What do I want to pass on?

Beloved person,

There is a Roman story written more than two thousand years ago about the hero Aeneas. He flees the burning city of Troy together with his elderly father and his young son. He carries his father on his shoulders, and his son walks hand in hand with him. Aeneas, as it were, carries his past with him and passes it on to the future.

From a young age, we are shaped by stories, values, beliefs, and traditions. This desire to pass them on is also deeply rooted in our Apostolic culture. Our foundation statement states that we wish to cherish the light of love and pass it on from generation to generation.

People can consciously choose what they want to pass on. But at least as often, this happens unnoticed. The expression "the apple does not fall far from the tree" refers not only to someone's appearance, but also to character or behaviour. This can be very positive and provide a sense of connection and recognition. We laugh at certain family traits that keep recurring. But who does not know the thought: *"Later on, I'm really going to do this differently than my father or mother"?* Only to discover that you have also adopted a thing or two from their character traits and behaviours.

In this way, patterns within a family or community can unconsciously be passed on to subsequent generations. This happens not only through what is spoken, but also through what remains unsaid. Unwritten rules emerge that, often without us realising it, influence life today and developments in the future.

At the same time, there are things we specifically hope will be preserved. Certain values, customs, or stories have gained great significance over time. We are talking about tradition here. Tradition also requires the art of continually noticing what is needed in the present time. Which patterns and habits are still helpful? Tradition is a responsibility we wish to consciously take upon ourselves. We often find ourselves setting an example for those we meet. That is why our attitude matters. We have more influence on what we pass onto others than we sometimes think.

Take a moment to reflect
at the time it started for you,
at people in the past
who did what they did,
causing what could happen to happen[1]

When it comes to the example we received ourselves, hopefully people around us showed how it *can* be done, not how it must be done. Especially when it comes to passing on love. That can be very contagious! And how wonderful it is to see reflected in others what you have exemplified.

Perhaps that is why passing on love begins with a question to ourselves: which values, beliefs, and habits do I want to preserve? And what is allowed to end with me? Passing on love or other values can also mean that you have to let go. By speaking where silence was previously maintained. By making room for vulnerability.

If we dare to look at our traditions in this way, then passing on the light of love does not mean that forms or customs remain unchanged, but that the source of love remains alive. This requires a continuous search for the space to do things differently than they once were. It does not have to look exactly as what we were used to. We carry the past with us, and at the same time, we decide for ourselves what and how we pass it on. That is a tradition we have been part of for a very long time. From that, we draw confidence for the future. And we want to continue committing ourselves to that. Do you as well?

With a warm-hearted greeting,
sr Jill Eekhart and br Martien Hoendermis

[1] Youth choir, song 19: *Take a moment to reflect:* (freely translated)