

«CHRIST IN HIS BEAUTY
DRAWS ME TO HIM»

EXERCISES OF THE FRATERNITY
OF COMMUNION AND LIBERATION



RIMINI 2007

Cover: Masaccio, *The Tribute (detail)*, Brancacci Chapel, Florence, Italy

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From the Vatican, May 3, 2007

Reverend Father

Julián Carrón

President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation

On the occasion of the Spiritual Exercises of Communion and Liberation on the theme, "Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him," the Supreme Pontiff expresses to the many participants His cordial good wishes with the assurance of His spiritual closeness and, while desiring that this providential meeting may give rise to faithfulness to Christ for a generous engagement in the new work of evangelization, He invokes a broad outpouring of heavenly graces and sends to you, to the responsables of the Fraternity and to all those gathered His special apostolic blessing.

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State of His Holiness.

Friday evening, May 4

During the entrance and exit:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Symphony no. 40 in G minor, KV 550

Frans Brüggen – Orchestra of the 18th Century

“Spirto Gentil,” Philips (Universal)

■ INTRODUCTION

Julián Carrón: Let us beg the Spirit, because only His irresistible power can reawaken in us the passion for our destiny. Only the power of an energy that shakes us to our depths, that clears away everything that is at a standstill in us, can truly reawaken us to a full life.

As these Exercises begin, we all know how much this urgency is often far removed from us. We are well aware that all our presumption is of no use in front of the failure of our capacity, of our I. This is why, as soon as you realize it, the most fitting thing to do is to cry out to the Only One who can come to our aid.

Let us stand and invoke the Spirit of Christ with this awareness.

Come O Creator Spirit, Come

I greet each of you present here, and all those who are linked: 26 countries now, and afterwards another 37 will conduct the Exercises, for a total of 63 countries. For the first time, our friends from Israel and Palestine are linked in from Bethlehem.

Before beginning our gesture I will read you the telegram sent to me by the Holy Father:

“On the occasion of the Spiritual Exercises of Communion and Liberation on the theme, ‘Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him,’ the Supreme Pontiff expresses to the many participants His cordial good wishes with the assurance of His spiritual closeness and, while desiring that this providential meeting may give rise to faithfulness to Christ for a generous engagement in the new work of evangelization, He invokes a broad outpouring of heavenly graces and sends to you, to the responsables of the Fraternity and to all those gathered His special apostolic blessing.

“Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State for His Holiness.”

“Where your treasure is, there also will be your heart.”¹ Over these past months, as we read and reread the lesson given by Father Giussani

at the first Fraternity Exercises,² this phrase of Jesus almost spontaneously came to mind for very many of us.

It was providential to find this text on familiarity with Christ to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of our Fraternity, because all of us have felt called to task by the shock of his appeal: “You have grown up,” Fr. Giussani said back then, “and while you have secured a human ability in your professions, there is the possibility of drifting away from Christ... There is a kind of drifting away from Christ, except in particular moments (when we set ourselves to pray, or when you do something in His name, or in the name of the Church, or in the name of the Movement). It is as if Christ were far from our heart [...] as if there were no longer this familiarity with Christ that made itself felt, ... in a particular time of our life. Like a non-presence. In actions [it’s not missing]—this is why this insistent recollection strikes us even more—in activities, it’s not lacking; but what about the heart? In the heart, no! [...] What I called ‘the ambiguity of growing up’ is really”—he was telling us this back then—“a becoming aware from which we have to start off. I don’t believe that it is a statistically normal characteristic, that growing up has made us more familiar with Christ [...]. There is a kind of demoralization,”³ a lack of tension, an absence of tension.

Who doesn’t identify with these words one of you wrote to me? “I read Page One in the February issue of *Traces* and realized that Giussani describes with great precision what I am living. I’m experiencing the demoralization he speaks of. Christ is the motive for which we live a certain kind of life and for which we even risk our faces in the world, yet He is far from the heart, from how I look at my work, at the house, and above all from how I get up in the morning. If I think about my mornings, all that comes to mind is a void of awareness, and getting up to say Morning Prayer doesn’t change the substance of it.”

If, my friends, the problem is really that our heart (in other words, the source of feelings, of thoughts, of judgments) lacks this tension because it’s demoralized, if works alone (and we’ve done many of them), if the actions, the initiatives we’ve taken up over all these years are of no use, if all of this is of no use, if it didn’t serve to overcome this distance of Christ from the heart, then it’s not surprising that someone would ask, as Pope Benedict says, quoting Saint Augustine, “So what ultimately can move man in his soul, in his heart?”

