



"THIS IS THE VICTORY THAT CONQUERS
THE WORLD, OUR FAITH"

**EXERCISES OF THE FRATERNITY
OF COMMUNION AND LIBERATION**



RIMINI 2008

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On the cover: *Peter saved from the waters* (detail), mosaic. Monreale, Sicily. Cathedral

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Vatican City, April 22, 2008

Reverend Fr. Julián Carrón
President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation

On the occasion of the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation on the theme, “This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith,” the Sovereign Pontiff addresses his affectionate good wishes to the participants, and, as he hopes that this important encounter may evoke renewed faithfulness to Christ, our one hope, and fervent evangelical witness, he invokes bountiful effusions of celestial light on you and sends you, the responsables of the Fraternity, and all those gathered his special apostolic blessing.

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State of His Holiness

Friday evening, April 25

During the entrance and exit:

Franz Schubert: Symphony n. 8 in G minor, D 759 “Unfinished”

Carlos Kleiber – Wiener Philharmoniker

“Spirto Gentil” n. 2, Deutsche Grammophon

■ INTRODUCTION

Julián Carrón. Each of us arrives here expecting something, something we truly need and cannot give ourselves, but can only receive. Thus the most reasonable thing is to pray for it, to beg the Only One who can give it to us: the Holy Spirit.

Come Holy Spirit

We begin our encounter watching, together with all those joined by satellite hook up throughout the world, the most powerful work that the Mystery has accomplished in our midst this year.

It happened last February 24, in Brazil, in the Cathedral of São Paulo and the adjacent square, where before fifty thousand people and the Cardinal of São Paulo, His Eminence Odilo Scherer, our friends Cleuza and Marcos Zerbini, together with their friends of the Landless Workers (*Associação dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra*), confessed before all their desire to belong to our history, because they said, “Encountering Communion and Liberation, we have encountered everything we had needed to encounter.”

Viewing of the video

[transcript]

Marcos Zerbini. *Sometimes, someone says to us, “Thank you for everything you’re doing for us,” “thank you for the opportunity you give us to attend university and to have a house.” But you don’t know that we are the ones who should thank you, because while we’ve helped you to have a university, to have a house, you are the ones who have helped us find something much greater, because you are the road of our encounter with Jesus Christ. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart!*

Cleuza Ramos. *People! What a joy to be here today! I thought it would've been different, that it would be sunny. But God wanted it this way, that it would rain, to increase our joy on such an important day. I think that today represents the twenty years of suffering we've faced to build the Association. Nothing more. The rain falling today is the tears I've cried to build this Association that today fills me with pride, for the homes, the university. What a moment! We've been here since noon under the rain, but with our hearts full of joy.*

Carrón, we... a few years ago, you had a movement, New Earth. When you met Fr. Giussani, you entrusted your movement to him, because you didn't need to seek any further; everything you needed to find, you had already found. And today we're about to repeat your gesture. With the same courage with which you consigned your movement, I consign into your hands my movement, because I don't need to search for anything else; everything I needed to seek, I've already encountered. I have the book of the Association here, which has yet to be launched, telling about the twenty years of our Movement. So we want to consign to you this book on the twenty years of the building of the Association. The drops of rain falling today are the tears with which each page of this book was written: this is why it rained today.

Carrón, we want to follow you once again. History is repeating itself once again: you generated this people because you were generated. The Association has worked a lifetime: it's our history. But I want to follow you, all your steps, your thoughts, your words; I want to follow you. Because, more than homes, more than a university, this people needs joy and hope. And you are our hope. I want to follow you, Carrón.

I want to thank you for this day, a historic day for the Association. All the history we've lived through, and that of the future, I want to live together with you, Carrón. May God illuminate your life, your steps, for we travel together this journey that God has shown us.

Carrón, I'm very moved. We wanted the celebration to happen in the square: there were photos, and the big hot air balloon with words on it ready to take off. But God arranged things differently. This gathering, this joy... I want to tell you that I'm very happy, that my heart is full of cheer, and that I'm crying, not out of sadness, but for joy. I wanted this encounter to take place in the square with the fifty thousand people who are there outside, because I wanted fifty thousand people to witness to this moment. But God didn't want it so, and we'll have many other occasions to witness to it together. Thank you for being here! I'm grateful to you for everything: for the affection, for the people of the Move-

ment who welcomed me so well, the friends we've encountered, Fr. Filippo, Fr. Douglas, Fr. Vando, everyone: it's difficult to remember all their names, I'm afraid of forgetting someone, all those whom we've encountered on this journey. May God bless each of you.

And today there aren't two roads: there's only one. Today, New Earth and the Landless Workers unite with the Movement of Communion and Liberation. Thank you, Carrón!



Carrón. I wanted to start by watching together what we've just seen, before saying a word, as the sign of a method entirely directed to giving precedence to what Christ does in our midst, to what we were talking about this summer, the "before" of any move of ours.¹

We desire nothing more than following what He does in our midst. Therefore what happened in Brazil is the first gift that the Lord gives us in these Exercises, entitled, "This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith."² What we have seen is a gift to respond to the greatest urgency among us: faith, faith in Jesus Christ alive, present here and now.

But, speaking of faith, it's almost impossible not to feel the charge of the question Christ asks: "But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"³ This question might seem a bit exaggerated at the beginning of an encounter like ours, one can say it to himself, but it doesn't seem exaggerated at all to me, given the difficulty we've all had many times in acknowledging the Mystery as real in our midst. We've seen it on many occasions doing School of Community on faith:⁴ not unoften we perceive the Mystery as abstract. I've heard it all: self-convincing, deduction, projection.... It's not that this question doesn't concern us. It concerns us, and how! As soon as there's some itinerary to accomplish with reason, the existence of the Mystery for us becomes the fruit of reasoning, of deduction, rather than an acknowledgment.

One person writes, "Why is it that even though I need certainty, I can never manage to trust entirely? Why does reality seem like a fraud to me? When I heard the sentence it seems Fr. Giussani pronounced before dying – 'Reality has never betrayed me' –, I was moved: how I too would like to be this way! I've stayed all these years for this, but for me it seems to be the contrary. Fr. Giussani was terrible with people like me. I'm immoral because I don't trust. But I don't trust because reality seems so contradictory to me, and Jesus doesn't seem like the occasion

for scandal or obstacle to what I'd like, but perhaps (I'm afraid to admit it even to myself) an illusion."

One can stay in the Movement for years and continue to feel the Mystery as abstract and Jesus as an illusion. How many times, when I speak with people, do they confess "But for me it's abstract."? We see it many times in the way we speak of the real, describe reality, what occurs, what happens to you, because in the description the Mystery isn't there, at most it's simply a sentiment or an ethical effort, not a given of reality. It's as if in the end, we were creators of what we affirm to believe, instead of witnesses, upending what the Pope said, "The Resurrection of Christ is a fact that occurred in history, of which the Apostles were witnesses and certainly not its inventors."⁵ In this we are truly modern, because in history there are many who didn't believe, many who didn't follow Christianity, but nobody, until modernity arrived, who dreamed of thinking that fundamentally God was man's creation, that He was invented. This is why we find ourselves before a cultural challenge, a challenge that regards all of us: this is why the Pope in his document after the Eucharistic Synod said, "Today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman."⁶

"Nothing can be constructed [we've read in School of Community], if not on rock, on what is certain. Without certainty nothing gets built."⁷ Herein lies the importance of the journey we have been doing in the last few years. Starting out from the heart, we have underlined that the heart isn't sentiment, but reason, which has to be constantly broadened, and that reason reaches its peak in religiosity. Therefore last year at the Fraternity Exercises we spoke precisely of religiosity as the peak of reason. This time we are trying to get all the way to the bottom, speaking of faith that blossoms like a flower – as Fr. Giussani said – at the apex of reason.⁸

I'll never cease to be amazed, because Fr. Giussani had already said this, one of the last times he preached the Exercises to the whole Fraternity. It seems he said it for today: "It's impossible to live within a general context without being influenced by it; we ourselves [us, not others, us] participate in the mentality by which God is conceived of as abstract or forgotten or even rejected. Thus, in practice, existentially, we come to deny that 'God is all in all.' Present in our restless and confused spirit is the lie of today's mentality, in which we ourselves participate," because we too "must pass through all the difficulties, the temptations, the bitter

results, maintaining the hope that is the life of life.” He insisted, “We have to *become conscious of a mentality* that, apparently exalting a religious rebirth, in reality wants to censure precisely that ‘God is all in all,’ making Him abstract, forgetting Him, or even more, rejecting Him. It’s necessary to become conscious of the reality in which we live, the ‘cultural’ moment, in the powerful sense of the term, of our journey.”⁹

So then, what’s the question? What’s the issue? Why does this happen? Be careful, because here the first shift happens. The last possible thing that would come to our mind is what Fr. Giussani says, that well before it’s a matter of doing or operating, it’s a matter of knowledge. That the Mystery becomes abstract for us or that Jesus is an illusion is a problem of knowledge, not a problem of sentiment; it’s not first of all an ethical problem.

In what does this problem of knowledge consist? He describes it in this way, “The *negation* of the fact that ‘God is all in all’ depends on an irreligiosity extraneous to the formation of the European peoples [attention!], an irreligiosity that begins, without anyone realizing it, in a detachment between God as origin and meaning of life and God as fact of thought, conceived according to the exigencies of man’s thought.”¹⁰ What we think we know about God has nothing to do with what He is, starting from experience, and this happens without anyone realizing it. If in this moment you became aware of it, you would realize that there’s nothing more concrete than the fact that an Other is making me now, and an instant later you would stop thinking that it’s abstract. But we continue repeating, “It’s abstract” even though in experience He’s acting with a power that we ourselves don’t even realize.

Why does this happen? “The substance of the question is clarified in the struggle that unfolds in the way of understanding the *relationship between reason and experience*.”¹¹ Reality, ours and all that we see, is a given, and reason – if it is true to itself, if it isn’t completely irreligious, if it isn’t disloyal with what it sees, if it doesn’t renounce its own nature, this urge to find the reasons for what lies before it – cannot end without acknowledging Him at work. We’re unreasonable because we don’t submit our reason, our way of thinking of God, of the Mystery, to what we experience.¹² This is our irreligiosity, that is, not broadening reason to the point of acknowledging the given, the real, in its arising, which is the Mystery.

An instant is enough to realize this. Listen to this beautiful dialogue between [the fictional] Peppone [the ex-partisan Communist mayor] and Don Camillo [the parish priest]: “Peppone, exasperated, went and

planted himself wide-legged in front of Don Camillo: ‘Could you possibly tell us what you want from us? Are we the ones, perhaps, who come to you?’ [Don Camillo answered]: ‘What’s that got to do with it? Even if you don’t come to church, God exists anyway, and is waiting for you.’ The Skinny One interjected, ‘Has the Reverend Father perhaps forgotten that we’re excommunicated?’ ‘That’s a question of secondary importance’ shot back Don Camillo. ‘Even if you’re excommunicated, God continues to exist and continues to wait for you. Excuse me. I’m not registered in your party, I don’t participate in the People’s House [local headquarters for the Communist Party and labor union] and I’m considered an enemy of your party. Because of these facts, could I perhaps assert that Stalin doesn’t exist?’ ‘Stalin exists, and how! And he’s lying in wait for you!’ Peppone bellowed. Don Camillo smiled: ‘I don’t doubt it a bit and I’ve never doubted it. And if I admit that Stalin exists and is waiting for me, why can’t you admit that God exists and is waiting for you? Isn’t it the same thing?’ Peppone was struck by this elementary reasoning. But the Skinny One intervened: ‘The only difference is that while nobody has seen your God, Stalin can be seen and touched. And even if I haven’t seen and touched him, you can see and touch what Stalin has created: Communism!’ Don Camillo opened his arms wide: ‘And the world where we live, me, you, and Stalin, isn’t that perhaps something you see and touch?’¹³

This simple observation would be enough to help each of us acknowledge Him so present as to be the origin of everything. But if by chance “the heavens to gaze upon”¹⁴ we sang about don’t serve the purpose, aren’t enough, the Lord unfolds right before our eyes what we just saw in São Paulo, which is like a cry, “Wake up! What abstract thing can generate what you’ve seen?”. The Lord has compassion and tenderness for each of us, so much so that He comes help us in our difficulties, bends down in front of our need and makes happen before our eyes something that helps us acknowledge Him, and one remains dumbstruck before what He does: His presence fills me with silence.

The silence isn’t because we have to be quiet, for reasons of good order. It is born of the event, and one remains speechless before what happens before our eyes. This is why we need to support each other in this silence that His presence in our midst generates during these days, offering the sacrifice that a gesture like this can’t help but generate, that the Lord may have pity on us.

HOLY MASS

FR. PINO'S HOMILY

“God opposes the proud, but bestows favor on the humble.” (1 Pt. 5:5). With what we’ve already seen and heard during this hour we can well grasp the context in which our freedom moves: to persist in this pride that is unreasonableness and irreligiosity, or to be “steadfast in faith” (in Paul’s letters this expression returns four times).

Steadfastness is not first of all our strength, our coherence, but the opening of our consciousness, of our reason before the testimony that comes to us in the same way today as it did two thousand years ago. To the name of Peter, of Silvano, of Mark, of the first person who wrote what he heard from Peter, who saw it all, to these names today thousands more are added: the first of those who departed for Brazil in 1962, those who are the protagonists and witnesses to the great miracle, like Cleuza, each of us behind Fr. Giussani and Julián.

The conclusion of Mark’s gospel tells us, “They went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs” (Mk. 16:20). This was the beginning of the Christian adventure in the world, but the way Christianity persists today, in these days here in Rimini and in the world, is exactly the same: if we’re here, it’s first of all to beg for renewed awareness of how the Lord is operating in the life of each of us and in His people.

Saturday morning, April 26

During the entrance and exit:

Franz Schubert: Sonata for arpeggione and piano, D 821

Mstislav Rostropovich, violoncello

Benjamin Britten, piano

“Spirto Gentil” n. 18, Decca (Universal)

Fr. Pino. Listening to the music of Schubert, the Arpeggione, there can't help but arise in the soul the awareness that each of us, in whatever moment of our journey we find ourselves, is made for happiness: we're not made for losing ourselves or for nothingness. But who reawakens this certainty, who reawakens this question in each day's journey? If each of us were alone, if each of us were left to our own thoughts or the fragile razor's edge of our own freedom, the impetus toward destiny would be destined to run aground. This is why the beginning of the day coincides with the chance to realize that an Other is our companion toward destiny, that Destiny itself is the companion of our life.

Looking at this young woman totally open to the initiative of the Mystery, we renew our consciousness of the greatness of our destiny.

Angelus

Lauds

Julián Carrón. We begin by reading the telegram the Holy Father has sent us. “On the occasion of the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation on the theme, ‘This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith,’ the Sovereign Pontiff addresses his affectionate good wishes to the participants, and, as he hopes that this important encounter may evoke renewed faithfulness to Christ, our one hope, and fervent evangelical witness, he invokes bountiful effusions of celestial light and sends you, the responsables of the Fraternity, and all those gathered his special apostolic blessing.” Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of His Holiness.

Messages have also arrived from His Eminence Angelo Cardinal Scola, Patriarch of Venice, and His Excellence Bishop Filippo Santoro, of Petropolis.

■ FIRST MEDITATION

Faith as method of knowledge

1. Faith as method of knowledge

“For most people (also for those who go to church) the relationship with God, with the divine, that is, with what should be perceived as origin and destiny of everything, is words,”¹⁵ Fr. Giussani said years ago. We’re not so different, as we saw yesterday, and for not a few the Mystery is abstract, far away. The reason for perceiving the Mystery as far away, Fr. Giussani told us, is that there is in us a breach between reason and experience.

What has the Mystery done, what does the Mystery continue to do to help us overcome this breach, so we don’t perceive God as far away, abstract? Out of compassion for each of us, the Mystery has entered history to facilitate in each of us an acknowledgment of Him.

“*God has broken through this separation* [Fr. Giussani continued], *this void between Himself and the experience of man.* [...] God, the Mystery that makes all things, has broken through the distance, the void that man inevitably would set between time and space, that is, reality as perceptible, visible, tangible, audible, and God. [...] The Mystery has broken through the abstraction and distance in which man would inevitably keep Him, because, being neither visible, nor touchable, nor audible, thought cannot grasp Him as it grasps the meaning of a face, and affection cannot approach Him as it would a face. [...] God has demolished, broken through the distance at which we would feel Him and keep Him. How has God broken through this distance? *Incarnating Himself* and coming out of a woman’s womb as a baby. [...] *To make Himself known, God entered into the life of man as a man*, according to human form, so the thought and all his imagination, affectivity and all his dreaming were ‘blocked’ and magnetized”¹⁶ by the hope that one day He awoke in me.¹⁷

The whole “I” magnetized to Him. Here we see the importance of the method I mentioned before, this precedence given to what He does. He doesn’t respond to our difficulties with a line of reasoning, but with a fact, with a fact so attractive that it brings forth a hope I never could have dreamed of. What loyalty is needed to leave space each instant to this precedence, since the day He brought forth this hope in us!

How do we know that this has happened, that the Mystery has become a factor of reality? Through that method of knowledge we call faith. Speaking of faith as a method of knowledge means from the start removing faith from the terrain of the irrational, of sentiment, and restoring it to the terrain of true rational knowledge. This is decisive for the reasonableness of the faith and for its cultural dignity.

What is the origin of this journey of knowledge? What is the point of departure for this method of knowledge that is faith? It's enough for us to look for an instant with full awareness at our experience: what brought you here? What brought you to believe? Each of us can answer simply with the sentence the Pope told us and that Fr. Giussani has told us on so many occasions in analogous words, "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a Person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."¹⁸ Therefore, "the first characteristic of Christian faith is that it comes from a fact, a fact that has the form of an encounter"¹⁹.

