



## End-of-Year Reflection

# Zahorí Manifesto

## Or the Art of Discovering Wells of Living Water

Papers no. 34. September 2025

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There is a group of people known as the *Zahorís*<sup>1</sup> who possess the ability to locate underground streams and wells. They do this by using their bodies and rudimentary instruments, such as wooden rods, pendulums, or small sticks. When these tools move in a specific way, they indicate the presence of water, its depth, and its volume. Skeptics refer to this activity as pseudoscience, but this does not stop the *Zahorís* from continuing the practice. Rather than debating the scientific validity of the practice, we will use it as a metaphor to interpret our current times.

### “A River of Misery...”

Having concluded the year 2025, we find it difficult to evaluate if it has been better or worse than those before. At first

glance, the predominant feeling is that it has been worse. Numerous objective indicators cause concern, and 2025 has only deepened an already uncertain trend. The fragile consensus on issues vital to human survival, seems to be shattered. The few advances made in reducing emissions to halt climate change are being rolled back by a growing wave of denialism—a tide that the recent COP30 in Brazil was unable to stem. Existing treaties on arms control and the reduction of arsenals have become obsolete in the face of a global push to increase military spending. At the same time, the consensus regarding the condemnation of genocide has been questioned or nuanced, even as thousands continue to die in Gaza, Sudan, Nigeria, and Mali amidst the near-total passivity of the international community.

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The international organizations that once championed multilateral governance have been discredited. In fact, democracy itself has been questioned with many across the globe embracing authoritarianism. Fundamental rights, such as the right to seek asylum, are no longer celebrated but are instead subordinated to openly racist and xenophobic policies. We could go on. Indeed, the policies of the second Trump administration are the most visible symptom of a deep, pervasive uneasiness that has reached the world, particularly European and Western societies.

Despite this, it is important to recognize that our end-year review also has a personal dimension. Maybe this year we have lost a loved one, experienced important changes in health, or celebrated the birth of a child or grandchild. Some have begun new careers, others will end one. Some have found work, while others have lost it. This personal perspective is what roots us in reality. Every life is important, and each life counts. We often forget this in the face of a collective mood induced by external interests.

Years ago, combining both perspectives, Pope Francis alerted us in a homily to a “river of misery fed by sin, and rising”, to which is opposed “an ocean of mercy that inundates our world”. Amidst current events, we can sometimes barely see it; we may not even intuit the presence of a sea or a small lake. It is for this reason that we need the *Zahorís*.

## Where Do We Look?

We offer a few routes to guide our steps. Equipped with our rods or pendulums,

we must keep moving, never resigning ourselves to a future written by those who repeat the mantra: “There is no alternative.” For some, the routes will be simple and unconvincing. But for the *Zahorí* and his pendulum, the slightest movement can reveal an immense stream of living water.

## *The Thin Thread of Tradition*

Looking at the past when discussing the present and the future seems like escapism. While that is a real temptation, we are instead invited to explore the “thin thread of tradition.” This helps us not only to put current problems into perspective but also to find words, thoughts, and testimonies that inspire the human soul. Far from nostalgia, and maintaining a critical eye, we find within traditional words that still resonate loudly: words about idolatry, how we treat our brothers and sisters, good and evil, and humility and pride. This was the intuition of our missed José I. González Faus when he compiled in *Vicarios de Cristo: Los Pobres*, gathering Church traditions that speak out against the “cult of money” and the inequality it spawns. In the sermons of St. John Chrysostom, for example, we find a fountain that continues to flow because it connects us to the deepest struggles of the human soul and the unquenchable need for commitment against idolatry.

Similarly, at Cristianisme i Justícia, we have spent recent months “celebrating our roots,” marking forty years since the Decree 4 of the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus that promulgated that justice is an absolute

requirement for the service of faith. This seems obvious if we look at the world through the eyes of the Gospel, but it bears constant remembering and action.

So, the *Zahoris* have a space within the thread of their tradition that dictates where to place the pendulum.

### *The Well of Celebration*

Another vast area for the *Zahorí* to explore is that of the party and celebration. These rituals mark the passages of personal and communal life, bringing quality to our time and breaking the alienating linearity that tends to homogenize existence. Celebrations foster joy and allow us to rediscover personal and communal dimensions like gratitude and shared commitment—values that disrupt the patterns of consumption and pleasure-as-business. Today, every celebration risks being assimilated by the market, yet, when lived freely, they contain a well of living water.

Tied in with the tradition, the Church guards a treasure to offer through celebration: the Eucharist. In it, we find the core of Christian life: forgiveness, reconciliation, hearing the Word, receiving communion and peace. We must rescue it from one-sided interpretations that reduce it to mere ritual or Law, returning it to its original context: the encounter of Jesus with the followers he loved “until the end.” In the Eucharist, we explore—always imperfectly—the limits of love and the self-giving of which humans are capable. We do this by repeating the gestures of Someone who walked this road before us and followed it all the way to the Cross.

### *The Fountain of Art and Culture*

Our dear Jorge Pico, actor and theater director, once noted in *Cultural Democracy* (CJ Booklet #192) that “there is emotion when looking at something beautiful that can be lived as the announcement of a better world. If it is true that in the present there exists an art that is characterized by its usefulness in manipulation, what interests us is the transformational function that art can have.” Art has not escaped utilitarianism or market dynamics, but we are seeing a renewed intent to recover the “emotion of beauty” through artistic experiences that seek spirituality. It just can be another marketing strategy, but we are seeing a growing exhaustion with empty entertainment in all forms of art (music, literature, cinema, theater, etc.) and a shift toward experimentation tied to fundamental themes: death, limitation, and the infinite.

These manifestations cannot be belittled or ignored. Perhaps they are the clamor of a spirit that refuses to be reduced to pure psychology and seeks to open windows to a wind that blows to change everything. The sensible *Zahorí* rests his wooden rod upon each of these manifestations, hoping to strike a spring of clear, inspirational water for pilgrims who search for sense.

### *The Underground Waters of Everyday Life*

Nevertheless, the most expansive territory for the *Zahorí* is life itself. Streams of solidarity emerge spontaneously wherever people dedicate their time to caring for others—defending rights to dignified

work, housing, healthcare, and education. These are the people who care for the sick, push wheelchairs, or walk their grandchildren to school. They are the ones who work with a sense of vocation, seeking no compensation other than the satisfaction of doing what is right. They are people who welcome others to their homes, generous people who with their contributions, enable others to do the same thing.

These are underground streams, are rarely captured by the media, viral tweets, or influencers. Yet, they are there. The pendulum of the *Zahori* spins, pointing to these abundant, hidden waters. Suddenly, that water emerges, fills wells, and forms lakes. Because this water of daily life soaks entirely invisible reality that needs to be made more visible every day.

## Conclusion

One might say that *Zahorí Manifesto* (Papeles 279) is too poetic for such a difficult time. However, in our blogs, booklets, and courses, we do not seek to deny reality; rather, we seek to “take responsibility for it” by welcoming those victimized by this world. We want to visualize these hidden streams of living water because there is a perverse interest in keeping them hidden. We know that by killing hope, they kill our souls, making us cowardly, skeptical, and especially egotistical and dangerous beasts.

St. John of the Cross, a *Zahorí* mystic, marks the road for us: “That living fount that I desire / I see in this bread of life / although it is night.” In this new year, with the help of good *Zahorís*, we will find the Fountain that allows us to live lives full of meaning.

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1. Zahorí: a dowser, someone who practices dowsing—a traditional method used to find underground water without using scientific equipment.