“With deep human insight,” says the Pope, “Saint Augustine clearly showed how we are moved spontaneously, and not by constraint, whenever we encounter something attractive and desirable. Asking himself

what it is that can move us most deeply, the saintly bishop went on to say, ‘What does our soul desire more passionately than truth?’ Each of us has an innate and irrepressible desire for ultimate and definitive truth. The Lord Jesus, ‘the way, and the truth, and the life’ (*Jn* 14:6), speaks to our thirsting, pilgrim hearts, our hearts yearning for the source of life, our hearts longing for truth. Jesus Christ is the truth in person, drawing the world to Himself.”⁴

We cannot overcome this distance of the heart from Christ if He does not “wholly draw us,” precisely by the attraction of His beauty. This is why the title of these Exercises is an affirmation of His truth: “Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him.”⁵ Yet at the same time, it is a cry; it is asking Christ to make His face, His splendor shine before our eyes, so that all of us, each one of us, might be attracted by Him in his soul with the same awareness the psalmist had as he prayed, “O Lord of hosts, bring us back; let Your face shine on us and we shall be saved.”⁶

We can feel wholly attracted from the depths of our heart only if Christ in His beauty shines on us. Yet life is a drama; it’s a relationship, and in a relationship nothing is automatic. “Man is moved,” says the Pope, “spontaneously, and not by constraint.” This is why man, each one of us, must be open to letting himself be struck by the beauty of Christ, because “the Lord Jesus,” the Pope says, “turns to the longing heart of man, to the thirsty, pilgrim heart, to the heart that pines for the source of life”;⁷ in other words, to the poor heart.

Because the splendor of His truth “penetrates us,” Father Giussani said years ago, “in the measure in which the heart is poor.” What is this poverty, he asked, this poverty of heart? “It’s not a sentimental or temperamental simplicity or a comfort won by favorable circumstances.”⁸ Poverty of heart is the irrepressible desire for the ultimate and definitive truth that constitutes the heart of man.

“I don’t know,” he said to a group of married couples in 1977, “I don’t know, but I believe that my continual appeal to desire, which comes to me from the experience of my life, because I have experienced and experience salvation in it, is one of the things that makes what I say more appealing because it’s plainly human. Yet at the same time, it’s the least accepted of all. It’s the most human thing,”—because it is the thing that most coincides with the stuff of which we’re made, yet—“it’s the least accepted.”⁹

“Desire is not a mere wish: it’s the chief act, or better, it’s the only act in which the truth of man ventures to make room for the Lord. This is why the one who is poor of heart is the one whose heart is full of the

desire for His presence. All the rest isn't poverty. In fact someone who has this desire can't make demands. The symptom of this desire in the heart, of this poverty, is that you can't make demands; psychologically, you can't pull off making demands."¹⁰

It takes a value judgment about what Christ really is to desire like this, because otherwise we don't desire Him. This is why we can do many things, and yet the heart remains distant; we desire many other things. This is the reason for the gospel phrase, "Where your treasure is, there is your heart," because, *de facto*, we desire what we deem valuable. Therefore desire is the revelatory phenomenon of the human. Chekhov expressed it well: "When I wanted to understand someone or myself, I considered not actions but desires. Tell me what you want and I will tell you who you are."¹¹ What one values is revealed in desire. This is why Father Giussani used to say, "Look, conversion happens at the level of desire."¹²

May we have a greater, more powerful esteem for Christ, so powerful that little by little our desire might shift more toward Him, so as to overcome this distance. It's a matter of time. What matters is that we ask, at the beginning of this retreat, to have this desire, because desire, he used to say, is the talent of the poor. What is the opposite of this poverty? Presumption.

In 1992, when the Gruppo Adulto (*Memoires Domini*) had their summer exercises at Corvara on *Traces of the Christian Experience* (the current text of the School of Community), he answered one question by saying, "It's pretty presumptuous to claim that we can remain in the companionship without seriously living our human needs." We can be in this companionship as one of the presumptuous ones, as if there were something automatic, as if the mere fact of remaining, without doing anything, without taking initiative, without taking our human need seriously, were enough. This is presumption. It's like if a kid were in class and were to say, "It's enough for me to be here, to come to school and listen to the lessons." It's presumptuous to think you can get by so easily.

