

March 1st, 2019

MORNING PRAYER

As pilgrims, we begin our journey to Pedro Abad. We know where we want to go, we have in our minds and hearts the desire for happiness, the destiny for which God created us.

We want to thank Him for all that we have experienced during these days, together as a Family. We want to give what we have received, placing our life and our mission in the hands of God, asking for the intercession of Saint Raphaela Mary, joining our prayers to hers and to those of many Handmaids who, like her, wanted to live, witness and give to the world "the style of Jesus. "

On the day we celebrate Saint Raphaela Mary's LIFE, we are going to visit her house, her roots; breathe the family atmosphere, touch their childhood and adolescence, receive the inspiration of her dedication and mission; we are going to see and hear, from all the corners that remind us of her and her sister, Mother Pilar, our Foundresses.

Let us take some time for silence, becoming aware of the presence of the Lord in our pilgrimage. It was He who called us here... He wants to come with us, with each one of us. He wants to hear our wishes, but He also wants to challenge us MORE. Let us keep in mind the ACI Family of our countries and give the Lord our needs and desires...

"My story is written in your mind" (E.N.36), nobody knows it but You. How long have we known each other, Lord? What a privilege to be able to say forever! You have always been part of my story. Your Presence was as natural in my childhood as the hot sun and the blue sky of my village."

(Angeles Mera aci – I want to write my story only in the mind of the Lord)

Let us be led by the Lord in this journey to the roots. May the Holy Spirit take us to Pedro Abad and make us see the path ...

Silence

Anyone in Pedro Abad today knows the details of the life of Raphaela Mary, the child born on March 1st, 1850. Her house, the Porras' house, stands on the most important street of the town (...) That house was also well known in 1850; well-known, familiar. It was the same building which we see today, solid, plain, almost austere in its severity had not been softened by the presence of flowers (...) It was a joy to go to that house on the bright days of spring and summer. A cosy, welcoming, familiar world could be glimpsed through the iron gate between the entrance and the interior of the house (...)

In 1850 the Porras' house was not only the largest and richest in the town. The head of the Porras family was almost the owner and natural lord of the land and people of Pedro Abad at a time when those rather patriarchal families, like local rulers, seemed natural in such a tiny corner of the world. The family house was as simple as its country surroundings, but it was the centre of a modest court. Don Ildefonso, Raphaela Mary's father was the mayor of the town until his death, and he fulfilled his duties with the rectitude and sense of duty which he was to bequeath to his children.

Doña Raphaela, the mother, was a great lady in that little corner of Andalucia. She possessed all the virtues of her class, partly aristocratic, partly bourgeois, which certain tales of the era recall today: she was friendly with staff without being hearty, she was hard-working and active, loved by her husband and children, charitable to the poor..."

(Inmaculada Yáñez aci – Foundations for a building)



Silence

"I remember when I went with my mother and my sister Dolores to Your hermitage, the hermitage of Santo Cristo on the small hill of Pedro Abad. There you were with arms and heart open. My mother told us that you died like this to embrace everyone and that they pierced your heart to show that you gave us all of Your Blood, all of Your life and love. Then, I did not understand very well the meaning of her words. I understood it later. It was easy to understand that you *"loved me like the apple of your eye"*. With how much love you always surrounded me, Lord! I was the youngest of my brothers and sisters, the truth is that everyone spoiled me, even though Dolores, as she was older than me, wanted always to be the boss in our games. From this I learned to give in and to do what she wanted.

Remembering my childhood, I have to tell you that I almost do not remember my father. I was four years old when he died, but the servants at home said he was a very good man, and that he died because he stayed in Pedro Abad to help those affected by the cholera, although we could have gone somewhere else to escape the epidemic in which many died in the village. I always heard good things about him. People said that, even if he had to put some criminal in jail, because he was the mayor of Pedro Abad, he would make sure that the man would not get cold and that he would have a good meal. Having a father like him helped me understand that God the Father is good and cares for everyone, and that You loved us so much that You gave your life for us even though we were sinners.

I have many good memories of my mother. I remember when we left Pedro Abad, and we were going to Córdoba. My uncles, aunts and cousins lived there, and I had a lot of fun with them. I liked to visit You with my mother in the many churches in Cordoba, but where I went more often was to the church of San Juan de los Caballeros. We were friends, Lord, and friends like to talk and visit each other. That is why when I passed by a church I felt the desire to visit You."

(Angeles Mera aci – I want to write my story only in the mind of the Lord)

Silence

Reading from the Gospel of S. Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail." "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

God approaches us in the reality in which we are, with what we are and what we have... He does not impose Himself, but He has a dream for each one... He comes to meet our deepest desires and dreams...

In silence, let our hearts be open to what God wants to reveal to us. May silence help us to focus on what we are going to experience, so that we can understand the present moment, so that we can strengthen ourselves as a Christian family that wishes to serve God, trusting that what He asks us is the way of salvation for each one and for the world.

Silence – Personal prayer