Faith has a departure outside of us: what challenges the subjectivity of man is a fact, an objectivity. Nothing abstract, no deduction, no projection. Right from the origin, it is the encounter with something outside myself, so much so that nothing else has brought forth that hope that He has brought forth in me. This is why faith is a human gesture and must be born in a human way, because it wouldn't be human if it were born without reason; it would be unreasonable, that is, not human. The way in which the faith is born reasonably, that is, bringing within itself for man, for any man, the evidence of its consistency, the evidence of its reason, is an encounter, the event of an encounter.

We're here now not because we've had a vision, because of a figment of our imagination, or for something abstract, but because of the encounter with a fact so exceptional that it "blocked" us, magnetized us. Why did it so affect us? Why did it magnetize us this way? Because of its exceptionality, because nothing else corresponded and corresponds to all the exigencies of our being. For this reason the Mystery is not something unknown for us; it is the Mystery who makes Himself accessible, and His incomprehensibility isn't a negative determination, as Von Balthasar says, but a positive property of the known;²⁰ what I see, what I encounter, is so awesome that I can't measure it, put it in my pocket, and not because I don't know it, but precisely because I *do* know it. Look how many times the disciples had this experience, for example, with the miraculous catch of fish: the Mystery wasn't

unknown – it was there, right in front of them – but it exceeded them in every regard and provoked Peter’s reaction, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”²²¹ He didn’t say this before the unknown, but before the Mystery overflowing in front of him. And therefore many times he blurted out, “We’ve never seen anything like this!”²²²

Why instead do we continue to perceive Him so often as abstract, far away? Fr. Giussani attributes it to a separation of reason from experience. Perhaps we can better understand this separation with this Gospel passage. “As he continued his journey to Jerusalem, He travelled through Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village, ten lepers met (Him). They stood at a distance from him and raised their voice, saying, ‘Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!’ And when He saw them, He said, ‘Go show yourselves to the priests.’ As they were going they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked Him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus said in reply, ‘Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?’ Then he said to him, ‘Stand up and go; your faith has saved you.’”²²³

Jesus was astonished. “What? Ten were cleansed, were they not? Only one has returned to give thanks to God?” That is, only one understood what had truly happened. Jesus reproached them not just for their ingratitude, but for their lack of knowledge of the import of what had happened. Here we see introduced the irreligiosity of which Fr. Giussani spoke, which comes forth without one even realizing it. It’s not that the others didn’t see the healing: they saw it, touched it, were able to touch it, but they didn’t understand and they missed the best. Only one, the Samaritan – the Gospel doesn’t miss anything – one who was not part of the people of Israel, didn’t take it for granted.

Where does the problem lurk? Above all, in the use of reason before what we see. It is there that an irrationality or a rationalism so often establishes itself: we reduce what we see, and we block the provocation to intelligence and the heart that comes from what we see. The problem of faith concerns not what we fail to see, but what we *do* see, what we touch, what we experience – like the healing – that forces us to broaden reason and allow ourselves to be swept up, magnetized by this good Presence that enters into life.

Who accepts this challenge from reality, from such an imposing, exceptional reality? What permits us to know without reduction, without imposing our measure, in order not to miss the best? Fr. Giussani

repeated it every day, “In this way Christianity presents its great ‘draw-back’: to be understood and lived, it requires ‘humans.’ Humans: that level of nature that acquires consciousness of itself. If humanity does not vibrate, no religious discourse, no matter how persuasive, can hold water. Christianity has no other ‘weapon,’ just the human being who lives as such.”²⁴ For this reason he said “it is desire that assures real faith, because real faith is the acknowledgment of His presence, of this presence, but that acknowledgment isn’t true if it doesn’t coincide [...] [with] desire. Desire is the first, and to my mind, the only gesture in which the truth of humanity is gambled; this truth is really put into play to make place for the Lord.” This desire is poverty of heart, of spirit: “Poverty of heart is the desire for that presence with which the heart does not become troubled.”²⁵ This is why it’s easier for the poor of heart. As Chesterton said, “The sages, it is often said, can see no answer to the riddle of religion. But the trouble with our sages is not that they cannot see the answer; it is that they cannot even see the riddle.”²⁶

This is why it’s so hard for us, because of this lack of humanity to understand deep down what has happened in the encounter, that hope that He has aroused in us. This is why Fr. Giussani repeated so often that line of Theophilus of Antioch: “You will say to me, ‘Show me your God.’ And I tell you, ‘Show me first the man who is in you, and then I will show you my God.’”²⁷ And he commented, “I believe that this sentence will have to be quoted at each of our gatherings. It’s everything we’ve wanted to be able to express in twenty-five years. What I can say to you is only a response to your humanity; and if you don’t pull out your humanity for me, what response can I give you? ‘Nothing is less credible than the answer to a question you haven’t asked yourself.’”²⁸

Saint Augustine said, “Christ attracts the man who finds his delectation in truth, beatitude, justice, eternal life, in everything, in short, that is Christ.”²⁹ I understand whether I have this desire for truth if, when I encounter Christ, I feel my whole being attracted to Him. How do I understand whether I feel truly attracted? By the fact that the healing is not enough! Because, what do I care about the healing without Him? This is our drama, like that of the lepers: only one felt the urgent need to return, understood that the most important thing was not the healing, but that though the healing He had made Himself present, that it wasn’t enough to be healed, but that he needed Him. This is why we can see so many things that happen among us, but not need Him, not need to reach faith, reach the point of acknowledging

Him, and for this reason we miss the best. “Thou doest give sufficient evidence of how great Thou didst make the rational creature [this is our greatness], for whom nothing whatever, less than Thee, is in any way adequate to provide for its happy repose.”³⁰ Nothing can suffice to us that is less than Him. Therefore, in order to understand, the human is needed, re-awakened by the power of a fact so exceptional that it magnetizes everything. But so many times, like the others, we don’t feel this urgency. And then, what does Jesus do? He doesn’t get angry, but He’s amazed that we don’t understand, just as He was astonished that they didn’t understand then, and He continues to testify, with a position born of a mysterious origin, like a mother who, even when she can’t get her child to smile, continues to smile without tiring, without getting angry, trying to spark the “I” of her child, expressed in a smile. This is what Jesus does.

2. The witness

Second passage. In shared living with Him, there emerges ever more strongly the unique, incomparable figure: the witness. The exceptionality and the singularity of this Presence made the question “Who is this man?” ever more urgent. Those who ask a question like this before an other acknowledge that they can’t explain the mystery of that presence, of that person: that presence points to something beyond, doesn’t have in itself an ultimate explanation, testifies to an Other.

a) Christ, witness to the Father

If we look at our experience, what has kept the distance, the abstraction of the Mystery from prevailing? Running up against a Presence that we couldn’t reduce to an abstraction. What is the most striking sign? That, as for the disciples, the urgent question – “Who is this man?” – is so often sparked in us. Faith, as we’ve seen in School of Community, begins with exactly this question: “Who is this man?”. “This poses the problem of faith. The answer to that question is the answer of faith. One person says yes and another says no.”³¹ No abstraction. The question, “Who is this man?” arises before a presence that I touch, I see, and that brings forth freedom.

“Again there was a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, ‘He is possessed and out of his mind; why listen to him?’ Others said, ‘These are not the words of one possessed; surely a demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?’”

Jesus, in order to continue collaborating in the destiny of each of them, in order to avoid ending the game, challenges them, putting before them His works, “Can you say that the one whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world blasphemes because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? If I do not perform my Father’s works, do not believe me; but if I perform them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works, [the works you can look at, you can touch, you can see; you can’t end the game like this: you have the works before you], so that you may realize (and understand) that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”³²

But to further provoke their reason and their freedom, He doesn’t stop at this: after satisfying their hunger he could have settled with that, right? They wanted to make Him king; they acknowledged Him, so why don’t you settle, Jesus? Instead, He provokes them further.

“The next day, the crowd that remained across the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not gone along with his disciples in the boat, but only his disciples had left. Other boats came from Tiberias near the place where they had eaten the bread when the Lord gave thanks. When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into boats and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus. And when they found him across the sea they said to him, ‘Rabbi, when did you get here?’ Jesus answered them and said, ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled.’” Jesus doesn’t yield; He doesn’t reduce His proposal, and continues to challenge them. “Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal.” And He takes the last step of the challenge, “Jesus said to them, ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.’” He knew that without this step all the rest would be insufficient to respond to their human need, the need of those who listened to Him, to fill their heart. Going all the way to the end isn’t an optional: faith isn’t an optional. Everything collapses or stands if we get there. This is why He doesn’t stop. “Do you too want to leave?”

What amazing freedom, that of Jesus! He’s not afraid of being left alone, doesn’t yield when man’s destiny and happiness are at stake. What passion! What passion for each of us! This freedom of Jesus’ is the most powerful provocation to the freedom of Peter, who is forced

to come out, to take a position, to speak out from the depths of his being. Then Simon Peter, with his usual impetuosity, says, “Master, we also can’t understand what You’re saying, but if we go away, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life. It’s impossible to find one like You. If I’m not to believe in You, then I can’t believe my eyes anymore; I can’t believe in anything anymore.”³³

Look, this is the true alternative, says Fr. Giussani, “It’s the great, true, real alternative: either the nothingness in which everything culminates – the nothingness of what you love, of what you esteem, the nothingness of yourself and your friends, the nothingness of sky and earth, the nothingness, everything is nothing because everything will end up in ashes – either this, or that man there is right: He is who He says He is.”³⁴ If we settled and didn’t arrive at the point of acknowledging Him, we would increase nihilism, and for this reason sooner or later the faith won’t interest us anymore. Reaching the end isn’t an optional; it’s the only possibility that remains interesting for life. This is why it’s of prime interest to us to complete the entire itinerary of knowledge. And Giussani comments, “This point sums up everything, this dramatic emergence of the question of Christ and the springing up of faith in the world, this is the moment in which faith in Christ rises up in the world, and it will last until the end of the world.”³⁵

The game isn’t up until an answer has been found for the question “Who is this man?” that the encounter with Him evokes. The witness makes the Mystery present for me to the point of evoking the question, “Who is this man?”, but on my own, I can’t identify what the Mystery is. As we say so often among ourselves, “I can’t manage to say that this Mystery that I’ve encountered is Christ; I can’t manage to say His name.” Not even the disciples. They tried to respond to the question; there were attempts at an answer (John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets) but it wasn’t enough.

For this reason, the witness isn’t just someone who prompts the question, but the person who answers it. This is why in *Si può (veramente?!) vivere così?* Fr. Giussani added a point to the five points on faith explained in *Is It Possible to Live This Way?*: “His answer.”³⁶ He is the only one able to answer the question. And how does He respond? “If any person living in the time of Christ were to meet Him and ask ‘But who are You? What’s your name?’, Jesus would have answered, ‘I am the One Sent by the Father’ (*missus*, the one sent by the Father). Sent by an Other: this expression implicates the mystery regarding His origin and His end, implicates the mystery of His person, which, inas-

much as it is experientially encounterable and existentially observable, is exactly tied to the meaning of this word: ‘sent.’”³⁷ If we read the Gospel of Saint John, we find everywhere this expression: “sent,” “I am the one sent by the Father”, the expression among men of the mystery of the Father, the presence among men of the mystery who makes all things.”³⁸ When we read the Gospel of John to discover all the expressions with which Jesus renders His consciousness of being sent by the Father, we are deeply moved before the Mystery. This is the ultimate explanation of His exceptionality. “I am not alone, but it is I and the Father who sent me.”³⁹ “The Father and I are one.”⁴⁰ Christ is the witness to the Father because He is the one sent by the Father.

Why is it reasonable to believe in Him as the One sent by the Father? Here you see the unique singularity of the witness of Christ. He doesn’t bring the content of truth as a prophet would bring it: He *is* the truth. Why do I understand it? Why do I know it? Because He makes it present communicating it in such a way that we can grasp this unique witness of His. “Between Socrates and Christ” writes von Balthasar, “in the decisive point, there is only opposition, since Socrates can only point to the truth that he is not, while Christ is the truth and thus can share it through Himself.”⁴¹ Christ is the truth and He communicates it communicating Himself.

We’ve heard Fr. Giussani say many times that in Christ, content and method coincide, and this is of crucial importance: making happen this truth to which He witnesses, He facilitates our acknowledgment.

I can reasonably believe in the witness Jesus of Nazareth, the external witness I touch, grasp, and see, because of the internal witness of the correspondence I experience in the relationship with Him: both witnesses coincide. For this reason, if I don’t believe in You, I can’t believe my eyes anymore; I can’t believe in anything anymore. The correspondence I experience encountering Jesus is so unique and impossible that only with Him can I arrive at knowing reality deep down. Not only do I know reality deep down, not only do I know myself deep down, but I am more myself. I know it’s Him because He increases my being, makes totality possible for me. For this reason I need Him. Encountering Jesus – and only Him – my humanity is mysteriously fulfilled in accordance with the stature of elementary experience, a structural disproportion that I alone cannot bridge.

We can recall the image of Quincke’s resonator⁴² that Fr. Giussani used to indicate this syntony between the encounter with a historical person and the infinite exigencies of my being, of my heart. If my ele-

mentary experience reaches its apex when I can say, “I-am-You-Who-make-me” encountering Jesus I can say, through pure grace, “I-am-You-Who-attract-me” because of the hope that He has brought forth in me. “Christ in His beauty draws me to Him!”⁷⁴³. I, but no longer I. The decision to adhere, to believe in Him, says Fr. Giussani, “is generated only by the discovery the my own ‘I’ is attracted by an Other, that the substance of my ‘I’, the substance of my being, my heart, is identical to ‘being attracted to an Other’”⁷⁴⁴ and in this my “I” is fulfilled.

For this reason, the criterion of the heart and the witness walk hand in hand. It’s useless to set heart against witness – as I’ve sometimes heard in this period in which we’ve been talking about the witness – because the heart is what acknowledges the witness, through that experience of fullness that nobody else can give me. It is the heart that enables me to acknowledge the truth, because it has been brought to a fullness that is above and beyond. “Therefore the judgment about the credibility of the witness,” says Fr. Giussani, “is a judgment I make with my reason”: if I can’t believe what I see with my own eyes, I can’t believe in myself. “I come to the point of realizing through my direct knowledge, that is, through the use of my reason. Faith doesn’t presuppose faith in order to be faith, but it presupposes reason in order to be faith.”⁷⁴⁵ If I can’t believe my own eyes, I can no longer believe in anything.

Therefore, faith in God is faith in Christ. In this way, Jesus fulfils the purpose for which He entered history. Fr. Giussani always used to tell us that Jesus didn’t conceive of “His attractiveness to others as an ultimate reference to Himself, but to the Father: to Himself so that He could lead to the Father, as knowledge and as obedience,”⁷⁴⁶ because it is there that all the nature of my “I”, which is desire for the Infinite, finds its complete fulfilment. If we stop at any healing, sooner or later we’ll become sceptical, because it’s not enough, it’s not enough if I don’t have You, Christ. This is why Jesus doesn’t budge an inch on this, because if He yielded, it would be the end of Christianity. “Jesus cried out and said, ‘Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me.’”⁷⁴⁷ This is why his mission is to be the witness of the Father.

b) The Church as witness to Christ

In the likeness of Christ, witness to the Father, the Church herself witnesses to Christ. The contemporaneousness of Christ today is the Church. In fact, as stated in *Gaudium et Spes*, “...it is the function

of the Church, led by the Holy Spirit Who renews and purifies her ceaselessly, to make God the Father and His Incarnate Son present and in a sense visible”.⁴⁸ This is why the Church “is absolutely interested in excluding the purely self-referential quality [any self-referentiality] of the faith she lives.”⁴⁹ The referent is Christ. The Church – using an expression, an image that is very dear to the Fathers of the Church – speaks of herself as the moon. Saint Ambrose said, “This is the true moon [...] The Church shines not her own light, but that of Christ and takes her own splendor from the Sun of justice, so that she can say, *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*”⁵⁰ Through the Church it is the Risen Christ Himself who continues to attract us, but “*in attracting to herself she attracts to the Lord: and therefore actually does not attract to herself for herself*”⁵¹ but to bring to the Only One able to fulfil: nothing less than You is enough. For this reason, if we stop, sooner or later Christianity, Christ, will no longer interest us. If we don’t understand this, we’ll see in life that it doesn’t interest us, because nothing else corresponds to this. Faith isn’t an optional.

The Church documents herself before our eyes through witnesses. The most important for us is Fr. Giussani. It wasn’t by chance that speaking at Fr. Giussani’s funeral, Cardinal Ratzinger said that, “having led people not to himself but to Christ, he really won hearts”.⁵² Fr. Giussani fascinated us precisely because he didn’t guide people to himself, but sought to draw them to Christ, to draw us to Christ. I don’t know what modality the Mystery uses to bring each of us to our destiny, which person He sets before you, who draws you; this is known to each of you, each of you knows. What precedence should be given to Him who works and sets witnesses before me who bring forth in me this powerful attraction, in order for us not to stop, and to bring us truly to the One who fulfils!

3. Faith, acknowledgment of the Mystery present

“There exists in our experience something that comes from beyond it: unforeseeable, mysterious, but within our experience. If it is unforeseeable, not immediately visible, mysterious, with what instrument of our personality do we grasp this Presence? With the instrument called faith. [...] In experience we feel the waft or the vibration or the consequences of a Presence that is unexplainable, surprising,” but that exists. “I said that faith is a form of knowing that is beyond

the limits of reason. Why is it beyond the limits of reason? Because it grasps a thing that reason cannot grasp: ‘the presence of Christ among us,’ ‘Christ here and now.’ Reason cannot perceive it as it perceives that you’re here. Is that clear? However, I can’t fail to admit that He exists. Why? Because there’s a factor here inside, a factor that decides this companionship, certain results of this companionship, certain resonances in this companionship, so surprising that if I don’t affirm something Other I fail to acknowledge the validity of experience [...]. There can be a factor that composes it, of which you hear the echo, taste the fruit, see also the consequence, but you’re not able to see directly. If I say, ‘So then, it doesn’t exist,’ I’m mistaken, because I eliminate something of experience; it’s no longer reasonable.” Therefore, faith “is an act of knowing that grasps the Presence of something that reason wouldn’t be able to grasp, but even so would have to affirm, otherwise it would elude, eliminate something that exists within experience [...]; it’s unexplainable, but it exists within. So necessarily there is in me a capacity to understand, to know on a level of reality that is greater than the usual.”⁵³ Because He makes it happen; He makes me capable of grasping it because He broadens my capacity for understanding.