We are no different from the others, and we can't go around thinking we can get away with being here without taking seriously the need we have that compels us from our depths, from our human exigencies, to seek Him. Because "Christ," the Pope said, "turns to each person's longing heart."¹³ Look how living our companionship without seriously living the needs of our heart is presumptuous, as Father Giussani insisted.

This year has been a providential year. We began with the grace of the Pope's very beautiful speech in Regensburg, in which we were re-

minded to broaden reason. Then, in Italy, the Pope addressed the Verona Convention, where he recalled us to “a faith that befriends intelligence and a way of life characterized by mutual love.”¹⁴ Then we all took part in the meeting with the Pope in Rome, where yet again he reminded us of the beauty of the Christianity that we met in Father Giussani’s charism and how this event that struck him, wounded him, has wounded us, too; and he invited us to continue seeking a faith that is deep, personalized, and firmly rooted in the living body of Christ, the Church, which guarantees the contemporaneity of Jesus in us, with us.¹⁵ All these things—this call to broaden reason, this call to live the beauty of Christianity so that we can deepen our faith and therefore overcome that distance—are in harmony with everything we see as useful for the journey we are taking.

To help us in this education, to broaden reason for a deeper and more personalized faith, tomorrow we will take up again the eighth chapter of *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*¹⁶ as a tool for this journey. Man is exclusive relationship with God, direct relationship with the Mystery; hence Jesus’ insistence on religiosity, in other words, on living this total openness to the Mystery. What Jesus insisted on most powerfully is that life is fulfilled in the gift of self. How can this road lead to a personalization of faith? As Father Giussani used to say, “Faith is personal when it is in response to, when it is exclusively discovered and lived in response to our humanity.”¹⁷

This is particularly important in the cultural climate in which we live because there’s no middle road. It really takes a faith that is extremely aware, and therefore extremely desired as the response to our own humanity, to our human needs, and is, therefore, a seriousness with our own humanity. Otherwise, if it’s not a response to our humanity, Christ will continue to be far from our hearts. We can go on carrying out initiatives, but it won’t be enough to overcome this distance. This is why this loyalty is the first urgent need we have, as Lewis observed with great acuity when he wrote that the preliminary to detaching someone from the Enemy—that is, from Christ—is to detach him from himself.¹⁸

The first way we distance ourselves from Christ is by distancing ourselves from our very selves. In that text from the Exercises twenty years ago, Father Giussani quoted a phrase from Pope John Paul II that is still decisive for us today: “There will be no faithfulness ... if a question isn’t found in man’s heart to which only God ... is the answer.”¹⁹ He doesn’t say there will be no faithfulness if we’re not good, if we’re not

coherent, if we lack the energy. No. There will be no faithfulness—in other words, in the end Christ will not matter to us—without a question to which only He is the answer. If this question is not rooted in the depths of our I, and if we are not loyal to it, sooner or later Christ will not matter to us any more. Like many others, we too will go away. For this reason, our first loyalty is to our humanity, to our cry, to the urgent need of our heart. That's what we can begin to ask in order to live these days of retreat entirely poised to let ourselves be struck, surprised by the beauty of Christ.

Let us sustain one another, aware of how great our weakness is, of how great our fragility is, in silence. May silence be the cry of each of us for our companions, as we enter and leave, and on the shuttle trips. Let us offer this sacrifice as the expression of our poverty, asking the Lord to take pity on our nothingness.

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF FATHER PINO

There is a word which dominates tonight's liturgy: the word "Father." It is the Father who raised Christ from the dead; it is the Father who has prepared a place for each of us in His house, a place where Father Giusani and many of our loved ones are waiting for us.

We are not slaves; we are not disciples: we are sons and daughters. We are sons and daughters because there is a Father who continually generates us. But this certainty cannot become custom, habit, or presumption.

We find ourselves with the same question on our tongues that Thomas asked, one of those questions that only God can answer, that only Christ can answer: "Show us the way" (cf. *Jn* 14:5), show us the way to happiness, to the fulfillment of our lives. Because nothing happens mechanically. Nothing happens without our freedom, without the desire and responsibility for our destiny. This is why we are here. Jesus answers, "I am the way" (*Jn* 14:6), not only the truth and the life, but the way; not *a* road, but *the* road.

This is our certainty. This is our joy. This is our cry.

