitude, with limits, all the time.

Time eats up our lives; time flows and in the end it kills us, it robs us of years, of youth, of strength, it leads us to death.

We are continuously subjected to the injustice of being deprived of life, we have to take into account death all the time.

We live a life that is being taken away from us, unfairly taken away from us.

To live our life in *chrónos* means to feed continuously on what is missing, running out of wine. (cf Jn 2,3)

There are only five loaves and two fish for five thousand people, without counting women and children, (cf Mk 6,38)

the reed is crushed and the wick is faltering, (cf Mt 12,20)

the net is empty. (cf Jn 21,3)

It is like living in the desert, where there is no way one can find something to eat, there is nobody who proclaims the Word, there is no time to listen to that Word.

So, as He stepped ashore He saw a large crowd; and He took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and He set Himself to teach them at some length.
Mk 6,34

We lack everything and we lie in wait... we want to possess, we want to grab something.

To live in *chrónos* means to live in fear, fearing that all the things we love, we own, our own life itself may be taken away from us.

Jesus came in the fullness of time,
Jesus Himself *is* the fullness of time:

The time is fulfilled. (Mk 1,15)

This is the very first thing that He says:
the *chrónos* is over, life in this world is over.

Christ filled each and every instant of life, each and every minute, each and every moment, with Himself.

Consequently, we can have access to Him each and every instant of our lives: He has definitively filled it to the brim.

The *chrónos* is harmless by now.

The *chrónos* is no longer the time during which we feed on nothingness, emptiness, death, limits, possessions, but it becomes the time when we can pick up the scraps left over, (cf Jn 6,12) the time when the fish is already cooking on the charcoal fire and we can add the fish that we have just caught, (cf Jn 21,9-10) the time of the water quenching one's thirst for ever, (cf Jn 4,14) the time of bread that satisfies for eternal life, (cf Jn 6,35) the time of good and abundant wine, (cf Jn 2,10) the time of joy that no one shall take from us, (cf Jn 16,22) the time of the Spirit given without reserve. (cf Jn 3,34)

Time has become *kairós*.

Time is no longer the place of our death, but the place where we can experience that Love can reach us, and that we can be given existence by Love for ever.

It is no longer the place where we must try to survive but rather the place of the earth from which we can be enriched by Heaven, where we can experience Heaven.

In it we look for and we do find not what we lack and is missing but rather what is given back to us; in it we look for the new form of love which is peculiar to the life that is coming to welcome us for ever.

We have all the time necessary for us to listen to the Word of God that is addressing us within the time of our lives: the Eternal Word fills as a flood the empty talks of our days. He saves us within the time of our lives, and time is no longer the time in which we are lost and die but the time in which we are found, saved, raised to life over and over again by Him. It is no longer night, but the time of the light without setting.

The light of this world is passing away, but we live in Christ who is the *kairós*, the sun without setting. In Him we have all the time to do God's will, given that He has filled everything with it, and we can find it everywhere. This is the Christian time, one long day.

We have already died, our days are over, the *chrónos* is over, we have died, but the life we have is hidden with Christ in God. (cf Col 3:3) There are no longer days, minutes to be lived in fear, in death, but there is only one day without setting which is Christ.

This is the reason why in history we bemoan its violence,

but at the same time we can praise, sing to the Lord because He is good,
eternal is His mercy.

Because if in the time of our own history we can experience death or violence, there is still
salvation in that history, and that salvation must be sung.

Now we feed on the Light without setting.

And that Light is truer than my death and my darkness;
that life is truer than my fragility,
that salvation is truer than my sin,
grace is more abundant than my wickedness.

This month will the first of all months for you:
we must orientate the time of life, of *chrónos*, to the time of salvation
and the time of our life must fit in with the rhythm of the time of salvation.

It is the time of Pentecost.

It is the time of the Exaltation of the Cross.

It is the time of the opening up of the Church to the Gentiles.

It is the time of Christ's resurrection.

It is the time of Easter.

From those events I must let myself be ordered,
from those events I must let myself be conducted,
from those events I must let myself be given a name.

Time has permanently become the place
where we can experience that Love can reach us,
and that we can be given existence by Love for ever.

The *kairós* compels us to come to terms with life,
to make decisions about ourselves, our family, our Church, the world,
taking into account first a life which can no longer die,
and therefore being builders,
keeping on growing, learning,
giving away things as gifts, meeting,
generating, starting over and over again,
spending all our energies
because this is the *kairós*,
the time in which we can live to the full
and in which to live means to love.

One long day to be lived,
a day without setting,
a day that we must sing about.

DIRECTIONS FOR PRAYER

I do not add anything else to this. I recommend that you enjoy this Lectio first, then you can start putting it into practice.

I suggest that for a second you may go back to childhood, and go up on a hill and watch for the slender new crescent moon. While contemplating that wonderful view, do ask God that He may renew you once again, and repeat in your heart the first commandment:

'This month must be the first of all the months for you...'

Please focus, both in your meditation and in your practical actions, on the main three ideas of this Lectio:

- 1) The renewal of time as a renewal of our encounters with God: we must renew everything, the places, the situations, the schedules of the time spent with Him.
- 2) The Exodus as the basis of living in time: we must plan and preserve our own actions in particular and our lives in general in the 'good season', that is, according to freedom. We must believe in what is sprouting and, above all, let it grow and mature within the place of those mercy and love that know how to foresee its future fulfilment. How can our fraternities live in the 'good season'? What allows the 'new' to exist and grow? Which kinds of rigidity, which droughts, which presences of death put it at risk?
- 3) The distinction between living in *chrónos* and living the *kairós*, between living according to limits or according to opportunities. I enclose a passage by Matta el Meskin (1919-2006), the spiritual father of the Monastery of St Macarius in Egypt.

Man is a history written, produced by days. That history has a great influence on his physical and psychological features. Human personality in particular is influenced by age: its richness and depth are the result also of setbacks and of the way man reacts to them.

However, another dimension is present in man, beyond time and separated from it. This dimension neither depends on physiological changes, nor is subject to psychological influences: it is nearly separated from the dust of the soil, from all that derives from it or that returns to it. This dimension is not in harmony with the passing of time, because it is other-worldly: it cannot be measured; it is subject only to God's direct intervention. It is the law of immortality, or of life eternal. When man behaves according to the temporal dimension, his conscience moves within the dimension of hours and days. He is influenced by the earth, the sky, and all that they contain; he is subject to the laws of motion and change, which inevitably lead him towards death. However, when he follows the law of immortality, he can perceive something of the infinite, of the absolute existence and of life eternal; he adheres to truth and is turned into truth himself.

To adhere to truth – and truth is God – to devote oneself to love and to life eternal, up to the point of giving away one's life and entrusting one's soul: this is true promptness to the dimension that is beyond time; consequently, this is the practice of the law of eternity, governed by God.

Here is some help on how to read the Hebrew terms, so that you may not be afraid of reading them aloud:

‘e’ is not pronounced

b is pronounced as the ‘v’ in ‘verb’

t̄ / **t̄** are pronounced as the ‘t’ in ‘ten’

ś as the ‘s’ in ‘speak’

š as ‘sh’ (*Šabbāt* is pronounced *shabbát*) in ‘ship’

ṣ as a ‘z’ [zed]

k̄ as a ‘k’

w as the ‘v’ in ‘verb’

d̄ as the ‘d’ in ‘day’

ḡ / **g** as the ‘g’ in ‘go’

ḥ as a ‘k’ (*ḥōdeš*)

All the other consonants are pronounced as the Italian ones.

Vowels are pronounced likewise, in spite of additional signs.