This is the struggle Jesus had with His disciples and that He has with us. Von Balthasar says, “The way the Apostles, like believing Israelites, went around with Jesus in an earthly way, was fundamentally [absolutely] of the Old Testament. [...] In fact, in the beginning the disciples are always closed and obstinate together with the people: they don’t understand; they are of little faith, without the courage to believe, yearning for extraordinary signs, ambitious, authentic representatives of their race [it’s a consolation for us]. [...]. The difficulty for the Apostles, in their earthly dealings with the Lord, didn’t come from what they experienced through their senses [it’s not that they didn’t see: they saw], but by the faith [they stopped early], proportioned to *this* object of faith and which thus is able to grasp it.”⁵⁴ They weren’t capable of grasping the exceptionality. This is why the whole struggle Christ engages in with us, refusing to reduce its importance, is like the one with the disciples: He seeks to help us not stop at the perceptible experience, but acknowledge what is inside the experience.

Here we find the last hurdle, because acknowledging this isn’t always easy. What facilitates this acknowledgment of Something that exists, but that I don’t see? As Fr. Giussani asked in *The Religious Sense*, how can we bridge this gap between my reason and my will to

adhere? It happens through the presence of authority and companionship (remember what he said of the experience of risk?)

But this is useful up to a certain point. When things become truly raw – think about the Apostles during the Passion: they all abandoned Him. Among them, not even the presence of Jesus could do anything. So a more powerful force is needed: it is called the Risen Christ and His Spirit that dominates the world, that enters into the world – Pentecost – to facilitate this acknowledgment. Therefore this acknowledgment is grace. Only grace “at a certain point accomplishes what the companionship wasn’t able to accomplish and what the great man wasn’t able to accomplish.”⁵⁵ This is why Fr. Giussani says, “faith is rational, inasmuch as it flowers on the extreme limit of the rational dynamic like a flower of grace, to which man adheres with all this freedom.”⁵⁶ St. Paul says it with these words, “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ [that is, affirm all the truth of Jesus] except by the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁷ He is the one who brings us to the full truth, to the full acknowledgment of Christ.

This is everything that Fr. Giussani witnessed to us, “Christ, this is the name that indicates and defines a reality that I encountered in my life. I encountered: first, when I was little, a boy, etc, I heard Him spoken of. When we grow up, this word can be well known, but for many people it isn’t encountered; it isn’t really experienced as present. On the contrary, Christ ran up against my life, and my life ran up against Christ, precisely so that I would learn to understand how He is the nerve center, the crucial point of everything, of all my life. *Christ is the life of my life*. In Him is summed all that I could want, all that I search for, all that I sacrifice, all that evolves in me for love of the people with whom He has put me. As Möhler said in a sentence I’ve quoted many times, ‘I don’t think I could continue living if I didn’t hear Him speak anymore.’ [...] Perhaps one of the sentences that I’ve quoted most often in my life. Christ, life of life, certainty of the good destiny and companionship for daily life, familiar companionship that transforms daily life for the good: this represents His efficacy in my life.”⁵⁸

This is the kind of faith that Fr. Giussani testified to us, that he wanted to transmit, and we can do no other than pray, as it says in the Gospel, “Increase our faith!”⁵⁹

HOLY MASS

GREETINGS OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL STANISLAW RYLKO
PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY

Dearest friends, my cordial greetings to all of you who are gathered here in Rimini and all of you, scattered in various countries on five continents, who are participating in the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of CL via satellite link. This annual appointment is a strong witness to your communion in the faith and a special moment of that spiritual refreshment that each person needs to continue journeying.

“Know that He, the Lord, is God. He made us, we belong to him. We are His people, the sheep of His flock.” (Ps. 100:3). The responsorial psalm expresses well the theme you’ve chosen this year for your meditation, the faith that conquers the world. Faith means precisely this: belonging to Christ (“we are His”), and belonging to the people of believers, which is the Church – a companionship of friends on a journey, as Benedict XVI said (“we are His people”). Our identity as Christians is founded on this dual belonging.

Dearest friends, strong in this conviction, we begin the Eucharistic celebration praying for divine mercy for ourselves.

HOMILY

Christian, that is “sign of contradiction”

1. Why do spiritual exercises? What is the meaning of this time that the Lord gives us?? “Spiritual exercises – the Holy Father said recently – represent a particularly precious path and a method for seeking and finding God in us, around us, and in every thing, to know His will and put it into practice” (*Speech*, “L’Osservatore Romano”, February 22, 2008). And Fr. Giussani wrote that, “Nothing can be constructed, if not on rock, on what is certain. Without certainty nothing gets built” (*Is It Possible to Live This Way?*, p. 16). In a world of insidious quicksands, then, we have to seek the certainty upon which to graft our existence, the rock upon which we can build our life. Spiritual exercises are the place for the most intense search for that rock and that absolute certainty that is Christ.

It seems to me that a paradigm for spiritual exercises can be the story of the disciples of Emmaus, which actually is a paradigm for all of Christian

life. The Risen Jesus makes Himself our travelling companion to reawaken in our hearts the ardour of faith and hope, to break for us the bread of eternal life. It's a journey of maturation and purification of our faith. Benedict XVI spoke of this recently (Cf *Regina coeli*, "L'Osservatore Romano", April 7-8 2008). For you, dearest friends, Emmaus is Rimini: here the Lord calls you every year and becomes your travelling companion to speak to you in the intimacy of your hearts, to explain to you the Scriptures, to break bread with you. To set you again upon the rock...

2. The passage of the Acts of the Apostles to which we've listened brings us back to the times of the earliest evangelization of our continent and inevitably leads us to think about the state of faith in Europe. "During the night, Paul had a vision: A Macedonian stood before him and implored him with these words: 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'" (Acts 16:9). The evangelization of Europe began because of this dramatic call to the Apostle, "Come over ... and help us!" Two thousand years later, what place has the faith in the life of Europeans? The answer comes to us from the pages of the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, in which the servant of God John Paul II explained the "time of bewilderment" crossing through the old continent, "At the root of this loss of hope is an attempt to promote a vision of man apart from God and apart from Christ. This sort of thinking has led to man being considered as 'the absolute centre of reality, a view which makes him occupy – falsely – the place of God and which forgets that it is not man who creates God, but rather God who creates man. Forgetfulness of God led to the abandonment of man'. [...] European culture gives the impression of 'silent apostasy' on the part of people who have all that they need and who live as if God does not exist" (n. 9). It is the drama of Europe who renounces her Christian roots and thus erases her own identity, of Europe who refuses the rock that is God and who claims to build her present and future on the sand, insensible to Benedict XVI's admonition that "the accounts of man without God do not balance, and the accounts of the world, the entire universe, without Him do not balance" (*Homily*, "L'Osservatore Romano", September 14, 2006). Because, as the Pope said in Aparecida in Brazil, "those who exclude God from their horizon falsify the concept of reality [...] Only those who know God, know reality and can respond to it in an adequate and truly human way" (*Speech*, "L'Osservatore Romano", May 14-15, 2007). Certainly, one can never take for granted faith in Jesus Christ, even less so in the post-modern age. Faith is an ever-open challenge for everyone, for each one of us. So then, during these spiritual

exercises, each person must feel urged to put God again truly in the center of his existence, (in that) of his family, of the community in which he lives.

Not only. The thirst for God of so many men and women today, especially the young, a faith that the obstacles and closures of post-modernity cannot erase, demands that Christians, that is, us, take on the task of responding to the cry of so many “Macedonians” of our time, “Come over... and help us!” It’s a cry to which we cannot remain deaf. The world needs us Christians: it needs our visible and incisive presence, our clear and persuasive witness of faith and a courageous announcement of the Word that saves. How much history since that dream of Paul’s in the Acts of the Apostles! And yet, today we seem to have returned to the beginnings: Europe is once again mission territory and the responsibility of we Christians is enormous.

3. Witnessing to the faith isn’t easy. Christ Himself felt it, when he said clearly in the gospel passage we’ve just heard, “If the world hates you, realize it hated me first. [...] Remember the word I spoke to you, ‘No slave is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” (Jn. 15:18-20). The Christian is destined in one way or another to become a “sign of contradiction,” like the Master. Hans Urs von Balthasar writes, “According to the teaching of Christ, the state of persecution is the normal state for the Church in the world, and martyrdom of the Christian is his normal situation. Not in the sense that the Church must be persecuted continually everywhere; but if she is for some time and in certain regions, she should remember right away that she is participating in a grace that has been promised to her, ‘I have told you this, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you.’ (Jn. 16:4). These words – says von Balthasar – cannot be overcome by any evolution of the world” (*Cordula...*, p. 183). Therefore, the forms and the methods of battle against Christ and His Church may change, but the persecutions of Christians remain a constant, even in times like ours, replete with words like freedom, equality, pluralism, and tolerance. John Paul II wrote, “In our own century the martyrs have returned, many of them nameless, ‘unknown soldiers’ as it were of God’s great cause. As far as possible, their witness should not be lost to the Church.” (Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 37).

With their whole existence and the witness of faith to the point of shedding their blood, the martyrs speak to us of the centrality of God in the life of man: a message of fundamental importance for today’s humanity.

Holy Father Benedict XVI never tires of repeating it, “It’s a matter of the centrality of God, and precisely not just any god, but the God who has the face of Jesus Christ [...] There are many problems that one can list, that have to be resolved, but that – all of them – are not resolved if God is not put at the center, if God does not become visible in the world anew, if He doesn’t become decisive for our life” (*Homily*, “L’Osservatore Romano”, November 8, 2006). Martyrs, therefore, charge us with the courage to wager our lives on God. They call us to the incommensurable value of the faith, for which – just as it is for the treasure of the evangelical parable – it’s worth giving everything: “*Amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui*”, the love of God, to the point of disdaining oneself, as Saint Augustine said (*De Civitate Dei*). They remind us that being Christian entails radical choices – the salt must flavor and the lantern must cast light – and often signifies going against the flow, being a “sign of contradiction” in the world and in our own sphere of life. The martyrs encourage us to be ourselves, that is, Christians, in the world and not to hide or dilute our identity as disciples of Christ. Their witness is for us a healthy goad, a healthy goad for our faith, often too accommodating to the spirit of the world, watered down, prone to compromises with the culture that dominates the current scene.

Dearest friends, reflecting on the gift of faith, let’s seek during these spiritual exercises to treasure the witness of the hosts of martyrs who populate the history of the Church: those of long ago times and those of our own. We ask Mary, Queen of martyrs and confessors, to be our teacher in learning this lesson, which is decisive for the life of each Christian. Amen.

BEFORE THE FINAL BLESSING

Julían Carrón. Your Eminence, allow me to thank you in the name of all of us for your ever more appreciated paternity. We ask you to pray for us, that following the charism of Fr. Giussani, we may witness before everyone to what we hold most dear, for the good of the Church and for the good of the world. Thank you.

Cardinal Rylko. I am the one to thank you, for the witness of faith you are giving and for your witness to this important and fascinating fact: the beauty of being Christian and the joy of communicating it to the world. You are always present in my prayers. Best wishes. Continue in this way toward the great goal Fr. Giussani showed you.

Saturday afternoon, April 26

During the entrance and exit:

Ludwig van Beethoven: Triple concerto in A major for piano, violin, violoncello and orchestra, op. 56

*David Oistrakh, violen – Mstislav Rostropovich, violoncello
Sviatoslav Richter, piano*

Herbert von Karajan – Berliner Philharmoniker, EMI

■ SECOND MEDITATION

Life in faith

1. Those who believe have eternal life

Julián Carrón. “Our person, what does it rest upon? More simply, what is it based on?”⁶⁰ Fr. Giussani asked years ago. The Pope asks a similar question in *Spe salvi*, “Is the Christian faith also for us today a life-changing and life-sustaining hope?” The Pope continues: “In the search for an answer, I would like to begin with the classical form of the dialogue with which the rite of Baptism expressed the reception of an infant into the community of believers and the infant’s rebirth in Christ. First of all, the priest asked what name the parents had chosen for the child, and then he continued with the question: ‘What do you ask of the Church?’ Answer: ‘Faith.’ ‘And what does faith give you?’ ‘Eternal life.’ According to this dialogue, the parents were seeking access to the faith for their child, communion with believers, because they saw in faith the key to ‘eternal life.’⁶¹ In this sense, the Catechism of the Church says, “Indeed Baptism is ‘the sacrament of faith’ in a particular way, since it is the sacramental entry into the life of faith.”⁶²

What parents bringing a child to Baptism expected and expect is that same thing we expect: that faith give us life. The only thing that makes faith reasonable is its promise to bring us life. This is why God intervened in history, to bring us this life, and this life reaches us in Baptism. “Normally, however” comments Fr. Giussani, “in the hierarchy of esteem and interest that governs our life, nothing is more extraneous than Baptism.” If it’s so decisive as to bring us life, why then is it so extraneous to us?

Because this beginning, dated in time, is often “buried under a thick blanket of earth or in a tomb of forgetfulness and ignorance.”⁷⁶³

For many of us, Baptism was this way, buried in forgetfulness. What reawakened in us the interest in faith given to us in Baptism? How do we begin again to understand its importance? Each of us knows well: as Fr. Giussani always explained, you begin to understand it in the encounter with a living Christian companionship. In fact, as the Catechism explains, “The faith required for Baptism is not a perfect and mature faith, but a beginning that is called to develop. [...] For all the baptized, children or adults, faith must *grow* after Baptism.”⁷⁶⁴

How does our faith grow and develop? In our belonging to the Church. This is why Baptism incorporates us into the community of believers through the fact of becoming one person in Christ. “For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one [*eis*, Fr. Giussani always insisted, only one person!] in Christ Jesus.”⁷⁶⁵ This is why the Catechism continues, explaining that Baptism is the sacrament of faith, which, however, needs the community of believers. It is only in the faith of the Church that each member of the faithful can believe.⁷⁶⁶ In the body of Christ the newness of Christ is communicated: the life that He has brought.

“The Church is therefore the method by which Christ communicates Himself in space and time, analogously to the fact that Christ is the method with which God has chosen to communicate Himself to men for their salvation.” Were He not present in the living Church, “Christ would be irremediably far and therefore victim of our interpretation, [...] reduced subjectively both as content and method.”⁷⁶⁷

In the encounter with the Movement we have experienced the reawakening of faith, the interest Christ holds for our life. The Movement has been this living Christian community for us, where all the interest for Him is reawakened. What happened afterwards?

But then – Fr. Giussani insists on many occasions – “the beginning ended,”⁷⁶⁸ once again. After the hope brought forth by the encounter with the Movement, it seems that over time everything becomes flat again, such that often it seems we’re increasingly sceptical about the new promises made to us, and prompted to ask, like Nichodemus, “How can a person once grown old be born again?”⁷⁶⁹ Is there still hope for us? Is it still realistic to hope? Once we’ve come to know ourselves, circumstances, and life, is there something that supports us, that sustains us?

In order to understand what happened afterwards, let's observe what Fr. Giussani describes, because it seems to me very illustrative of what occurs. Imagine a *Memores Domini* home, or a Fraternity group among us, on a lovely evening of singing with an atmosphere of friendship and fraternity, of companionship in an adventure. "It's truly beautiful, the music, the singing, the human sentiment of friendship and fraternity and companionship in an adventure. And yet, if the things could be listed as I've listed them just now, end of story, and something else were taken for granted – accepted and acknowledged (understand me!) but taken for granted –, and if His name were not produced by an emphasis of dialogue, a desire to be heard, a desire to hear Him", if we don't feel the urgent need to hear Him, if Christ, His name "at a certain point didn't have autonomy, if He didn't have an ultimately singular face, marked by unmistakable, unique features, distinct from those He Himself created as sign of Himself," Christ would lose "that ultimate, unmistakable singularity." If Christ lost this ultimate singularity, you could go to America, as was the case that evening, for work, supported by the friendly memory of a companionship that awaits your return; have an exceptionally satisfying job, truly pertinent to the point that everyone would be amazed by your contribution, but it wouldn't be enough. "If [Christ] isn't the thought object (memory), spoken (invocation), contemplated with amazement and gusto, so much so as to translate into gladness for a presence," to the point of saying, "My heart is glad because You live,"⁷⁰ none of the rest is enough.

"We have to be careful because among us Jesus can be the origin of the whole world of humanity [a very beautiful companionship, singing together, being at home, feeling truly good in each other's company], full of gladness and friendship, of formally exemplary reasons and of help to each other, even in materially concrete ways. [...] But Jesus could be reduced to the 'portrait of a beautiful woman sculpted on her funerary monument' [Christ could be a portrait on a tomb]. If Jesus came here in silence – softly – and sat on a chair over there, near her, and at a certain point we realized it, I wonder if in many of us the amazement, gratitude, joy ... I wonder if in many of us the affection would be truly spontaneous," as if He were a well-known friend, with a simple familiarity. "I wonder if we all would be covered with a blanket of shame, if we realized in that moment that we had never said 'You,'" that we had been together, that everything had been beautiful, but nobody had felt the need to say His name.

If there's not a personal "I" that says "You" to Christ, as you say it to a man who is present, Christ is "bleached or faded away from the beautiful and glad appearance of the companionship of faces that should have been a sign pointing to Him!" but we stop there; we stay there with the sign. It's true, the "companionship is *the* sign – dissatisfied, approximate, analogous – of a reality of the other world! [...] The presence of Christ in the world is the miracle of our companionship. [...] It's not a matter of cushioning the burden of our friendship [to affirm Christ, it's not a matter of diminishing anything], of rendering nebulous the charged efficacy of eyes, lips, and face, of words, songs, heart, of a beautiful companionship like this one, but it's like a kind of exasperated tension to cry out Your name, O Christ: 'Thank you for making Yourself seen and for sitting here.'⁷¹

Faith is this exasperated tension toward acknowledging and saying His name, Him at work in our midst, but many times each of us can recognize ourselves in what Fr. Giussani describes. I remember once at dinner with my friends of School of Community, when they were recounting many beautiful facts for a good part of the evening, but nobody felt the urgency to say His name. This example came to mind: it's as if one of us had received a stupendous bouquet of flowers, and never tired of talking about the bouquet of flowers, but felt no urgency to say the name, to speak about the person who had given them. It doesn't come to us naturally; we lack that exasperated tension toward crying out your name, O Christ! Many times we feel it like something forced, added on, superimposed. But would it cross anybody's mind to say that speaking enthusiastically about the person who gave us the flowers is a superimposition, a deduction, or an act of self-convincing? Only those who don't understand the true meaning of the flowers, only those who lack that exasperated tension toward saying Your name.