Saturday morning, May 5

During the entrance and exit:

Ludwig van Beethoven, Concerto for violin and orchestra, opus 61

David Oistrakh, violin

André Cluytens – Orchestre National de la Radiodiffusion Française

“Spirto Gentil,” EMI

Father Pino: “Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.” The angel’s announcement, which for each of us has the concrete form, the face of this companionship guided to destiny, reawakens us not only from material sleep, but also from the sleep of distraction, the sleep of presumption, and allows us to watch how that woman, Mary, trembles at the words of the Mystery who opens her freedom, begging to be welcomed in the flesh, as a companion in every instant, in every step, as the all-embracing content of every desire of the heart.

Angelus

Morning Prayer

■ FIRST LESSON

Man is exclusive relationship with God

A gaze that reveals humanity

Julián Carrón: “Unless you become like children, you will never enter.”²⁰ It’s impossible to hear that everything in life, absolutely everything, depends on this position of the child, and not be moved to the marrow. This is how we can understand what kind of emotion Jesus felt as He looked at those He had in front of Him, with that capacity He had for penetrating, for perceiving man’s drama, the drama of those He had in front of Him. You understand what life is, that it would be enough to be children to let Him enter. You understand what fullness life could have if He were allowed to enter. If only we were to understand that He ends up crying, not out of sentimentalism, but from this passion for those whom He had in front of Him; in fact the Gospel repeats, almost as a refrain, “And He had compassion.” Compassion. What tenderness man was able to stir in the depths of Jesus, to the point of Him being so

moved! And what did Jesus see, to be so moved? He saw need, our need. Man is this need, this hunger and this thirst that he can't fulfill by himself, that none of us can fulfill by ourselves. This is why it is no surprise that when one finds someone like this he can't help but immediately feel that He was what he was waiting for, that it was He; He was the very thing that he was waiting for.

What surprises us when we look at Jesus? "Where they had been unaware and confused, they were enlightened, for Christ was the only one in whose words they felt their whole human experience understood and their need taken seriously, clarified."²¹ What surprises us in Jesus is this gaze, full of compassion for humanity, for the happiness of the individual, for each one, for every one who has a first and last name.

What a difference there is between this gaze and the one we often have for ourselves, where admitting neediness seems to us to be a weakness to hide, to hide even from ourselves, almost being ashamed, so much so that we think of our condition as needy, as beggars, as a kind of hurdle to be overcome. It's as if the mindset of everyone were hiding behind this understanding, this way of looking at ourselves. It's the unconfessed dream of not being needy, of not having any need, that the ideal would be autonomy, being self-sufficient (like everyone else—nothing new here). You understand why Christ stays far from our heart. How far we are from the One who generated us!

The true protagonist of history, on the contrary, is the beggar: "Christ begging for the heart of man, and the heart of man begging for Christ."²² What change needs to take place for our gaze to be able to look at ourselves like this? What familiarity, what a sharing of our lives with a different gaze, until we can look with the same compassion upon our humanity, as we always felt ourselves looked upon by Father Giusani.

I don't want to be self-sufficient; I want to feel the urge inside my heart, the need, the need for Christ, to the point of tears, to open myself up to Him, to experience the power of His presence, the fullness life can have when, being needy, we let Him enter. There's something worse than being needy: it's being alone with our self-sufficiency. Think for a moment if you prefer needing people you love, needing the companionship of your children and friends, or if you prefer being alone.

All of us in some moment of our life have experienced this gaze, which is what attracted us. But what does Jesus see in us that we are not able to see? What does He perceive in us that moves Him to the marrow with tenderness toward us? Here's where we can go back to that chapter

I mentioned yesterday, "Christ's Conception of Life,"²³ to help us understand, to look, to identify ourselves with that gaze, to discover who we are and to discover who Christ is. In this gaze He most reveals who He is, at the same time that He reveals to us who we are.

"Who is Jesus? The question was asked. And He answered it. He answered it by revealing Himself through all of the gestures of His personality."—His works, His miracles—"But the most enlightening 'gesture,' and so the most significant 'sign,' is a person's conception of life, his overall, definitive sentiment toward man. Only the divine can 'save' man. The true and essential dimensions of humanity and its destiny can only be preserved by Him who is their ultimate meaning—which is to say, recognized, acclaimed, defended."²⁴

His gaze full of tenderness for us is what reveals to us who Jesus is. And how is He revealed? Not as a discourse, not as an explanation. He is revealed with that gaze full of esteem for each one of us. Christ reveals who He is by reawakening man, bringing out all the factors. This is why, says Giussani, only the divine can save man, can bring out all that we are, can allow us to experience what life can be, what fullness it can attain, such that we can tell when Christ is here, not just because *we say* His name (which can be said in a formal, empty way). We know He is here, that Christ is here present, because He brings out our entire I, because He brings out in us a fullness that we cannot attain by ourselves. This is why we experience the foretaste of the divine in such a gaze.

