**Leading from the Margins:**

**Being Young, Woman, and Free in the Church and the World**

**A relection by Guilia Longo**

To be young and a woman in humanitarian and Church settings is still, today, a challenge.

You’re not asked to shape, but to follow.

Not to decide, but to support.

If you show emotion, you’re weak.

If you speak clearly, you’re too intense.

They say you’re strong — but don’t make room for you.

They say you’re promising — but keep you in waiting.

And yet I stayed. I chose to stay. To be there.

To lead not through control, but through presence.

Like Mary of Bethany, who broke the alabaster jar not to please, but to proclaim a truth beyond words.

Like the Samaritan woman at the well, who became a bearer of Good News even though no one had appointed her.

And like Mary Magdalene, the apostle to the apostles, who announced the Resurrection from outside the center.

I found strength in other women inside and outside the Church.

I experienced sisterhood not only as solidarity, but as a shared struggle.

And I was lucky enough to meet men who knew how to step back,

to make space instead of taking it.

My faith has never been a static framework. It’s been a living well.

I’ve walked, prayed, struggled, and discerned.

During the Synod on Young People, I realized my voice was not only personal — it could be ecclesial.

That leadership can be different: not vertical, not title-driven, but relationship-based.

Leading from the margins means believing that the margins are not a punishment.

They are sacred ground.

The edge is where life is more fragile — and truth more honest.

The edge is where no one rules — and community becomes real.

To be a young woman in a position of responsibility today means:

to build trust, to hold uncertainty,

to stand without guarantees,

and to stay faithful to what you believe is right — even when it shakes you.

I don’t know exactly what will be next.

But I do know what I will carry with me:

the desire that every young woman who enters the Church or the humanitarian field

does not have to justify her presence,

but can freely express her voice.

Not because she’s perfect or better,

but because she’s true.

My hope is that Caritas — in every country, every diocese, every team —

never forgets that the margins are a resource.

That the future is built by listening even to those who don’t yet have titles, but do have vision.

And that the strongest leadership often begins in silence,

on the edges, where life begins again.