So if the flowers aren't the occasion to reawaken the memory of Him, the evening passes and like the flowers, everything decays; the beginning starts to end, starts to lose its fascination. What has happened? "At a certain point," Fr. Giussani said in Colfosco in 1982, "the companionship became the true substitution for Christ."⁷² This is why it stops. Fr. Giussani told us in myriad ways. In 1977 in Viterbo he said, "The Movement was born out of a presence that imposed itself and brought to people's lives the provocation of a promise to follow. But then we entrusted the continuity of this beginning to speeches and to initiatives, to meetings and things to do. We didn't entrust, hand over our lives, and so the beginning very soon ceased to be the truth offered to our person and instead became

the starting point for an association, for a reality upon which we could unload our own responsibility for our work, and from which we could demand the resolution of things. What should have been the embrace of a provocation and thus a lively following has instead become obedience to the organization.”⁷³ We hadn’t understood that what had awakened interest in the Movement was precisely Him; He peered out from the face of those we had encountered. It was He within those faces.

What Fr. Giussani says is tremendous! “Looking at You [Christ] in this companionship can be as difficult among us as it is for most people who live these things in solitude, with an appalling, mortal vagueness, with a lethal solitude of heart.”⁷⁴ Just think of how many evenings together we could return home without having recognized Him. But our companionship is sustained only by the fact that we recognize You, Christ! If we don’t look at Him there within, and we don’t recognize Him, it’s not that we don’t continue talking about Christ, but that we speak of Him as of a “spiritual” call, because the concrete is something else. This is the way He becomes abstract, ever more abstract.

“For many of us, saying that salvation is Jesus Christ and that the liberation of life and of humanity here and beyond is continually bound to the encounter with Him has become a ‘spiritual’ call. The concrete would be something else: the organization, work, meetings... not as expressions of an exigency of life, but as mortification of life, burden and toll to pay for a belonging that still, unexplainably, finds us in the ranks.”⁷⁵

It’s our attempt to reduce the Church, the place of His presence, the Movement, to a beautiful companionship, things to do, organization, as the disciples attempted to reduce Christ to their schemas. But sooner or later this disillusion us and life ceases; the wakened interest in Him finishes.

This is why we have to beware of two temptations always lying in ambush, which we can express succinctly as first, conceiving a Christ without Church, that is, excluding Christ from reality, to a far-away, supernatural world, and reducing Him to our interpretation or our measure, or, second, having a Church without Christ, where the Church is perceived not as the body of Christ, that makes Him present, but at the substitution of Christ. The common denominator of both temptations is that Christ is outside reality. But the Church, the Movement, continues to be interesting for us, continues to interest us, still to magnetize us as in the beginning, to “block us,” if it can’t be reduced to our interpretation, our measure, if it fulfils its nature of being a “moon” – as we were saying this morning – of being wholly a reflection of the “sun,” Christ.

“The ‘companionship’ of which we speak,” said Fr. Giussani, “isn’t a reality we’ve made or found [we don’t generate it]. It is wanted by, has its consistence and permanence in an Other. [...] The precise term that reveals the ontology, the ultimate nature of this human cosmos is ‘communion,’ by which we are members of Christ and members of each other; we belong to one Body alone, the Body of Christ. Christ does not exist in history without us, but there is no ‘us,’ no communion among us, without Christ.”⁷⁶

Therefore the only hope is that we “won’t succeed” in this attempt to reduce the Church, because we would remain alone with our nothingness. What stops us from reducing Christ to our measure? “In the Church, God makes Himself familiar to man in every era. The familiarity of a daily relationship [with God], of God with us, also unfolds in a particularly persuasive way in events and people that directly point to Him.”⁷⁷ The Church continues to be Church if she directly points to Him. And how? Through people and events. We saw it yesterday watching the video of the Zerbinis: who didn’t feel drawn by it?

This acquires the form of miracle and holiness. “*Miracles* are the happening of something that ‘forces’ us to think of God,” that impose themselves so powerfully that we can’t reduce them to our measure. The saints are “figures whose human stature is worthy of the truest desires of man’s heart. In them is fulfilled an exceptional humanity, impossible to think up. [...] Jesus Christ isn’t a presence isolated in far-off history, so as to seem the fruit of imagination. He is a Presence ten years after His death, a thousand years after His death, two thousand years after His death, up to today, through this different humanity of the saints, a human presence impossible to think up.”⁷⁸

The saints, that is, the witnesses, those among us who block us from reducing Christ to our measure: we see them, we touch them. Who didn’t feel powerfully called in seeing Cleuza speak yesterday? Who didn’t see Him, perceive Him through the witness of our friend Vicky in Uganda? Or looking at the Comet exhibit last summer? They are facts! Or our friends in Naples, who, in truly complicated situations, continue to witness to us about Christ and His victory, and don’t let themselves be reduced? Anything but Christ in the abstract! He is something so real that through His historical presence in the Church and His witnesses, He becomes a reality that can’t be reduced by any attempt of ours, challenging man’s heart, reason, freedom, and affection. Anything but abstract!

How do we see that He’s not abstract? How do we see that He’s real? We see it in our resistance. You don’t resist nothingness, the abstract. You

resist something real that challenges you continually. All our attempts to reduce the companionship are attempts to reduce the drama that introduces the reality of the Church. It's resistance to the exasperated tension to which the companionship introduces us; it's the ultimate crass disregard for ourselves and those we claim to love. Instead, His irreducibility is what saves us, pushing us toward Him. If our attempt to reduce Him were to succeed, He would interest us no longer, and once reduced to what I want, He would become irrelevant. Without this tension, the "I" is forfeited, because He is the one who builds the community, which – as we've studied in School of Community⁷⁹ – is *convocatio* before *congregatio*: we have been chosen, magnetized.

This is the struggle Christ established with me, with each of us on the day of our Baptism, a fierce struggle He carries on through His body which is the Church, and we won't succeed – thanks be to God, you have to say it right off – in reducing it, because He is present in our midst. It is here that our freedom is called into action. For this reason all our attempts to dump our responsibility on the companionship are pathetic; they're our lie, our unopenness to the conversion to which we are called. It's a temptation always lying in wait, as Dostoyevsky reminds us, "I tell you man has no more agonizing anxiety than to find someone to whom he can hand over with all speed the gift of freedom..."⁸⁰ "It almost seems as if man has tired of his own spiritual freedom," says Berdjaev, "and is ready to renounce it in the name of a power that organizes his life internally and externally."⁸¹ In this way, life ceases.

Our companionship isn't here to spare us the drama of freedom, but to continually provoke our responsibility. Were it not so, the Movement would cease to exist, would continue with the same name, but would be another thing, because "this is a responsibility that we cannot unload onto the companionship. The heart is the only thing in which we are not partners. [...] So our companionship must be rather strange. It's a companionship upon which you cannot unload anything" and that doesn't leave us alone. If it were to leave us alone, it wouldn't interest us, and we would all fall away. "Our companionship means not to let time pass without our life asking, seeking, wanting the relationship with God present and without our life wanting or accepting that companionship, without which not even the image of His presence would be true."⁸²

And in this way, in this dramatic struggle that the Mystery began by entering into history, and carries on in order to introduce each of us to life, Christ reaches us through our communion to introduce us to a relationship with Him, so the Mystery may become familiar. "For God so

loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. [...] Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him.”⁸³ The entire New Testament, Saint John and Saint Paul, are full of this promise, “Whoever believes has eternal life.”⁸⁴ “I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness.”⁸⁵ Those who eat my flesh are satiated in their hunger and thirst for life. “Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst.”⁸⁶ “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.”⁸⁷ “Whoever is begotten by God conquers the world. And the victory that conquers the world is our faith.”⁸⁸

What is faith and what is its relationship with the life to which Baptism introduces us? Let’s listen once again to the Pope. “From faith I await ‘eternal life’—the true life which, whole and unthreatened, in all its fullness, is simply life. Jesus, who said that He had come so that we might have life and have it in its fullness, in abundance (cf. Jn. 10:10), also explained to us what ‘life’ means: ‘this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent’ (Jn. 17:3). In its true sense, life is neither something we have in us by ourselves, nor only from itself: it is a relationship. And life in its totality is a relationship with He who is the source of life. If we are in relation with He who does not die, who is Life itself and Love itself, then we are in life. Then we ‘live.’”⁸⁹ Christ came to give us life, which coincides with introducing us to this relationship with He who is the source of life. Therefore those who believe in Him have life.

Faith is this relationship with Christ that introduces me to the mystery of God through the energy of the Spirit. This is why He was sent, why He entered history.

What is this relationship, this relation? It’s a relationship with a You, with Him, as one relates with a you. I want to read you what Fr. Giussani recounted in 1990, “A month ago I was in Madrid to see the new *Memoires Domini* homes. In the women’s house they let me enter each room. At a certain point, I opened another door and entered a new room; above the desk there weren’t any photos, just a yellowish piece of paper, like the kind used by our butchers, as big as a picture, with the word ‘You’ written on it. I believe this is one of my most shocking memories, and I’ll never forget it. Now I imagine entering a room, in one of the innumerable conditions in which a person can live, and see the room dominated by that piece of paper...not by that piece of paper, but by that ‘You.’ I imagine the person who enters that room daily, everything she mulls over in her

thoughts, all the pressures of her states of mind and all the emptiness of her weariness, all the fullness of the overflowing of her desires and imaginations, dominated and challenged by this ‘You’.” For many, unfortunately, this “You” would be abstract, but Fr. Giussani continues, “This is precisely the synthesis of our life. It should be the synthesis of the life of every rational being, of every conscious being, but it is precisely the summary of life for those called to virginity: ‘You.’ Yes, Lord, there’s nothing else to say; whether you praise me or reprove me, look at me as you gazed at Your interlocutor in the Masaccio painting, embrace me as you did St. John at the last supper, cry over my errors, fragility, weakness, and betrayals, accompany me in the fervor and freshness of the years that pass quickly or at the slow pace of maturity and old age. This ‘You’ is like an endless spring of fresh water.” Here is the origin of that source, that ceaseless spring. The inexhaustible spring of fresh water, “limpid, that is, with a proposal for life, the proposal of full [true] life of its origin, intense in its present potential and energy, dominated by the ocean of the great ultimate circumstance, happiness, the eternal. ‘This is why I came: that they may have eternal life, and this is eternal life: that they know You, the only true God, and He whom You have sent, the Christ.’ Within this ‘You’ is hinted the ultimate You of all things, of which also Christ is, the You of the Father. I’m thankful for this exceptional occasion that shook my memory, and will shake it forever. I wish my telling could communicate it to you, too, that it would be communicated to you as well, in the measure of the openness of your hearts, your vigilance and your love for destiny, which is Christ.”⁹⁰

“Eternal life is knowing You.”⁹¹ No satisfaction compares with reaching this You. Only He corresponds. Nothing less than You is enough, said Saint Augustine: without Him the beginning ends and everything decays. An “I” that fears allowing You to define him or herself sooner or later becomes sceptical and feels the need for companionship as a refuge and support for his or her own insecurity. But this isn’t inevitable, because, as St. Thomas says, “Man’s life consists in the affection which sustains him most, for there he finds his greatest satisfaction.”⁹²

The test of faith, of the true relationship, not virtual, not with someone abstract, is satisfaction. Only if we experience faith as satisfaction, the greatest satisfaction one can imagine, because of the hope that He has brought forth in me, do we have an experience so powerful that it sustains all of life, because life consists in the affection that sustains us most, not outside reality, that sustains in satisfaction, in the unique correspondence that Christ is for life.

Therefore, when we speak of satisfaction, we can all experience the ultimate proof of life: if faith, as said in the Letter to the Hebrews, commented upon by the Pope,⁹³ gives us the substance of life, if faith gives us something so real that it makes us participants in a fullness of life. This is what constitutes the proof of the reality of what we don't see, but that exists. This is anything but an abstraction! Nobody would ever dream of saying these things, if He didn't exist!

2. New knowledge and affection

Second step: new knowledge and affection. From this life emerge a new life and a new affection, a new experience of living; it's already a new experience of living. "Whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come."⁹⁴

What is this new creature? Where is the newness? Not that someone rattles on about Christ unthinkingly, repeating a memorized discourse, but a newness one experiences in life. Here we see the newness introduced by the life of faith. Becoming a new creature means having a new awareness, a new capacity for gazing upon reality, having an intelligence of reality that others don't have – couldn't even dream of – and a new affection, a capacity for real adhering and dedication to the other, that's not even imaginable. The new creature identifies a new intelligence and heart in eating and drinking, waking and sleeping, living and dying. There's no need to do particularly different things. "Faith is the subversive and surprising modality of everyday things,"⁹⁵ of living everyday things. As Pavese said, "The things you say don't have in themselves that annoyance of what happens everyday [He takes away that annoyance!]. You give names to things that make them different, unheard of, and yet dear and familiar as a voice that had kept quiet for a time."⁹⁶

How does the birth of this new knowledge come about? Take heed, not of any genius of our own. "The new knowledge is born of the adhesion to an event, born of the *affectus* for an event to which one is attached, to which one says yes. [You have to say yes. Faith is a free gesture: you need to say yes to this event, so that this newness can begin to happen.] This event is a particular element in history: it has a universal claim, but it's a particular point. To think, starting from an event, means first of all accepting that I don't define that event, but rather, that I'm defined by it. In the event there emerges what I really am and my conception of the world."⁹⁷

This is why a comparison with everything is needed. "This challenges the common mentality, which, to judge, always tends to subsume the par-

particulars within an abstract universal. The new mentality, instead, is not born of a process of analytical deduction starting out from certain principles or criteria that are then applied, but of an event, of something that has happened and that happens: it isn't born of me, but of what I encounter. It's not an application of mine, but obedience to what I've encountered." We all understand if we think, for example, of falling in love: it's a fact that changes everything. It's a fact. You don't have to be very intelligent; it just has to happen. The source of this newness lies precisely in that event that makes everything arise anew. It's not an application; it's almost a surprise, "The new knowledge implies therefore being in contemporaneity with the event that generates it and continually sustains it. Therefore this origin isn't an idea," that I can learn and let go. It implies contemporaneity with the place, with the living reality; precisely because "the origin isn't an idea but a locus, a living reality [like the beloved], the new judgment is possible only in a continual relationship with reality, in other words, with the human companionship that prolongs in time the initial Event: it proposes the authentic Christian point of view. The [Christian] Event persists in history, and with it persists the origin of the new judgment." The temptation always lying in wait is the reduction of the new knowledge to a discourse, even if correct, that I can master, as if at a certain point I could do without this contemporaneity with the event; as if a beautiful theory about love were enough for me, and I could do without the presence of the beloved. Look, the difference is tremendous: there's no comparison. Even the "blind" see this! "Those who give first priority to their analyses or deductions will in the end adopt [even in the intelligence they think they have] the frameworks of the world, tomorrow's different from today's." Therefore it is urgent for us to persist in the position of origin. "Remaining in the position of origin in which the Event brings forth the new knowledge is the only chance for relating to reality without preconceptions."

Fr. Giussani gives us the profound reason, which is like a punch below the belt to our presumption. Why do we need contemporaneity with the event that brings forth this new way of looking at everything? Because "in fact, a permanently open and unprejudiced judgment is as impossible for man's efforts alone as it is unique in its respect and exaltation of the dynamism of reason."⁹⁸

This is what the Pope reminded us in his speech prepared for [his annual words at the academic year opening of] Rome's Sapienza University, "Yet if reason, out of concern for its alleged purity, becomes deaf to the great message that comes to it from Christian faith and

wisdom, then it withers like a tree whose roots can no longer reach the waters that give it life. It loses the courage for truth and thus becomes not greater but smaller.”⁹⁹

In order to acquire this, a work is necessary. “For the mentality to be truly new, it’s necessary that out of its consciousness of ‘belonging,’ it continually engage in comparison with present events. Since this new mentality is born of a present place, it judges the present. Otherwise it doesn’t exist: if it doesn’t enter into the experience of the present, the new knowledge doesn’t exist, is only an abstraction. In this sense, not to make judgments on events is to mortify faith,”¹⁰⁰ because it’s like barring entry to any aspect of reality to the newness of life, experience, and affection that has magnetized us.