As Tarkovsky says, "You know it well: you can't manage a thing; you're tired; you can't go on. And all at once you meet the gaze of someone in the crowd—a human gaze—and it's as if you had drawn near to a hidden god. And everything suddenly becomes simpler."²⁵

Only the divine can save all a person's worth. Finding a man who has this ability to affirm humanity in all its dimensions is a spectacle so unique and imposing, is a sign so meaningful, so enlightening, that one is helped to recognize Him because he suddenly finds correspondence to his human need.

But watch how Christ works: first He lets us perceive Him in our humanity and reveals what we are by making it happen. Not a discourse, not a philosophy lesson: He makes it happen inside us, in us. This is how we can understand what newness there is in the conception of life that Jesus then tells us, because, "It is in the conception of life which Christ proclaims, the image He gives of the human being's true stature, the realistic way He looks at human existence, it is here where

the heart, in search of its destiny, perceives the truth in the voice of Christ as He speaks.”²⁶

Thus it is no surprise that William of Saint Thierry should ask, “Speak therefore and say to her and to her heart, ‘I am your salvation.’ Speak that she may hear. Inspire her that she may feel. Give that she may possess, that all that is within her may bless you.”²⁷

Or as Saint Augustine said, as Saint Augustine asked, “[I]n your mercy, O Lord my God, tell me what you are to me. ‘Say to my soul: I am your salvation.’ Say this, so that I may hear you. Behold, my heart’s ears are turned to you, O Lord: open them, and ‘say to my soul: I am your salvation.’ I will run after that voice, and I will catch hold of you.”²⁸

In one sentence Father Giussani gathers all the factors: “The ‘moral’ heart discerns the sign of the Presence of his Lord.”²⁹ This, which we struggle to understand, happens: the relationship between the heart, my human need, my disproportion, and His presence. Here is where we see what the attitude of our heart is, because the only heart able to grasp, to recognize its Lord is the moral heart, that is, the heart loyal to itself, poor, simple, not detached from itself, loyal to its own humanity, to its own human need (which is not weakness!). Thank heavens that we are needy; otherwise, how could we recognize? Our needy heart is the principal instrument that has been given to us to recognize Him. It is because of this that we can understand.

1. The value of the person

What does Jesus see, to the point of bringing it out with His gaze, of letting the value of our person be experienced, perceived, within us?

“The fundamental factor of Jesus’ outlook is the existence in man of a reality superior to any other reality subject to time and space. The whole world is not as worthy as the most insignificant human person. Nothing in the entire universe can compare with the human person, from the first instant of his conception to the last step of his decrepit old age. Every man possesses within himself a principle for which he depends on no one, a foundation of inalienable rights, a fount of values.”³⁰

Jesus sees a superior reality, an original and irreducible principle, in us, in you, in me. Our need, our desire, our disproportion is its first echo. And so our need, our desire, which we think of as our weakness, is precisely what makes us irreducible. Precisely because we are an irrepressible desire for the infinite, we are irreducible to any reaction, and

so our worth cannot be confused with the reactions we are misled to adopt.

How often we reduce the person to reactions! Indeed, we justify doing it: "This is how I'm made." No! I react this way because I want to react this way. I am not a cog in a machine. I am not stuck in a machine of circumstances, in my reactions. I am this unique relationship which makes me irreducible. And we have to affirm this and we have to become aware of what we are saying, because the first influence that the mindset that surrounds us has on us is precisely this reduction in the way we conceive of ourselves, reducing ourselves, like everyone else does, to preceding factors, to our reactions, to our mechanisms. No! We can reduce ourselves as much as we want, but this is not what we are! We are that irreducible reality which is relationship with the Mystery.

This is why Ernesto Sábato says, "The first tragedy that urgently needs to be faced is the loss that man feels of his own worth."³¹ And this reduction to an automaton is the first thing to free ourselves from, because "[e]verything that is personal in man is set in opposition to ... automatism both psychical and social,"³² as Berdyayev says.