It is there, in facing circumstances, that we see the truth and power of faith. Faith grows this way, risking it in reality and challenging everything with Him in our eyes. This is why it’s not a matter of learning a discourse by heart and repeating it, but learning a gaze, says Fr. Giusani. “The modality by which the criterion for judging is born can be succinctly indicated with the word *gaze*.” How can we learn this gaze? “It’s a matter of staying before the event encountered”: it’s the precedence given to the event, to what happens, to what He does. “It’s a matter of staying before the event encountered without at a certain point severing the loyalty of the gaze out of concern for affirming what we well please [...]. The loyalty of the gaze upon the event is what permits the birth in us of the new criterion of judgment, and keeps us from being subjected to the ‘world’s’ criteria.”¹⁰¹

This is possible. It’s within close reach of all of us. Just let His Presence enter. As this friend says, “I’m writing to thank you for the paternity you have for us, for me. Never in my life have I lived with the gladness and intensity with which I’ve been living this past year, since I encountered some precise faces, an ambit of people, witnesses who have made every thing become new for me. I’ve never been this way, not even twenty years ago, when I encountered the Movement [you can always be born again, even when you’re old]. Each thing seems new to me and becomes the circumstance with which ever more inevitably I compare myself and ask to recognize His presence. It’s impressive how things happen to me: with each day that passes, I’m experiencing a gusto with my work, wife, children, and friends, that was formerly unimaginable [this is what faith brings: does it interest you?]. It’s impressive how my thirst for Him grows every day. I’m not able to describe all this well, but I’m certain of one thing, that I’m not just convincing myself; it’s not just a beautiful emo-

tion. I'm sure of this because I'm happy and things have a different heft, and change: it's the experience of the hundred-fold. In all my years as CL member, I've never found myself wanting to do School of Community as I do now. Now it happens that increasingly frequently I hear ringing in my ears your provocation, asking us, what experience do you have of this? What does School of Community have to do with your day? What does this other thing mean? It's impressive how what we're reading can become a concrete experience. How impressive it is to catch sight of when our living backslides into propaganda, a user's manual. Because of the way I am, I don't understand many things and at times they seem far from my structure, but it impresses me that I see the changes in myself in daily life, because I simply discover more what I truly wanted even before [you discover, living, what you truly wanted before]. I feel like Peter before Jesus, who had to take some steps, and was changed even though his temperament was always the same. I have had to take some steps, and I took them, and have changed. It brings to mind the title of last year's Exercises, '*Christ in His beauty draws me to Him.*' This sentence has become so real for me, and only last summer it was unimaginable, maybe at best the fruit of self-convincing. An exceptional fact has happened, and now what I've written to you is happening to me!"

Only a newness like this can conquer the dualism that casts Christ out of history, trivializing, as Fr. Giussani said in the *Traces* insert, "the historic import of the Christian Fact,"¹⁰² reducing it to moralism, something incapable of having a culturally significant face.

3. Witness, the task of life

The last two words. For us, for whom this has happened, witness is the task of our life. Fr. Giussani told us in his talk on faith that we have been chosen to believe.¹⁰³ We have been given the grace to believe. Our task is to witness to what we've been given, because this is the greatest charity we can give to all our friends and those we encounter on the road of life. I'll return to this for a moment tomorrow, because the fact we saw yesterday evening has shaken all of us with a provocation to mission. But mission can be nothing other than a more acute awareness of what Christ means for life, because only to the degree that we live this newness will we feel the urgency of mission. Otherwise, as Fr. Giussani said, "We'll try to escape the question that is our faith," thinking of mission. But "what does it matter if the whole world joins Communion and Liberation, and I lose myself?"¹⁰⁴

Sunday morning, April 27

During the entrance and exit:

Ludwig van Beethoven: Concerto for violin and orchestra in B major op. 61

David Oistrakh, violin

André Cluytens – Orchestre National de la Radiodiffusion Française

“Spirto Gentil” n. 6, EMI

Don Pino: “Man’s life consists in the affection which sustains him most, for there he finds his greatest satisfaction.”

Angelus

Lauds

■ ASSEMBLY

Giancarlo Cesana. We’ve done the traditional sorting out of questions and chosen the most representative ones, that is, those that indicate the greatest difficulties, leaving aside the logical evaluation of these difficulties.

This is the first question. “We often stop at the sign. Does this happen because the sign is weak, or because we resist it? What work do we have to do in order to be loyal in front of reality?”. This question is completed with the next question, from the Bergamo community. “We all sincerely desire to bind ourselves to Jesus, to love Him, love precisely Him, and instead we risk stopping at the sign, at its beauty. What does it mean to go beyond?” We all remember that Fr. Giussani said that sign and Mystery coincide. Then the question concludes, “How can we pursue the itinerary of knowledge all the way?”

Julián Carrón. Why do we stop at the sign? Because the sign is weak? No! The sign is a sign and asks for our freedom, so much so that Fr. Giussani told us that freedom enters into play in the interpretation of the sign.¹⁰⁵ It is the nature of the sign that asks for our freedom, precisely because the sign refers, makes present something that in that moment I don’t touch, I don’t see. For this reason, I am called to decide whether I want to acknowledge this other or if I stop. It’s not

because of the weakness of the sign, but because of the very nature of the sign. Let's return to the example of the flowers. If one of you receives a bouquet of flowers, what happens? Try immerse yourselves in what Fr. Giussani calls the structure of your reaction, in order to discover what happens to you, and you will realize right away that even though the sign is small, it refers, calls to something else.

A few years ago, when I was teaching at Catholic University, a student brought her friend to listen for the first time, a girl who normally didn't attend the lessons. I had to speak about the sign, and for the whole hour I tried to explain the lesson from *The Religious Sense* on the sign, using the example of the flowers.¹⁰⁶ For the whole time this girl raised objections. There was a pause between one hour and the next and one of the young men of the course got a flower from the cloister lawn and put it there on her desk. When she returned and found the flower in front of her, at first she didn't think much of it, assuming that her friend had brought her this flower and so she was at ease. But when the second hour of lesson ended she said to her friend, "You brought me the flower, right?". "No." "What do you mean, no? So who brought it to me?" and she spent the entire afternoon with her friend, repeatedly asking, "Who brought me the flower?" For an hour she had raised objections. A person can resist a line of logic, an explanation, but before reality, before the sign, the "I" comes forth. Why did she spend the entire afternoon with the question, "Who brought me the flower?" Because the flower called her; it burned within her. In what sense can we say that in this case sign and Mystery coincide? Because I mustn't throw away the flower. The more I think of the flower, the more the other comes to mind.

When for the first time your boyfriend sent you a bouquet of flowers, each time you clashed with him you felt the repercussion. Wasn't that the occasion of memory? You didn't throw them away; the flowers made him present, but none of you stopped just at the flowers. The more you looked at the flowers, the more you felt strongly the beloved. He's there, in the flowers. But why do you think of the other? Because he's there!

As Fr. Giussani said, reality is the first appearance of Being. In this sense, Mystery and Being coincide. We can go beyond, even further, when I say "I", but I can say it in complete distraction, as I can look at the flowers distractedly. This is why Fr. Giussani isn't banal when, explaining this, he insists on a decisive particular in order not to reduce the use of reason (because our temptation is to reduce). While

we say “I am,” Fr. Giussani affirms that we don’t say “I am” truthfully until we say it with the awareness that “I am made.”¹⁰⁷ And the difference is profound. If I say it, and get used to saying it with ever-greater awareness of this, I can enter into any circumstance with certainty and a possibility of gladness. It’s like a child: if he becomes aware of his belonging to his parents, he can enter a dark room with his mother, in any circumstance, without fear. The consistence of the person lies in this awareness. Not because I have to set myself aside, not because I have to throw away the sign that I am, not because I have to throw away the flowers, but because I say “Flowers,” because I say “I,” with all the awareness of what exists, because otherwise I use reason as measure, not as openness to all that exists.

Fr. Giussani tries to explain it with different examples in the tenth chapter of *The Religious Sense* – why don’t you listen to me when I tell you to read it? It’s like the gush of a spring; if it were conscious, it would acknowledge that in that moment it is flowing from the spring. It’s like a voice that, as soon as the vocal chords stop vibrating, ceases. In this instant I am because an Other is making me now. And the more I become aware of this, the more I become conscious of this You who is making me now. It’s tremendous, the reduction with which we look at reality or look at our “I,” a reduction that impedes us from grasping the ultimate vibration of Being in every thing.

We have to help each other in this work, my dear friends. Why is it a work? Because we live in a culture that teaches us to use reason in a certain way. We always use it this way, so much so that in the way we say “I,” in the way we describe reality, in the way we talk about things, usually the Mystery is absent; it’s all reduced, without breath, without vanishing point, Fr. Giussani used to say, and for this reason we feel everything, all our circumstances as suffocating. But above all, do you know what? It’s not true that reality is this. Reality always has within this vanishing point that makes us breathe freely. And what is truly sad is that we live reality as suffocating when, in fact, reality thus reduced is a lie, the lie of our culture, the lie of our society, the lie that pervades even in us. I don’t care about this for its moral, moralistic aspect, but because of the lack of breathing space that so often we experience. It’s not so much an error in the way of living reality; it’s a falsehood. It’s like when someone thinks he has cancer and he doesn’t have it. It’s false. Or when a person lives with the awareness of being an orphan, when actually she has a father. Do you understand? It’s false! Okay, a person can be better or worse off with a

father, but it's false: first of all it's false, denying the fact of a father. This is why faith is knowledge. It's not an opinion of mine. It's knowledge. Reality doesn't exist without this You. I see whether faith is knowledge from the way I look at things, live reality, live my circumstances. In this one sees whether for us faith is knowledge and not an *a priori*. It's a reality more real than me, because without Him I wouldn't exist now.

Cesana. So the fact that nine lepers out of ten didn't return isn't just a matter of bad manners.

Carrón. Exactly.

Cesana. The point isn't that they didn't thank the One who healed them.

Carrón. Exactly. It's a problem of knowledge, once again. They didn't understand the import of what was inside. One can decide what he wants freely, for heaven's sake, it couldn't be otherwise, but let's at least help each other to clarify the terms of the question. If a person doesn't have cancer, he doesn't have cancer. If a fellow isn't an orphan and has a father, he has a father. Then you decide how you want to relate to your father, if you'll live as orphans or as children. This you'll decide, and as you know, I'm not here to spare you this. But what I want to battle with all of you is the lie that we're orphans, when instead we have a father. On this point I'll never be on your side. He exists! Not because I, the leader, say so – I don't care about the role. He exists because He exists, and even if I spoke the contrary, it wouldn't remove Him from reality.

Cesana. "Fr. Giussani said that reality had never betrayed him." Question: Why trust, if it's contradictory?

Carrón. Fr. Giussani said these things not when he was out for a stroll, smoking a cigar, but when he was in a really bad way. Why could he say this? Even in that moment, what did reality witness to? What Fr. Camillo said to Peppone. What did reality testify? That He exists, that the Mystery exists, and thus, even if contradictory, reality exists. I can be sick, I can be depressed (add everything you want) but I exist, so much so that I'm in a really bad way or depressed, and per-

ceive just the same that I exist. Heck! I don't just perceive it: I have to bear it! But nobody can stop me from saying, "I exist" and if I exist, an Other is making me now, and no contradictoriness can block Him. This is why reality never betrays; it never blocks me from acknowledging Him.

When we stop at the contradictoriness it means that we, as usual, think of reality, on the one hand, and Christ, on the other. But, as Fr. Giussani always reminded us, St. Paul says something that exceeds everything. "Reality is Christ."¹⁰⁸ Because if I look at reality – any reality – without Christ in my eyes, I don't look well at reality, I'm reducing reality, because in this way there's no reality, no history; it's like looking at reality erasing the resurrection of Christ. We have to update the maps, like after the discovery of America.

Cesana. So reality betrays when you don't look at it as a sign?

Carrón. Exactly. When you don't look at it according to its truth, according to the totality of all the factors of reality. And who does this? Those who don't use reason according to the true nature of reason. It doesn't require any particular genius, but an education to use reason according to its nature: awareness of reality according to all its factors. If someday we decided to educate ourselves to this, maybe we'd begin to breathe freely.

Cesana. "How can one say You to Christ through the companionship when the companionship itself is abstract and scandalizes us?" "What does it mean to say that heart and witness go together when the witness says something that goes against what the heart says?"

Carrón. How can you say You to Christ through the companionship when the companionship itself is abstract and scandalizes? And how can you say, "I am You who make me" when you're a sinner? Because you can be an inveterate sinner and yet you can't deny that an Other is making you now. And to the question "Do you love me?", you can respond, like Peter, full of sin, "I don't know how, I don't know how, truly I don't know how, because I feel all the remorse for my past life, but I can't avoid expressing all my human fondness for you, Christ."¹⁰⁹

If we began looking at ourselves in this way, perhaps we wouldn't have such a problem with the difficulty of the companionship. Thank goodness there's a companionship like this, because otherwise there

wouldn't be place for a sinner like me, do you understand? I'm delighted...

Cesana. ...That there's a companionship of sinners...

Carrón. ...that there's a companionship of sinners! Otherwise, go look for another place, if they'll admit you, if you have the "level" to enter. I'm happy to belong to this Church full of shabby characters, because Jesus came not for the righteous, but for sinners, and I'm grateful to have constant need of His forgiveness, mercy, and tenderness.

All these things, again, are a reduction. Why can I look at myself deep down, without hiding my evil? I'm not defined by my evil, because He continues to give life after I've erred, and continues to tell me, "You are mine because what defines you isn't what you manage to do, but what I did with you at baptism. I grasped you and all your evil is not more powerful than the energy with which I grasped you!" And this holds the same for our companionship. I don't want to censure anything of all the sinfulness among us, but even when it's there, I can't do anything but say whoever the person, the most recent arrival or the most inveterate sinner of all, this person is called like me, grasped like me; and even though this person is here with all the pain of his evil, he is grasped like me and gives me the witness of responding yes, even in the midst of his evil.

We need to have the courage sometimes to look at our evil, and that of the others, otherwise we always remain on the threshold, as if we have to turn our heads, avert our gaze not to see it. This doesn't mean that we can use it as an alibi to say "Nothing changes." No. Someone who feels his own evil doesn't say, "So I can do whatever I will please." One who perceives his own evil cannot feel it without pain. Feeling we're sinners isn't the same as being cynical, let's not confuse things. I can have all the pain of my evil and have all the tension toward Christ, but I don't justify it; I don't say under my breath, "So shut up and put up, because this is how I am...", as I hear you say so often. You're not forced to be "this way," because there's the tension to change: it's the humility of the entreaty. They're two different things – we all understand it very well – because a person who constantly realizes his evil and starts anew, who wouldn't hug him in continuation? As you do with your children. But it's another thing when the child becomes an adult and remains obstinate; then you don't let him get

away with anything. They're different things. This is why it's not a problem if there's this tension in us, because it's different from a justification of everything or connivance with your own evil.

As for the second question, there can't be contradiction between the witness and the heart; if the heart is given us to acknowledge the truth there can't be contradiction: I can use my heart badly as criterion of judgment, as many times we use it badly, or the witness may not be a witness, but we know that when there's this correspondence, heart and witness coincide.

I'd like to add a few more words: be careful not to reduce the witness to a merely coherent person, because we all encountered the Movement through people with limitations, and this didn't block their witnessing to us of something other. Witnesses aren't necessarily coherent: they're taken, magnetized by an Other, because they witness to me that they belong to an Other, that they are entirely determined by an Other, that they are wholly taken by an Other, and for this reason I can't look at the witness without being referred to this Other, even in the midst of whatever sinfulness this witnesses might have. The only question is that we can't cheat on this, but it can't be a contradiction because the truth is one: there can't be contradiction between the measure of my foot and my shoe.

Cesana. Many ask you, "What does it mean for me to say, 'You'?"

Carrón. Let's read together the response that Fr. Giussani gave, because for me it describes it with acuteness and drama. "I imagine the person who enters that room daily [and how does she enter? Just as we would enter], everything she mulls over in her thoughts, all the pressures of her states of mind and all the emptiness of her weariness [with which she arrives home; there's nothing sentimental: there's all the drama of daily life], all the fullness of the overflowing of her desires and imaginations, dominated and challenged by this 'You'. [dominated and challenged. I can't reduce my 'I' to my thoughts, my void, my tiredness, because I find myself before this You]. [...] Yes, Lord, there's nothing else to say; whether you praise me or reprove me, look at me as you gazed at Your interlocutor in the Masaccio painting, embrace me as you did St. John at the last supper, cry over my errors, fragility, weakness, and betrayals, accompany me in the fervor and freshness of the years that pass quickly or in the slow pace of maturity and old age" and that everything is dominated and challenged by this You. "This 'You' is like

an endless spring of fresh water [...] limpid, that is, with a proposal for life”¹¹⁰, with a Presence that dominates life. This You is a real You, Christ alive, risen, present in our midst, the Christ with whom Saint Paul filled the whole Roman empire, whom he brought everywhere, whom he announced to everyone, who has reached even us: this You whom, if I weren't to hear Him speak anymore, I couldn't continue living.

This is what it means to say You, not in the poetic moment of thought, but in the midst of all the drama of living; each of you can think of what saying You meant when a human presence entered your life. Therefore you can't talk about this without returning anew to that experience in which you can trace a real presence of a You; even when I'm tired or sad or when something beautiful happens to me or when I see a show, I can't help but think of this You. Does this happen to you sometime in your life? Has it happened? A You different from your “I,” a You, a You without whom life would be flat, and even the beautiful things would be flat without being able to share them with this You; the first thing that comes to mind when something happens to you, not as a “spiritual” meditation, is to think of this You, is to share it with this You. It's this You that dominates. But for us, is Christ this You, or is He something else? The image of the sepulchre? This You is what dominates life. And this is precisely the synthesis of our life: what makes life different is the fact that Christ is this You and that He becomes familiar. Life is different not because there is one circumstance or another, but because it is dominated by this You. Many people have all the belongings they could want, and yet they can't stand themselves anymore, because it's not a problem of circumstance: the circumstance can even be good and I could have everything I could wish, and yet I can find that I can't stand myself, because the “I” is made for the Infinite, for the unique relationship with this You.

Cesana. Saying “You” is also making memory of what has happened and constitutes us?

Carrón. Certainly. If someone falls in love, the morning after she can't help but be filled with the memory of what has happened. The present is entirely charged with all that has happened. For this reason, the day before falling in love is one thing, and the day after falling in love is another. Both days can be apparently equal in their everyday nature, but what makes the difference? That latter is charged with a memory, and the former isn't, because she hadn't fallen in love yet.

This is why Fr. Giussani says memory, because it's as if my "I" were entirely pervaded by this memory, that isn't a remembrance, because my "I" is wholly pervaded, seized, dominated.

Cesana. This is an example of a negative syllogism: "At today's assembly you said that the test of faith is satisfaction. But then every time we're not satisfied, does faith vacillate?"

Carrón. On this question of satisfaction there's always difficulty because...

Cesana. ...We're always mistaking the consequence for the cause.

Carrón. Yes. Today, chatting about this, a friend told me that someone had told him, "I do everything that we tell each other, but I'm not satisfied."

Recently I gave an example at a *Memores Domini* novices retreat. Imagine that you're hungry. If a person is hungry, does this worry him? Does he start saying, "So then, am I hungry because yesterday I didn't like my dinner? Because I didn't eat? Or maybe because it wasn't good enough? It was a dinner fit for the gods!" So then, why? Who worries about being hungry? Nobody. Does somebody start worrying when he's hungry, yes or no? If so, why? Because he's decided to get worried? No, because hunger is part of our "I" and so being hungry is a good thing; it's not a negative thing. The negative thing is *not* being hungry. Don't you agree?

Cesana. Yes, when you have no appetite it's because you're sick.

Carrón. Exactly. When you have no appetite it's because you're sick. But our attempt, our dream is not to be hungry, that is, to be sick. When the day comes that you have no appetite, you can't eat, you don't like to eat. So we think that being satisfied means not being hungry, when instead being satisfied— as Fr. Giussani said about thirst — means "continually satisfying a continual thirst."¹¹

I am satisfied with the encounter with a person, satisfied to such a point that I want to see her again; when I eat something I like, I'm so happy to have eaten it that I'd like to eat some again. Once you've eaten something good, would you like never to eat it again?

What we're talking about is a satisfaction that increasingly piques your desire, precisely because it satisfies you, because the other

things that don't satisfy you don't interest you anymore. If you eat two dishes, one of which satisfies you and the other which doesn't, both take away your hunger at the moment, but what do you desire, to return to eat the one that satisfied you or the one that didn't satisfy you? Now, if every time I experience satisfaction in the relationship with Christ – and this is the test – Christ is so real as to satisfy me – I increasingly desire that this become familiar, the more I feel hunger, the more I desire. Why? Because I don't believe in the positivity of His presence? No, because I'm sure of the positivity of His presence, and for this reason increasingly desire this relationship that constitutes me and make my life different.

Cesana. “How does the gaze on reality become judgment? What are the characteristics of this gaze?”

Carrón. All of us relate to reality and look at ourselves and others with a judgment. Deep down, the way we live is a judgment. Think of how each of you lives with yourself: deep down, it's with a judgment.

What introduces faith? A new judgment: a judgment about yourself is the one you manage to give, but it's a relationship, a relationship with an Other, that I continually allow to enter. Look at when you get up in the morning, when you're tired in the evening, when you do something mistaken, deep down there's always a judgment, a reproof. As happens for Peter, until Jesus challenges him and says, “Peter, do you love me?” and then the judgment changes; his sentiment about himself, the way he experiences himself and experiences the relationship with everything changes. This brings forth a gaze upon reality that is entirely different.

How do I learn this gaze? In this relationship. It's not that I don't constantly need this gaze. This amazes me: how can you live without returning to read Fr. Giussani to find this gaze, which I couldn't find anywhere else when I was alone in Madrid? That gaze was what allowed me to have a relationship with myself and to have a relationship with reality that I couldn't find elsewhere. And since I continued to make mistakes, since I continued to be sad, I continually needed that contemporaneity that introduces this gaze on me, and therefore I returned, I returned to this relationship. And how did I return? What can you do that I did? Where did I find it? I couldn't call Him on the phone; I couldn't go to lunch with Him, therefore I found Him where I found Him, in the books that I received, in the few things

published in Spanish. You have many more than me and you don't use them: tough luck! Do you have this urgent need to constantly find anew this gaze? Tell me if there's another place, another locus, where you can read something that introduces you to this newness of gaze as well as the two lines you've read of Fr. Giussani. If you don't need this, I don't think we have much else to say to each other. Tomorrow morning, when we're stuck in a circumstance, when your husband's in a foul mood and your son's I don't know what, we need to let this gaze in again. Where do we find it? Without it, what do we do? We do what comes readily to mind, that is, we reduce reality to the common mentality, the common framework, suffocating, unbearable. But you're not forced into this. You've received the same grace I have. What's the only difference? That I use it; I put it into play continually, because nothing else interests me. Can you do this, or is some particular genius required? This is what used to anger Fr. Giussani, "What do I have that you don't? I have this 'yes,' and that's all."

Cesana. "Does the new knowledge derive from staying attached to a locus where the charism is alive? What does it mean to experience a contemporaneusness with the Event?"

Carrón. The contemporaneusness with the Event can be in all the modalities through which the charism reaches me, which, as we know, can be the most varied: a letter in *Traces*, a book, a witness, a piece of news, that is, the myriad modalities through which Christ reaches me with His newness. Without this, what do I live on? Television: I look at reality in the same way as everybody else. If this is enough for you after encountering Christ, what can Christ do? Continue smiling, like a mother, still taking the initiative, trying to redeem you and to redeem each of us. This is what we try to do. A companionship like ours wants to be this fierce fighter to make Christ present, to make the memory of Christ alive among us, in such a way that we can experience this contemporaneusness, this new gaze that has entered history with Him. This is the goal.

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF MONSIGNOR MASSIMO CAMISASCA

Dear friends, these Exercises have been important for me, as I hope they have been for each of you. I truly desire to return soon to these words, as soon as we have the pages in hand, to pursue them more deeply, to discover what in these days I haven't yet been given to discover. The greatness of these Exercises – at least this is how I've experienced it – lies in the fact that their protagonist is the least spiritualistic there can be: the Holy Spirit. He is intelligence and affection, the intelligence and affection of Jesus, and He is also the protagonist in this liturgy, as we have heard in these readings. In the coming year I want to return to these words, these pages, this trace of Fr. Giussani drawn by Carrón, to discover ever more fully this method of God that is the Holy Spirit, to enter within His life.

“I will not leave you orphans” (Jn. 14:18). Of all the expressions of Jesus and the apostles that the liturgy of the Church this morning has set before us, had us listen to, “I will not leave you orphans” is what most struck me and what I felt most directly referred to these days; it seems to encapsulate all my experience and all the adventure and the meaning of my life.

An orphan isn't just someone who's lost his father or mother. He's lost them too early, when he still absolutely needed them to be himself, to mature, to reach his potential in his personality, to learn to live, to learn to enjoy things, events, to learn to judge and to love. Jesus says, “I don't leave you as orphans. I know you need me.” The disciples are disoriented, as we are at times, however confusedly they sensed what would happen, and Jesus says, “I don't leave you alone. What has begun between Me and you doesn't end here. Not only that, but in the time to come it will grow, deepen, become a light that will illuminate your whole life, a force that will sustain you in every trial, a love that will make possible – easy, in fact – every sacrifice.”

Jesus says these same words to us, to each of us, as He says to each of His own in every age of history, in every moment of life. What has begun doesn't end. Not because of an illusion of ours, an effort of our will, a utopia, because we close our eyes before the difficulties of history and existence. No, not because of this, but because He is alive, because He continually takes the initiative in a thousand ways to open

my eyes, to open my heart so the beginning may be renewed in a greater and truer profundity.

How can we be contemporaries of Christ? But it's He who is contemporary with you, in every moment of your existence! Just open yourself to His initiative, to what He does, and His contemporaneity enters your life as a fact that is renewed. "In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live." (Jn. 14:19). This is real, and permit me to witness to this, because many of you have given me this testimony. Just read the letters in *Traces*, just read with an open heart the hundreds and hundreds of emails and stories. Truly, our life is constellated with stars. Time doesn't row against us, if we seek, if we entreat the Holy Spirit for this singular face, as Carrón reminded us yesterday, echoing Fr. Giussani's words, if we ask the Spirit to become ever more the object of our thought and words.

"And I will ask the Father, and will give you another Advocate to be with you always." (Jn. 14:16). It is He who remains in us, who makes His dwelling place among us. Because, you see, Jesus doesn't limit Himself to promising, to beginning (the beginning is the promise), but continually fulfils what He promises. In these days I've heard this, I've understood this, I've experienced this, not only in the words I've heard but also in you whom I've seen. And Jesus says it: "You will see."

What is Baptism if not the fulfilment of this promise? What is the Eucharist, the daily Baptism of the adult Christian, if not the expression of this continual initiative of the unbounded love of Jesus for each of us, through us, for all men? And what is the Movement if not the new space Christ continually creates for us, to give His life, the life that never ends? How many calls to this in these days – the people, the events that call us to Him, the miracles of holiness that force us to think of God, that keep us from reducing Christ to our measure. And, after all, who is Fr. Giussani? Who is Fr. Giussani if not the person in whom the initiative of God was manifested more powerfully to make us His own? Jesus hasn't left us as orphans: He had us meet Fr. Giussani.

But this morning, to conclude this homily in a real way, not in a romantic, fairy-tale way, I'd like to tell you that not only is Jesus saying, "I don't leave you as orphans," but I feel Fr. Giussani is saying "I haven't left you as orphans," precisely because he hasn't called our attention to himself. In calling us to Christ, he has bound us to a locus, a human space, a space of freedom and grace that continues in time, that gives ever-new fruit, that establishes ever-new relationships, that increases our familiarity with God. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Julián Carrón. The first question I want to underline is a call to mission.

Last year I dwelt on charitable work; this time, because of the very powerful call of Brazil and because of the theme developed in these Exercises on faith, on witness, I want to repeat that our task is to live and witness to Christ, that is, mission. The grace given to us is for everyone, according to the method – we’ve always heard Fr. Giussani say this – used by the Mystery. God chooses a few people in order to reach everyone through them. We are chosen by God to be able to make Him present to all those we encounter.

This is why Fr. Giussani said that missionary power is internal; it is born from within one’s own faith. The impulse to witness to the ends of the earth – as it says in *The Journey to Truth is an Experience*, which collects the first books of the Movement – comes much more from within; from what we experience, than from an exterior need or an appeal: it is the desire to share with others what has happened to us.¹¹² This is why mission, the missionary vibration in us, is the ultimate test of faith, because the more you realize what a grace has befallen you, the more you feel the need, the urgency to communicate it to others. “The love of Christ impels me,” says Saint Paul, and he filled everyone from Jerusalem to Illyria with His presence.¹¹³ In Saint Paul we see this vibration, this urgency that arises from within what has happened.

For this reason, if we don’t live this missionary dimension, the problem isn’t so much that the others lose, but that *we* lose. Fr. Giussani said if we don’t live in this missionary dimension, those who risk losing themselves are first of all the Christians, that is, us. I was struck how so many university students perceived this when they were handing out flyers for the elections: they wanted to do it again because it benefited them, because it made them truly aware of the grace received. The more you realize this, the more you discover that the greatest gesture of charity you can do for anyone, what everyone needs more than any other thing, is to find the thing that in any circumstance can make them breathe freely, as it makes us breathe freely.

We can’t fail to remind each other of these things, precisely because mission is the chance to fulfil our personality. And the first realization of this missionary drive is to live mission where we are, in the place the Lord has put us: it’s the test of the vitality of our communities, and I don’t know how far we have grown in this regard. Reading the texts of the beginning of the Movement, seeing that right at the birth of the Movement the first GS

members went to Brazil, it seems that we have to ask the Lord to give us this passion, because I see it neither in myself nor in you, compared to how it vibrated in the first steps of the Movement. Perhaps this is why the Lord has set Brazil before our eyes, to call us not with words but through a fact. I wanted to tell you this and tell it to myself.

From the very beginning, when Fr. Giussani spoke of these things, it so permeated, so pervaded everything that he said that it was necessary to educate to consider nothing as personal property, but everything as destined for the whole world. So he invited the young people, whenever they received money, to give a small or large part, according to the individual's circumstances and generosity, as a concrete witness to a concern for the whole world and its happiness, which comes down to the spread of the Kingdom of God. What passion, even down to the concrete level!

This is why he said, "The high point of the initiative lies in those of us who have decided to dedicate themselves, without any time limit, to the service of the Church in the missionary world. These persons are sensed in GS as the 'front line' of the whole community that they express. The educative function for GS is irreplaceable."¹⁴

I don't think I need add anything else.

This allows me to move on to the question of poverty.

Poverty, as Fr. Giussani always reminded us, is a substantial dimension of our human and Christian experience, of the way we relate with reality. It has everything to do with what we've experienced these days, and therefore with faith. If faith is truly a satisfaction, we can be free of many useless things.

Poverty is born of His superabundance, of the fullness that He gives, that frees us in our use of things so we can dedicate them, as when a person is so happy that he says, "What would you have of me?". Who asks this question? Those who know that Christ is so able to fill everything, that they are open to whatever He chooses as a way to use life. If this happens with life in the supreme expression of vocation, imagine how it applies to goods, to money.

Our Common Fund contribution (and in general, the way we spend money) is an example of our way of relating to reality that is born of this judgment, this experience. We don't need alms; we need to verify whether Christ so fills us, becomes so decisive for life as to make us free. It's the verification of faith all the way down to our pockets, and thus it demonstrates that Christ is real. For this reason, Christ impels us to mission from within, impels us to use everything to further His Kingdom.

It's impressive to see how the Common Fund we collect is born simply from the commitment, at times very small but faithful, of thousands of people. This implies an education, a work on oneself, as you yourselves say in the letters you send about how each of you tries to live this.

"In the past, as you must know, I've never given a regular contribution, partly because of distance and the related difficulties of paying, and partly because I justified this position, thinking of all the hours I spent doing various activities for the good of the Movement, but this no longer satisfies me. I've been thinking about what Fr. Giussani said about the value of constancy and faithfulness in the gesture, and I want to make this commitment because I believe it will be for my own good, a concrete sign of my belonging to the Church through the charism of Fr. Giussani and my dependence on the experience of the encounter with the Movement."

Another person writes, "I'm grateful in particular that, with the call made at the Exercises, you've unblocked me from a prideful position that impeded my humble and faithful adherence." And another, "Because of the fact of not contributing to the Common Fund, I have the same sensation of having failed in love for myself that I feel when I don't do School of Community. It was as if part of me was removed from what I hold dearest in the world: our companionship, perceptible sign of the presence of Christ in the world."

Since no specific amount is requested of anyone, it's moving to see the simplicity with which this friend writes. "Dearest friends, just a few lines to explain the amount indicated as monthly contribution to the 2008 Common Fund. I know well that 3 euros aren't much, and might seem ridiculous, but it isn't at all if sent faithfully [it reminds me of the widow in the Gospel, who put in her meagre offering, and Jesus said, 'She has given more than all the others, because she gave out of her need']. I want to remember you with this gesture, above all in this period in which I've lost my job and don't know when things will change." We receive a great number of letters like this.

Some have witnessed that when something beautiful happens to them or their business, the first thing that comes to mind is their belonging to the body of Christ, which is our story. And thus the extraordinary donations this year have doubled. For example, "I've received my disability compensation and I wanted to give something to the Movement for the missions." "We're celebrating twenty-five years of marriage and wanted to share this with you."

Because of this criterion of poverty, we want to use this exclusively to spread our story. The Fraternity itself intends to spend all the money collected

by the Common Fund for the growth of the beautiful thing God has made happen among us. We don't want to accumulate anything. In fact, other than the ordinary expenses paid for the functioning of the life of the Fraternity, the Common Fund collected is used to support people, works, and activities of the Movement, for mission and aid to priests, keeping in mind the criteria for money use that Fr. Giussani taught us. Not just any desire, not just any need can be embraced for itself, but the intelligence with which one looks at reality reveals which need can be answered. For example, we don't help families to buy a home, but if a family has an urgent financial problem, it should be helped. We aid individuals, not firms, but if there's a work that expands the horizons of the Fraternity, one who is attentive can help it to create the patrimony with which it responds to needs. This asks all of us to be there, seeking not to bear reality, but to judge it. This precedence given to reality is a way of following what an Other does, even regarding money: following what an Other does, what an Other generates through you, prompts you, sets you in motion. If someone has an idea that contributes to accomplishing what we want to be in the world, this should be acknowledged and supported as a sign, as an example.

Just think how much more could be done if everyone were faithful to this commitment, even minimal, as this letter witnesses, "Up to now I haven't paid the Common Fund. I've been a member for four years. I don't really know why. Every year at the Exercises when I hear the accounts and the situation of how many don't pay, I think, 'For Pete's sake, the Movement is so important to me. Why don't I pay?'" But this always remained a moral reproof that only this year became a movement and decision, when I began following GS. Doing School of Community with the kids, I've spoken many times with them about what it means to follow the truth, to ask God to help us say 'yes' to what is true with simplicity, to ask Him to take us away from deception. Saying these things to the kids, I realized that in not paying the Common Fund, I was the first to lack seriousness with what the Fraternity asks of me. Why this resistance? Well, Fr. Giussani says that deep down, man is bad. I don't want it to be a justification, and I'm ashamed I haven't taken this gesture seriously until now, but I understand that truly, either I take interest and engage personally and totally in things, or Christ will always remain a bit far, relegated to what suits my fancy. So I finally decided to begin paying the Common Fund and this decision makes me glad; I'm certain that in doing so I will understand a bit more and be educated to stay with seriousness before everything, including the kids."

MESSAGES RECEIVED

On the occasion of the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation on the theme, “This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith,” the Sovereign Pontiff addresses his affectionate good wishes to the participants, and, as he hopes that this important encounter may evoke renewed faithfulness to Christ, our one hope, and fervent evangelical witness, he invokes bountiful effusions of celestial light on you and sends you, the responsables of the Fraternity, and all those gathered his special apostolic blessing.

*Tarcisio Cardinal Bertone,
Secretary of State of His Holiness*

Dearest ones,

The renewed proposal of the Spiritual Exercises is a providential occasion to explicitly renew the ties of affection of communion that bind us.

The victory of faith flows from the humility of our daily offering. As Fr. Giussani taught us, this consists on the one hand, in acknowledging that Jesus is the substance of all circumstances and relationships, and on the other, in invoking Him to manifest Himself as Presence that gives fullness to everything.

May the Virgin Mary sustain all the members of the Fraternity in living their vocation and their mission according to this purpose.

My greetings and blessing in the Lord.

*Cardinal Angelo Scola
Patriarch of Venice*

Dear Fr. Julián,

I unite with all of you in these Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, and ask the Risen Lord to make the truth and beauty of the charism shine for each of us and for all those who encounter us all over the world.