How can we overcome this automatism? Only if we find someone who doesn't let us go, who doesn't reduce us. This is why we have to read and try to understand the whole meaning of these affirmations. For Jesus, "the problem of the world's existence is the happiness of each single person."³³

And how do we discover that Jesus holds the happiness of the individual in His heart? How does He prevent reduction? In a very simple way: by asking us this question, "For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits life? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"³⁴

Why does someone who asks us this question truly love us? Because someone who asks this question does not let us reduce our I, our need; He recognizes the stuff of which we are made, as if He were saying, "But look who you are! Look at what your heart desires! Tell me if you can be content with less than this! Tell me if the whole world would be enough for you!"

This is why Father Giussani saw a tenderness out of this world in this question: "No force of energy and no paternal or maternal loving tenderness has ever impacted the heart of man more than these words of Christ, impassioned as He is about the life of man,"³⁵ ever. We are surprised by a man who has passion for our nothingness, because He looks at us without reducing us, with our whole need for happiness at heart.

Someone who feels looked at like this immediately experiences the recoil that makes him grasp how it corresponds: “This is what I was waiting for, someone who looked at me like this, who truly had my I at heart, who affirmed me like this, so that I could experience living like never before!”

This is why Father Giussani continues, “To listen to these radical questions Jesus poses, represents the first obedience to our own natures.” Someone who asks you this question is the Only One able to describe our nature. “If we are deaf to them we close ourselves off from the most significant of human experiences, for we would be unable not only to love ourselves, but also others. Indeed the ultimate motive pushing us to love ourselves and others is the mystery of the “I”; any other reason is only an introduction to this one.”³⁶

How far we are from this mindset! When we have relationship problems (spouses, friends, companions in the Fraternity), the last thing that comes to our minds is anything to do with this lack of obedience to these questions which define our nature. Deaf to these radical questions, we close ourselves off from the most significant human experiences. Are you aware what kind of challenge this is, and how far off we are?

2. Original dependence

What is the value of the I? Where is it rooted?

“What is most evident, immediately following the fact that we exist, is that before we lived we had no life. Therefore, we depend.”³⁷ I beg you not to bypass these sentences like things you already know. It’s enough simply to help us to become aware of when the last time was that we really felt our dependence, the truth about ourselves, to the point of recognizing that we depend, to the point of feeling the shiver of this dependence.

Because “Christ pinpoints a reality in man that does not derive from his phenomenological provenance, a reality which is a direct, exclusive relationship with God.”³⁸ The value of the I, the value of each one of us, is that it is a direct, exclusive relationship with God, which has its echo, as I said earlier, in need, in our begging.

Yet, the fact that this is what we are, that Jesus sees in us what we are, this dependence, the fact that we are direct relationship with God, is called into question today by our culture. Look at what Rorty says: “[T]here is nothing deep down inside us except what we have put there

ourselves, no criterion that we have not created in the course of creating a practice, no standard of rationality that is not an appeal to such a criterion, no rigorous argumentation that is not obedience to our own conventions.”³⁹

Nothing “given.” All “convention.” The battle is against this, because we have the same struggle as everyone else in recognizing what is given, and we think they are conventions, that we can throw them in the wastebasket, that nothing happens. This opens the door to all the kinds of manipulation, as we see in every discussion, even to the point of eugenics (as you can see in the text accompanying *Traces*, in some of the comments on the family and pseudo-families). What is at issue today is humanity, as John Paul II said in a wonderful expression: it is a “debate on the *humanum*”; what is at stake is the human being’s very nature, existence and identity.

And so, affirming that we are this direct relationship with the Mystery is the only possible way to defend man, as we have been made, with that desire for fullness, for happiness that we find ourselves with. This was something Father Giussani always fiercely defended, “Man has something that does not depend on what came before him, not given by his father or his mother, [...] which therefore is not just about what came before him. Rather, his reality has something that depends on nothing but God. In him there is something that is direct relationship with the infinite, direct relationship with the Mystery.”⁴⁰ Father Giussani said on another occasion, “Ever since I was young this is one of the feelings I have tried to nurture and renew very often: In this moment, I do not create myself.”⁴¹

If we do not want to give in to this mindset, we either start identifying with Father Giussani, overcoming this presumption of ours, and start like poor creatures to nurture and renew very often the feeling that we do not create ourselves, or we end up having the mindset everyone else has. Scratch the surface, and behind all our affirmations, we are like everyone else. Why? Because, as I was saying yesterday, quoting Father Giussani, we can even be with one another, among ourselves, in this place that has fascinated us, without taking it seriously. We can be here without taking our need seriously, with this passivity, doing nothing, because everything around us encourages this inertia.

Octavio Paz writes, “The only thing uniting Europe is its passivity in front of destiny,”⁴² a passivity which cannot help but have consequences. As an American journalist said about the massacre at Virginia Tech, “The default position”—the normal and almost automatic attitude—

“is a terribly unnerving passivity. Lone misfits with homicidal manias are fortunately quite rare. But this hateful and corrosive passivity is widespread and, unlike the psychopathic killer, is an existing threat to society.”⁷⁴³

At the beginning of this journey, Father Giussani had already rightly identified the beginning of this process, centuries ago in “an option permanently open to the human soul ... [of a] lack of committed interest and an absence of curiosity towards all reality.”⁷⁴⁴ The lack of commitment to what we are isn’t something that doesn’t concern us. We can see it many times, even taking part in our gestures. We do everything, but the center of the I is at a standstill.

Someone was telling me about his friend who took the bus to go to Rome’s Saint Peter’s Square Friday evening, spent all night on the bus, got to Rome, all the details, until, after many hassles, she found her spot. It seemed that she’d done everything. And, to her surprise, when I started talking about the beggar, she realized she hadn’t done the most important thing.

We can take the bus, go a ton of miles, [endure] huge hassles, spend money, and be at a standstill, stuck in the center of the I, motionless. This is passivity. And we can be here in our companionship and be alone, reduced to the factors of what came before, to our reactions, without becoming aware that I am relationship with the Mystery, that as long as I don’t move this, as long as I don’t put the center of my I, that which is more I than I myself, in play, my I is at a standstill, and this can’t but have consequences. If you want to see all of them, all you have to do is go back to chapter eight in *The Religious Sense*, where Father Giussani describes the consequences of this lack of commitment to our own questions: the annihilation of the personality, the suppression of the personality. We can even take part in many of our gestures, and see how our personality gets numb, and then even say, “I didn’t do anything.” This is the problem. It’s like someone who doesn’t use his arm for two weeks: he didn’t do anything against it, but we all know what consequences that passivity has.

On the other hand, the affirmation that Jesus makes of the person depends precisely on this activity, because “this irreducible relationship has a value that is inaccessible and unassailable by any type of influence.”⁷⁴⁵ We have to reread these things, one after another: our I is irreducible, unassailable. This is why we have to stop saying, “I can’t.” What kind of circumstance can prevent a person from lifting his gaze, as Father Giussani said in one of the latest *Traces* inserts,⁷⁴⁶ and saying

“You” to the Mystery? No power of this world can prevent it, but none can force it. This is the greatness; this is the unique value of our person.

This is why “this unique relationship with God, insofar as it is recognized and lived, is *religiosity*.”⁷⁴⁷ It’s not enough to be like this (because we are, despite ourselves; even in our forgetfulness this is what we are: we are made by Another with this unique relationship with Him). Each of us must recognize it. “This unique relationship with God, insofar as it is recognized and lived, is *religiosity*.”⁷⁴⁸ This is why Father Giussani speaks of this dogged insistence of Jesus in recalling this religiosity, this way of living one’s own I as relationship with the Mystery, because, in this relationship with the Mystery, with the Father, Jesus saw the only possibility of safeguarding the value of the individual. Jesus saw this possibility in the relationship with the Father. This is why Father Giussani said, “Christian religiosity arises as *the only condition for being human*,” not for becoming a bit more pious, not for becoming a bit more spiritual, not for being a bit more CL, but as the condition for being human.

This dogged insistence of Jesus is not only an affirmation, but a constant taking initiative toward us, making Himself a living presence in front of us to continue to do what He did during His earthly life: reawakening us from this passivity, waking us up by allowing us to experience, allowing us to desire, removing everything in us that is at a standstill and passive, in order to reawaken our whole I, to save our humanity. As Maria Zambrano says, “The complete actualization of what we are is only possible in view of another presence, of another being which has the strength to put us in motion, in act. And how would it be possible to get out of oneself, except by falling irresistibly in love?”⁷⁴⁹—that is, attracted, fascinated. This presence triggers loving knowledge, the only kind that can conquer passivity. “One form of reason,” she said, “in which passivity, total passivity, is redeemed regarding knowledge, and regarding the thing that moves and generates knowledge: love.”⁷⁵⁰ We need a method for knowing that “reawakens all the regions of life and bears all of them.”⁷⁵¹

This is why we have chosen this title for our Exercises, as the content of the method: “Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him!” Without His beauty which attracts all of me, all my human wholeness, I cannot be myself, I shrink, I become passive, I suppress my personality.