May the great signs that we are experiencing here in Brazil in the Church and above all in the Movement urge us on to a new, ever more free and personal beginning.

I am united with all of you and pray that Our Lady will accompany our whole Fraternity in this moment of grace for an increasingly greater service to the Church and the Holy Father.

Invoking the blessing of the Lord, I greet you cordially.

Bishop Filippo Santoro
Bishop of Petropolis

TELEGRAMS SENT

*His Holiness
Benedict XVI*

Holy Father,

26,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation have participated in the annual Spiritual Exercises in Rimini, and others in 62 countries via satellite link, on the theme, "This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith." Grateful for your message, we have experienced a renewed faithfulness to Christ, our one hope, deepening the awareness that faith is a method of knowledge that blossoms through grace at the apex of reason as acknowledgment of the exceptional presence of Jesus, "the One sent" by God to lead us to the Father.

Through your witness, Holy Father, we learn daily to repeat the words of Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words that explain life." If we cannot believe in Christ, we cannot believe in anything, because nothing less than Christ is enough, and only He fulfils the exigencies of our humanity.

We ask Fr. Giussani to implore Our Lady for gladness and peace for your person, and for us, the simplicity of faithfulness to Peter and the Church that makes Christ contemporaneous, on the road to holiness.

Fr. Julián Carrón

*His Eminence Tarcisio Cardinal Bertone
Secretary of State*

Your Eminence,

The 26,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation who have participated in the annual Spiritual Exercises in Rimini, and others in 62 countries via satellite link, meditating on the theme, "This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith," grateful for the words sent on behalf of Benedict XVI, are concluding the days of retreat with renewed will to be faithful to Christ and His Vicar on earth, to be witnesses of the fact that conquers the world and thus bearing the announcement of hope that fulfils our humanity.

May Mary illuminate your heart for ever-increasing intelligent collaboration to the spreading of the life of the Church in history.

Fr. Julián Carrón

*His Eminence Angelo Cardinal Bagnasco
President of the Italian Episcopal Conference*

Your Eminence,

The 26,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation who have participated in the annual Spiritual Exercises in Rimini, and others in 62 countries via satellite link, meditating on the theme, “This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith,” more certain of the Mystery present, confirm their commitment to serve the Church in Italy as witnesses to Christ, the rock upon Whom the future can be built.

Pained for the recent contestations of your person, the sign of a society that is indifferent, if not hostile, to the truth, we wish to tell you once again that we cherish you as a father who challenges the world’s misunderstandings for love of his children.

May Fr. Giussani and Mary protect your days and obtain for you the good desired.

Fr. Julián Carrón

*His Lordship Josef Clemens
Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity*

Your Lordship,

Once again the presence and words of Cardinal Ryłko have made present the blessing of the universal Church on the 26,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation who have participated in the annual Spiritual Exercises in Rimini, and others in 62 countries via satellite link. Meditating on the theme, “This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith,” as faithful laypeople raised in the

school of that credible witness, Fr. Giussani, we follow Benedict XVI who calls us to witness to the faith in Christ that responds to the needs of the heart of every man.

Fr. Julián Carrón

*His Eminence Angelo Cardinal Scola
Patriarch of Venice*

Dearest Eminence,

These days we have experienced the truth of your invitation to us: Christ is the consistence of everything and entreating Him in every circumstance is the most reasonable thing for each of us. More certain that “This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith,” that the One Sent by the Father has granted us as pure grace, and more grateful for the encounter with Fr. Giussani that opened the road to acknowledging Christ, we ask Our Lady to sustain your Episcopal mission for the unity of the Church.

Fr. Julián Carrón

*His Lordship Filippo Santoro
Bishop of Petrópolis*

Dearest Bishop Filippo,

These Spiritual Exercises began and have been dominated by what we saw happen in the Cathedral of São Paulo, the greatest event the Lord has wrought in our life this year to help us acknowledge His presence among us.

May Our Lady of Aparecida make us so simple as to serve the Mystery at work in our life through this new beginning that exceeds all imagination.

Fr. Julián Carrón

ART IN OUR COMPANIONSHIP

Organized by Sandro Chierici

(Guide to the images drawn from art history that accompanied the classical music selections during the entrance and exit.)

Man's gaze on reality reaches the point of perceiving its form and intuiting its origin.

God takes man by the hand and leads him within history to the encounter with Christ. In the experience of the companionship of Christ the origin of reality becomes knowable. Since then, man is no longer alone in his search for happiness, goodness, and justice; faith in Christ present becomes the criterion for judgment and engagement with reality.

1. Vincent Van Gogh, *The Starry Night*. New York, Museum of Modern Art
2. *The El Niño* seen by satellite. NASA Photograph, Goddard Laboratory for Atmospheric Sciences
3. Caspar Friedrich, *The Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*. Hamburg, Kunsthalle
4. Caspar Friedrich, *The Chalk Cliffs of Rügen*. Winterthur, Reinhart Collection
5. René Magritte, *The Seducer II*. Private collection.
6. René Magritte, *The Human Condition*. Geneva, Spierei Collection
7. René Magritte, *The Call of the Peaks*. Private collection
8. René Magritte, *Evening Falls*. Houston, Menil Collection
9. *The Rest of the Creator on the Seventh Day*, mosaic. Monreale, Cathedral
10. *Adam Led into Eden*, mosaic. Monreale, Cathedral
11. *The Covenant of God with Noah*, mosaic. Monreale, Cathedral
12. *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, mosaic. Monreale, Cathedral
13. *Isaac Blesses Jacob*, mosaic. Monreale, Cathedral
14. *Jacob Wrestles the Angel*, mosaic. Monreale, Cathedral
15. *Joseph Leads Mary and Jesus to Egypt*, mosaic. Monreale, Cathedral
16. *The Preaching of the Baptist*, mosaic. Florence, Baptistery of St. John
17. *The Calming of the Storm*, mosaic. Venice, St. Mark's Basilica

18. *The Calling of Zacchaeus*, mosaic. Venice, St. Mark's Basilica
19. *The Widow's Mite*, mosaic. Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare nuovo
20. *The Healing of the Blind Men of Jericho*, mosaic. Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare nuovo
21. *The Healing of the Demoniac*, mosaic. Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare nuovo
22. *The Healing of the Woman with the Hemorrhage*, mosaic. Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare nuovo
23. *The Samaritan Woman at the Well*, mosaic. Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare nuovo
24. *The Healing of the Paralytic in Capernaum*, mosaic. Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare nuovo
25. *The Healing of the Paralytic of Bethsaida*, mosaic. Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare nuovo
26. *The Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes*, mosaic. Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare nuovo
27. *Jesus on the Mount of Olives*, mosaic. Venice, St. Mark's Basilica
28. Eugène Burnand, *Peter and John Running to the Sepulchre*. Paris, Musée d'Orsay
29. Francesco Bassano, *The Good Samaritan*. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum
30. Constantijn Daniel Renesse, *Parable of the Good Samaritan*. Paris, Louvre
31. Jean-François Millet, *The Good Samaritan*. Cardiff, National Gallery of Wales
32. Vincent Van Gogh, *The Good Samaritan*. Otterlo, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller
33. Silvestro Lega, *Landscape with Peasants*, detail. Private collection
34. Ardengo Soffici, *Peasants*. Poggio a Caiano, Municipal collection
35. August Macke, *Woman Sewing*. Dortmund, Galerie Utermann
36. Umberto Boccioni, *Peasant at work*. Roma, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna
37. Camille Pissarro, *The Potato Harvest*. London, private collection
38. Camille Pissarro, *La Causette*. Private collection
39. Paul Cézanne, *Louveciennes*. Private collection
40. Camille Pissarro, *Rue Rémy, Auvers-sur-Oise*. Private collection
41. Camille Pissarro, *The Railroad Crossing at Pontoise*. Private collection
42. Camille Pissarro, *The Coast of the Hermitage, Pontoise*. New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

43. Camille Pissarro, *The Garden of Maubuisson, Pontoise*. Prague, Narodny Galerie
44. Vincent Van Gogh, *Tulip Fields*. Washington, National Gallery of Art
45. Arthur Lismer, *The Mining Village*. Private collection
46. Camille Pissarro, *Woman Hanging Laundry*. Paris, Musée d'Orsay
47. Silvestro Lega, *Education to Work*. Private collection
48. Cristiano Banti, *Filatrici di paglia della Valdelsa [Straw Spinners of Valdelsa]*. Private collection
49. Vincent Van Gogh, *The Plain of Crau near Arles*. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum
50. Vincent Van Gogh, *Enclosed Field at Sunrise*. Private collection
51. Vincent Van Gogh, *Sower at Sunset*. Zurich, Bührle Collection
52. Vincent Van Gogh, *Cafe Terrace on the Place du Forum at Arles at Night*. Otterlo, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller
53. Vincent Van Gogh, *The Church of Auvers*. Paris, Musée d'Orsay

Notes

¹ Cf. J. Carrón, “Friends, That is, Witnesses,” Communion and Liberation Responsibles’ International Assembly. La Thuile, Italy, August 25-29, 2007, supplement to *Litterae Communionis-Traces*, vol. 9, n. 9, 2007.

² 1 Jn. 5:4.

³ Lk. 18:8.

⁴ L. Giussani, *Is It Possible to Live This Way?*, vol. 1, pp. 3-56.

⁵ Benedict XVI, “Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Participants in the Convention”, Pastoral Visit of his Holiness Benedict XVI to Verona on the occasion of the Fourth National Ecclesial Convention”, Verona, October 19, 2006.

⁶ Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission), February 22, 2007, (section 77).

⁷ L. Giussani, *Is It Possible to Live This Way?*, op. cit. p. 16.

⁸ Cf. L. Giussani, S. Alberto, J. Prades, *Generare tracce nella storia del mondo*, [Generating Traces in the History of the World], Rizzoli, Milano 1988, p. 32.

⁹ L. Giussani, *L’uomo e il suo destino. In cammino*, [Man and His Destiny: On a Journey] Marietti, Genova 1999, pp. 104-105.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 105.

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 106-107.

¹² Cf. J. Guittou, *Arte nuova di pensare* [New Art of Thinking], Edizioni Paoline, Roma 1981, p. 71.

¹³ G. Guareschi, *Don Camillo della bassa. Gente così. Lo spumarino pallido*, Superbur, Milano 1997, pp. 37-38.

¹⁴ C. Chieffo, “I cieli” [“The Heavens”], in *Canti* [Songs], Società Cooperativa Editoriale Nuovo Mondo, Milano 2002, p. 188.

¹⁵ L. Giussani, “He exists, if He works,” supplement to *30Giorni*, n. 2, February 1994, p. 68.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-70.

¹⁷ Cf. C. Chieffo, “Il monologo di Giuda” [“The Monologue of Judas”], in *Canti* [Songs], op. cit., p. 205.

¹⁸ Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 1.

¹⁹ L. Giussani, *Is It Possible...*, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

²⁰ Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, *La percezione della forma*, in *Gloria. Una estetica teologica*, vol. 1, [Seeing the Form, in The Glory of the Lord. A Theological Aesthetics] Jaca Book, Milano 1971, p. 171.

²¹ Lk. 5:8.

²² Mk. 2:12.

- ²³ Lk. 17:11-19.
- ²⁴ L. Giussani “Note for the second edition” in C. Martindale, *Santi* [Saints], Jaca Book, Milano 1992, p. 28.
- ²⁵ This refers to a conversation with Fr. Luigi Giussani at a “Day of Meditation for Married Couples,” Milan, January 23, 1977, *pro manuscripto*.
- ²⁶ G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, The Bodley Head, London 1957, p. 43.
- ²⁷ Cf. Saint Theophilous of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum libri tres*, I, 3.
- ²⁸ L. Giussani, *Certi di alcune grandi cose (1979-1981)* [Certain of a Few Great Things], BUR, Milano 2007, p. 10.
- ²⁹ Saint Augustine, *In Evangelium Ioannis*, Homily 26, n. 4.
- ³⁰ Saint Augustine, *Confessiones*, Book XIII, 8,9, (tr. Burke VJ) Fathers of the Church Inc., New York 1953, pp. 414-415.
- ³¹ L. Giussani, *Is It Possible...*, op. cit., p. 36.
- ³² Jn. 10:19-21, 36-39.
- ³³ Cf. Jn. 6:22-26,27,53,67,68.
- ³⁴ L. Giussani, *Is It Possible...*, op. cit., p. 38.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- ³⁶ L. Giussani, *Si può veramente (!) vivere così*, [Is It Truly (!) Possible to Live This Way?] BUR, Milano 1996, p. 140.
- ³⁷ L. Giussani - S. Alberto - J. Prades, *Generare tracce...* [Generating Traces], op. cit., p. 54.
- ³⁸ *Ivi*.
- ³⁹ Jn. 8:16.
- ⁴⁰ Jn. 10:30.
- ⁴¹ H.U. von Balthasar, *La percezione della forma*, in *Gloria. Una estetica teologica*, vol. 1, [Seeing the Form, in The Glory of the Lord. A Theological Aesthetics] op. cit., p. 169.
- ⁴² It is like Quincke’s resonator, which I studied in secondary school. It is a tool to identify which note dominates in a given chord: when a given column of sound passes in from of Quincke’s resonator, if the dominant note is a D, the resonator will echo that D, overwhelming the other notes. (L. Giussani, “To Live Reason,” in *Litterae Communionis-Traces*, n. 1, 2006, p. 2).
- ⁴³ Jacopone da Todi, “Lauda XC”, in *Le Laude*, Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, Firenze 1989, p. 313.
- ⁴⁴ L. Giussani, *Certi di alcune grandi cose (1979-1981)* [Certain of a Few Great Things], op. cit., p. 216.
- ⁴⁵ L. Giussani, *Si può veramente (!)...*, [Is It Truly Possible (!)...] op. cit., p. 103.
- ⁴⁶ Cfr. L. Giussani, *L’uomo e il suo destino...*, [Man and His Destiny...] op. cit., p. 129.
- ⁴⁷ Jn. 12:44.
- ⁴⁸ *Gaudium et Spes*, 21. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, Promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965.

⁴⁹ P. Sequeri, *L'idea della fede. Trattato di teologia fondamentale*, [The Idea of the Faith. Treatise on Fundamental Theology], Glossa, Milano 2002, p. 128.

⁵⁰ Saint Ambrose, *Hexameron*, VI, 8, 32.

⁵¹ P. Sequeri, *L'idea della fede. Trattato di teologia fondamentale*, [The Idea of the Faith. Treatise on Fundamental Theology], op. cit., p. 137.

⁵² J. Ratzinger, "In Love with Christ, In an Encounter, the Road", Homily of Cardinal J. Ratzinger present at the funeral of Fr. Giussani in the name of the Holy Father, Milan Cathedral, February 24, 2005, in *Litterae Communionis-Traces*, n. 3 2005.

⁵³ L. Giussani, *Si può vivere...* [Is It Possible...], op. cit., pp. 271-273. [English versions of the second and third parts of Giussani's text, respectively on hope and charity, are being prepared for publication.]

⁵⁴ H.U. von Balthasar, *La percezione della forma*, in *Gloria. Una estetica teologica*, vol. 1, [Seeing the Form, in The Glory of the Lord. A Theological Aesthetics] op. cit., pp. 317-318.

⁵⁵ L. Giussani, *Si può veramente (?)...* [Is It Truly Possible (?)], op. cit., p. 106.

⁵⁶ L. Giussani - S. Alberto - J. Prades, *Generare tracce...*, [Generating Traces ...], op. cit., pp. 32-33.

⁵⁷ 1 Cor. 12:3.

⁵⁸ L. Giussani, *L'uomo e il suo destino...* [Man and His Destiny...], op. cit., p. 57.

⁵⁹ Lk. 17:6.

⁶⁰ This refers to an encounter between Fr. Giussani and some *Memoires Domini* at Gudo Gambaredo on November 30, 1969, *pro manuscripto*.

⁶¹ Benedetto XVI, *Spe salvi*, 10.

⁶² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 1236.

⁶³ L. Giussani - S. Alberto - J. Prades, *Generare tracce...* [Generating Traces ...], op. cit., p. 65.

⁶⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 1253-1254.

⁶⁵ Gal. 3:26-28, 26.

⁶⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 1253. Everyone who is to be baptized is required to make a profession of faith. This is done personally in the case of an adult or by the parents and by the Church in the case of infants. Also the godfather or the godmother and the whole ecclesial community share the responsibility for baptismal preparation (catechumenate) as well as for the development and safeguarding of the faith and grace given at baptism.

⁶⁷ L. Giussani - S. Alberto - J. Prades, *Generare tracce...*, [Generating Traces ...] op. cit., p. 59.

⁶⁸ L. Giussani, *Il rischio educativo* [The Risk of Education], op. cit., p. 63. (The Viterbo 1977 section was printed in the original Italian book, but not selected for the English translation.)

⁶⁹ Jn. 3:4.

⁷⁰ L. Giussani, *L'attrattiva Gesù*, [The attraction of Jesus], BUR, Milano 1999, p. 48.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-153.

⁷² This is a reference to an Equipe published in Fr. Giussani's volume, *Uomini senza patria (1982-1983)* [Men Without a Homeland], in press, BUR.

⁷³ L. Giussani, *Il rischio educativo* [The Risk of Education], op. cit., p. 63. (The Viterbo 1977 section was printed in the original Italian book, but not selected for the English translation.)

⁷⁴ L. Giussani, *L'attrattiva Gesù* [The Attraction of Jesus], op. cit., p. 153.

⁷⁵ L. Giussani, *Il rischio educativo* [The Risk of Education], op. cit., p. 63. (The Viterbo 1977 section was printed in the original Italian book, but not selected for the English translation.)

⁷⁶ L. Giussani - S. Alberto - J. Prades, *Generare tracce...* [Generating Traces...], op. cit., p. 51.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

⁷⁹ Cf. L. Giussani, *Why the Church?*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston, 2001, pp. 84-87.

⁸⁰ Cf. F.M. Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part Two, Book Five, Chapter 5, *The Grand Inquisitor*. Penguin Books, Ltd, Harmondsworth, 1982, p. 298.

⁸¹ N. Berdjajev, *Pensieri controcorrente* [Countercurrent Thoughts], La Casa di Matrona, Milano 2007, p. 47.

⁸² L. Giussani, "Familiarity with Christ," in *Litterae Communionis-Traces*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2007, pp. 5, 4.

⁸³ Jn. 3:16,36.

⁸⁴ Jn. 6:47.

⁸⁵ Cf. Jn. 12:46.

⁸⁶ Jn. 4:14.

⁸⁷ Jn. 6:54.

⁸⁸ 1 Jn. 5:4.

⁸⁹ Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi*, 27.

⁹⁰ This refers to a lesson Fr. Giussani taught on December 1, 1990, in Riva del Garda, during the *Memores Domini* Advent retreat, *pro manuscripto*.

⁹¹ Jn. 17:3.

⁹² Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II, IIae, q. 179, a.1.

⁹³ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi*, 7.

⁹⁴ 2 Cor. 5:17.

⁹⁵ Cf. L. Giussani, *Dall'utopia alla presenza (1975-1978)* [From Utopia to Presence], BUR, Milano 2006, p. 330.

⁹⁶ C. Pavese, *Dialoghi con Leucò* [Dialogues with Leucò], Einaudi, Torino 1947, p. 164.

⁹⁷ L. Giussani - S. Alberto - J. Prades, *Generare Tracce...*[Generating Traces...], op. cit., pp. 74-75.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 75.

⁹⁹ Benedict XVI, “Lecture by the Holy Father Benedict XVI at the University of Rome “La Sapienza” (the Address that the Holy Father intended to give during a visit to the La Sapienza University in Rome on Thursday, January 17, 2008).

¹⁰⁰ L. Giussani - S. Alberto - J. Prades, *Generare Tracce...*[Generating Traces...], op. cit., p. 76.

¹⁰¹ *Ivi*.

¹⁰² L. Giussani, “The Long March to Maturity”, in *Litterae Communionis-Traces*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2008, p. 24.

¹⁰³ L. Giussani, “Faith Yesterday and Today”, in *Litterae Communionis-Traces*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2008, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ This refers to Fr. Giussani’s lesson in La Thuile on September 2, 1992, during the Spiritual Exercises for Priests, *pro manuscripto*.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. L. Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal, 1997, pp. 110-119.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 112.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 105-107.

¹⁰⁸ Col. 2:17. “These are shadows of things to come; the reality belongs to Christ.”

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Jn. 21:15-17.

¹¹⁰ See note 90.

¹¹¹ L. Giussani, *Avvenimento di libertà* [Event of Freedom], Marietti, Genova 2002, p. 20.

¹¹² Cf. L. Giussani, *The Journey to Truth is an Experience*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal, 2006, pp. 46-47.

¹¹³ Cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-20.

¹¹⁴ L. Giussani, *The Journey to Truth...*, op. cit., p. 47.

WITNESS OF CLEUZA AND MARCOS ZERBINI

Because of its absolute pertinence to the content of the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity, we offer here notes from the witness given by Cleuza and Marcos Zerbini on the evening of Saturday, May 10, during the Spiritual Exercises of Workers of Communion and Liberation, held in Rimini, May 9-11, 2008.

Marcos Zerbini. So that you can understand the context of our story, I want to tell you about a few facts.

Our origin is in the social teaching of the Catholic Church in Brazil. Every year during Lent the Church organizes a brotherhood campaign, and in 1986 the theme was “Land of God, Land of the Brothers,” posing us the question, “Do you do anything to help the people obtain land, or do you simply pray that the Lord will respond to this situation?”

This provocation caused us to invite people from a parish on the outskirts of São Paulo to discuss the problem of housing. In fifteen days we had gathered two hundred people, and in two months we had become two thousand. The only thing we knew to do was pressure the governments (those of the city and the nation) to respond to this situation.

Two years passed and nothing happened. So we organized with other social movements of the city of São Paulo and a common proposal emerged: to occupy land throughout the city. We talked to the people of the movement we headed, explaining the problems it could entail, and they decided not to participate in the occupation. But the social movement near our region did five land occupations, and since we were leaders of a social movement we went to support them. There were a total of eight hundred families. The owners of these areas went to the judges and a few months later law enforcement had evicted these families. Half of them had nowhere to go, so four hundred of these families were hosted in the parish halls of the churches. We asked them, “Why did you participate in something so dangerous?” They answered, “We participated because our leader explained that if we did this land occupation, the owner would have sold it to us at a

lower price.” This didn’t happen; that leader disappeared, but all this gave us the idea that should have been the obvious solution all along: we started looking for people who wanted to sell land. So we found a woman and told her the story. She was moved and gave us a low price and eighteen families bought the piece of land. Right away each built a shack on his plot and progressively began building a house. So we thought: if this worked with this little group that had nowhere to live, why don’t we do it also with the others who already were renting and who participated in our groups?

So we began reproducing this experience. We bought one, two, three... today twenty-six areas, where 17,500 families live. But the problem didn’t end with the purchase of the land. They had to build a house, and right away there was the problem of water, a sewage system, electricity... there was always a new problem arising, and so our movement began to grow.

Cleuza Ramos. Thank you for your hospitality. I’m happy to be here with you and to share with you this moment of joy.

The battle we’ve fought in the movement over the years has taught us how to organize to purchase houses. The years have passed and things have moved forward. In the year 2000 the neighborhoods were ready, with water, electricity, and schools, but I wasn’t happy; I didn’t see the people happy. I thought that as soon as someone homeless could have a house, he would be happy. And instead we saw that the families were building ever-higher walls so as not to see their neighbours, and this made me continually sadder. I asked whether the time had come to stop working, to halt everything, to leave that work. But ever since I was a little girl, I’ve always prayed and so I asked, “Lord, make me understand the road.”

At that point a fact happened: our friends told us they wanted a piece of land that belongs to the University Medical School, because they wanted to build a parish there. I didn’t want to go. I had no desire to do so, but Marcos insisted, “Let’s go, let’s go,” so finally I went. We spoke with the University President, explaining the problem, and he said, “Okay, let’s draw up a contract, and I’ll grant you the land,” but he insisted with me, “But ask me for something else, something more.” There was a factor that made me a bit sad. We lived far from the hospital. So I asked, “This is a Medical School, and there must be a lot of doctors; could you give us a doctor?” “Yes, I have lots of doctors.” He assigned us a doctor, but actually, this one never came, so the

President sent us another, Alexandre (who is translating for us today), arrived and told us, "I want to get to know your neighborhoods." I brought him around all our neighborhoods. Each one has a community center. I asked him, "Where do you want to stay?" "I want to stay in the school." So we organized a space for him in our school. "Here's your room; we'll find a little bed for you, too." He didn't have a stethoscope; he didn't have anything, and I wondered if he was really a doctor! I went to the school and saw him speaking with the teachers, so I thought, I haven't found a solution: I've found another problem! Marcos asked me, "Has your strange friend begun working?" Every day, Alexandre spoke with the people, spoke with the people... After a while I understood that the schools had a serious problem. There were many girls pregnant during their adolescence, and he was doing a work of consciousness-raising among the teachers. It was 2001 and to this day this program continues in our schools.

This was the occasion when I met the Movement of Communion and Liberation. At the time my soul was weak in me and I thought that maybe the battle wasn't worth it; I saw many things within our movement, many resolved problems, but many young people who finished school and needed to work, but had no great prospects for the future.

Marcos. A short time later we were both invited to a meeting of the Companionship of Works in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and exactly in those same days a group of young people from our neighborhoods sought us out, saying, "We have a great desire to study, to go to university." In Brazil the public university has very few openings and to gain entrance you have to do an exam, which only the children of the rich can pass, because they attend very good private schools. The poor in Brazil can only attend a private university, which is very expensive. The young people sought us out about this and told us, "The movement has helped us have a house. Now we would like to be helped to study at university."

At the COW meeting in Rio de Janeiro we heard two experiences that struck us. In one of these, Bolivar, a friend from Chile, told us about a people's university that the CL movement had contributed to building in Peru and that cost much less, because the motivation wasn't just economic – to make money – and where many young people from the periphery of Lima could study. So we thought, if we'd succeeded in building neighborhoods, why couldn't we also build a university?

That encounter with the Companionship of Works ended on Sunday, and already on Monday we were getting information about what had to be done to build a university. We discovered that it was a very slow process, that a lot of time was necessary, but we also discovered that in the private universities in São Paulo at least 45% of the openings weren't taken after the entrance exams. We thought, when we organize, we manage to buy land at a good discount, so maybe if we organize we can obtain university scholarships. We looked for a university and the President said, "If you bring me five hundred students, I'll give you a discount of 30-50%." So we asked our young people. At the first entrance exam 1,800 were admitted. So we thought, for the moment we've resolved the problem, and we'll think about the rest next year, when there'll be another generation to help. We were kidding ourselves, because after a week the people began telling us, "Listen, my girlfriend doesn't belong to our association, but she wants to attend university too;" "my cousin isn't in the association, but he too wants to attend university;" "my friend isn't in the association, but he too...". So we decided to do a movement of the "university-less students." Today we have forty thousand students in twelve participating universities.

Cleuza. In 2005 we had five thousand university students. I was invited to La Thuile, to the meeting of the responsables of the Movement, where I asked Cesana, "How can we do School of Community with five thousand people?" He said, "You'll find an answer." Returning to Brazil, we wondered, "How can it be done?" because the School of Community is a smaller group. What we had encountered in La Thuile made me very happy, and I had to tell the others. So we had the idea of making a flyer. Last month's flyer had a summary of the first chapter on faith from *Is It Possible to Live This Way?*, which is what we're working on in School of Community, and on the last page there's a cultural judgment on a fact much discussed in Brazil these days, the parliamentary vote on stem cell research.

We have forty thousand university students divided into groups of two thousand, and the gatherings last two hours. We do them quickly and have to be very objective, because while we're with one group there's another one already in line for the next meeting. In the end there are announcements about the association and university. At the beginning we present the text, and after the presentation and reading of the text, the people gather into small groups of ten to discuss the

theme, and afterwards the assembly opens, when people come up to speak spontaneously. We're always asking ourselves, "Do they understand? What do they understand?" There are forty thousand people: how can you talk with each one to ask what they've understood? This always filled me with sadness. In our association, as an organization, everyone has a membership card, and both the "homeless" and the "university-less" were obliged to come to our gatherings, to the assemblies. They came because they had to, only because they were afraid of losing the benefit they were receiving.

Last year they invited us again to the meeting in La Thuile. After five minutes of the meeting, Carrón in his presentation told us, "Christ loves us so much that even the hairs of our heads are counted." I said, "Marcos, we can go now, because he's already said everything."

Marcos. Returning to São Paulo, we said to each other, "As Fr. Giusani said, we have to gamble on the freedom of the people." So we said to everyone, "There's no longer any obligation to attend our gatherings. You're guaranteed that the benefit will be maintained; you're not obligated any more to come to the gatherings, because we want only those who truly intend to do this road with us to attend." This was done when we had twenty five thousand young people, as well as the people of the houses. Of the twenty five thousand young people, eight decided to leave, but after a week five of them returned, explaining, "We want to be received among you again, because we've understood that on our own we won't be able to finish university." Why? What's the reality of our young people? They work all day and then in the evening attend university; the great majority of them sleeps four or five hours a night and spends almost their entire salary to pay for university, even with the discount. Without a companionship, they're not capable of making it to the end.

Cleuza. After this I thought, from now on the movement has another face, another road. The association has learned to do great things, like a cooperative. Public health in Brazil is not in very good condition. We've established conventions with private health care providers and clinical services; conventions with language schools... all the schools now come to the association because they want to establish a convention. But what has changed the people isn't the help in getting a house or medical service. What has helped me, first of all, has been the encounter we've had with Communion and Liberation. We've pro-

posed this encounter to them, and they've said yes. This is why today it doesn't make sense for the association not to have the same road in common with Communion and Liberation. The association was born to respond to reality, and today the reality is that people are eager to encounter Christ. We've had the privilege of encountering Him.

I'm happy to be able to bring these things to these young people. In December we made this proposal to them: "The association has its services, these are our things, but we want to consign the destiny of the movement to Carrón. Let's go into the square: I want to show you the person whom I'm following." So we set the day and gave the following invitation: "Those among you who feel they belong to this story, come to the square with us. Those who don't feel they belong to this story, don't come." We prepared a beautiful celebration, with many things: songs, banners, a mega show, but it started raining and raining, pouring cats and dogs. I thought, it's over, nothing will happen. The event should have begun at five in the afternoon; there were balloons, singers, but it wouldn't stop raining. The people started arriving, arriving from everywhere, and the police said to us, "What's going on? This isn't a little Church gathering! Why are all these people arriving? What's going to happen here?" The square was overflowing with people, everybody with umbrellas. They had to cover the amplifiers because of the rain; you couldn't hear anything. Marcos had the idea of speaking with the Cardinal of São Paulo, who was going to participate in the event, but at that moment he was in conversation with Carrón. We didn't know what to do; there was generalized confusion. I said, "Oh my God, what's going to happen now?" Marcos asked the Cardinal if we could have the meeting inside the church instead of outside in the square, but the Cathedral could only hold eight thousand people. We entered the church, but outside there were fifty thousand people and the people wanted to enter at all costs, and I said to them, "Please, go home. Go home!" "No, I belong to this and I want to participate too!" but it wasn't possible. I said, "Oh, Jesus, in Italy it's Communion and Liberation, in Brazil it's Communion and Confusion!"

Marcos. Many ask us, "Okay, but you were used to doing what you do. What's changed in the encounter with Communion and Liberation?" What's changed is that five years ago we couldn't do our work anymore. The number of problems was great and we conceived of ourselves as responsible for the answers; we had the presumption of thinking that we were the ones who had to solve the problems. The

first thing we learned in the encounter with Communion and Liberation is that our lot is to say yes, but the result doesn't belong to us: the result belongs to Christ. When we understood this, it was as if four hundred pounds had been lifted from our shoulders. In the last five years the movement has tripled and its weight is much lighter.

The other thing we understood with great clarity is that ours was an experience of pain, of sadness, because the people had so many problems and we weren't able to respond. We only had an intuition, that we had to give our life for that work, but it was a sad, burdensome task. When we began to understand that we were doing things not for people, but for Christ, we began to do it cheerfully; it's as if all the gaiety, the joy of the world has flooded our heart. People say, "You've changed a lot: you had a sad expression before, and now you're cheerful." Even our relationship as a couple has changed. Eighteen years ago we got together. We began living together not because we were in love with each other but because we were sure that we had a mission, that we had a work to do. And the more difficult this work became, the more we blamed each other, to the point that we said to each other, "We've built the association, now the moment has come for us to go our separate ways and live our own lives." But the encounter with CL helped us to understand another thing: we weren't together just because we had to build something. We were together because Christ had given us to each other, and not to do a work but to travel a road together, so one could help the road of the other. The being in love that we now feel for each other is something that didn't exist before. Two years ago, we got married by civil rite. We couldn't get married in church because I already had a marriage behind me. Two months ago in August I received the declaration of nullity of my marriage, and if God wants, we'll get married in church. Why is this important? Because I have learned with Fr. Giussani that we have to be an example, because we don't teach others with our words, but with our example. How can I ask all those who follow us to be serious in life, if I myself am not serious with my own? How can I say that a wife or husband is something definitive in life, if in mine she isn't? Even this is the work of Fr. Giussani and of each of you.

When we consigned the movement to Carrón, we repeated the same gesture that he had done with Fr. Giussani, because a great many people follow us today, but they have to know that we follow a person, an Other. As Cleuza said, "It makes no sense to follow two roads." If I've encountered such a true and beautiful thing in my life, I have to bring

it to those who follow me. Perhaps you don't realize it, but you hold in your hands a great treasure: you were born or have grown up in a place where the charism Fr. Giussani has given us already existed, and I'm not sure that you understand the importance of this. For us it was the encounter with a thing that we'd been waiting for all our lives, and you have no idea how important this is for our life. I feel very small when Carrón speaks of our experience as if it were a great and beautiful thing, because I don't know whether he realizes that if it hadn't been for this encounter, our story probably wouldn't exist any more. If we set on the scales who owes what to whom, our debt to you is much greater than yours to us.

Cleuza. Young people are normally curious and they ask me, "Cleuza, you see Christ in everything. How can I, too, see Christ in everything?" Normally I don't know how to respond. I didn't study: I only have a fourth grade education. I'm not capable; I haven't learned to read and reflect on a text. I hear a word, like that story of the hairs of your head, and I repeat it to everyone. In the square that day, Carrón said something else that struck me: he told us that when John saw Christ for the first time, he was sixteen years old. I had already heard this story, but what struck me is that he said that John saw Christ when he was sixteen years old, and he wrote the Gospel when he was about eighty, and he still remembered the hour that he encountered Christ. So I thought, maybe I've understood what I can say to these young people when they ask me, "How can we see Christ?"; "How can I sense, how can I know where Christ is?". You have to do like John: everything for which you remember the day and the hour, it's because Christ was there. Think it over, and then come tell me. "I remember the day I met the association." So Christ is in this. "I remember when my son was born." And so we help each other remember when we encountered Christ. Even if I lived to be two hundred years old, how could I forget the moment I met you? It's impossible. This is Christ. I have no doubt that Christ is here. Not a leaf falls from a tree without God wanting it so. Why are you all here? There's no explanation: the only explanation is because Christ is here. So when I return to Brazil, when I have to tell them about this encounter, I'll say, "It was about ten in the evening."

Marcos. I'd like to end by thanking you for the opportunity to be here and underlining a concern: it depends on each of us that fifty years from now, people will encounter the beauty we've encountered.

Javier Prades, the responsible for CL in Spain, told me something beautiful. How do we know that a person becomes holy? When, after his death, his presence grows continually. We've met a saint, Fr. Giusani. It depends on each of us that this memory not be erased, because we have to desire that our grandchildren encounter the beauty that we've encountered. We've received an inheritance of great value. Help future generations to encounter this great thing that we have received as a gift. Thank you.

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