Christ is here, but we have to recognize Him. We saw it in Rome. You can see it again in the DVD sent with *Traces*, “Drawn by the Beauty of Christ.”⁷⁵² It’s necessary to see, not only the surface of what we

lived: it was not just the CL organization. It was the power of His presence. Because if we don't reach the point of recognizing His presence, we go back home and nothing's changed. That is, as many of you have already begun to perceive, reality is then the same and the disappointment is even bigger.

This is why it is providential that we have in front of us the text of the School of Community on the power of the Spirit,⁵³ because we have to continue to ask for the power of the Spirit, so that we can be like the disciples, who had encountered an exceptional Personality, but had not understood; and it is possible for us to have participated in an exceptional gesture and not understood.

We have to keep on asking for this event of the Spirit, so that we can identify more and more with what happened, which can change our gaze. "The new awareness is born in adherence to an event, in the *affectus* [affection] for an event to which we are attached"⁵⁴ ("in love," as Zambrano said). Our reason does not conquer if it is a "measure," [but] if it broadens, if it is determined by an event, by an *affectus*, by the living presence of Christ, by His beauty. His beauty is what keeps us from seeing the measure conquer, seeing passivity conquer, seeing how our humanity keeps on shrinking, to the point of being depressed.

What keeps us from reducing ourselves is a gaze, a tender, fixed, attached, gaze. How can we keep up this position? Only if that event stays contemporary. "The new awareness," says Father Giussani, "implies being contemporary with the event which generates and continues to sustain it."⁵⁵ If the presence of Christ is not constantly present, reawakening our I, we can't go on. Thus the Pope's precious reminder: a deep, personalized faith can only be rooted in the living Body of Christ, the Church, which guarantees Jesus' contemporaneity with us.

By staying in this companionship, we have been able to look at reality and ourselves without reduction. But watch out: staying in this companionship where this contemporaneity happens again doesn't mean staying passively, doesn't mean being presumptuous by staying passively. Years ago Father Giussani said, "Following the Movement without this conversion of self-awareness, without Christ, the memory of Christ becoming the content of the awareness of myself, that is, without memory, following the Movement becomes following a club,"⁵⁶ and a club that doesn't much matter.

This is why Christian religiosity, Father Giussani insists—in other words, a religiosity, an openness constantly reawakened by the presence of Christ, by this contemporaneity of Christ—is the only condition for

being human. In this love for Christ present among us, we put our humanity into play, we put our life into play! Thus, we can live religiosity, as Jesus reminds us, in all its truth, precisely through the encounter with Christ and staying in His Church, which keeps on reawakening us and pushing us more and more to relate to reality with all of the openness of reason, and keeps us from definitively giving in to passivity or to rationalism, pushing us to keep on broadening reason. This is why, Jesus says, this definitive relationship with God is worth our while if we are to save ourselves.

So, friends, we stand before a choice. “This is man’s choice: either he conceives of himself as free from the whole universe and dependent only on God, or free from God and therefore the slave of every circumstance.”⁵⁷ So when we feel like slaves, let’s not blame the circumstances, the entire universe, or anyone on whom we unload all our responsibilities. Let’s start thinking that being slaves in a circumstance, feeling stuck, feeling suffocated, depends on this lack of dependence on the Mystery.

How much, yes, how much unease, how much wasted time, how many complaints, how much violence we would spare ourselves if we understood these things! It’s enough to do School of Community. “[T]he superiority of the ‘I’ is based on its direct dependence upon God—the principle which originates and gives everything its beginnings. Man’s greatness and his freedom derive from a direct dependence on God, a condition by which man realizes and affirms himself. Dependence on God is the primary condition for what truly interests man. Lived dependence on God, or religiosity, is the most impassioned directive Jesus gives in His Gospel.”⁵⁸

3. Human existence

And thus, says Father Giussani, “insistence on religiosity is the first and absolute duty of the educator, that is to say, the friend.” This is a friend; all others are so-called friends. Friend: someone is a friend if he opens up this religiosity, if he reawakens it, not if he turns it off, not if he blocks it, not if he organizes it: this is not a friend; this is a manipulator. Let’s ask ourselves how many true friends we have, that is, someone who keeps on reawakening this for me, who reawakens my wound, the drama of life, who reawakens for me the question, “What profit is it to gain the whole world, if you lose yourself?” Whoever says this to us is a friend.

4. An awareness that expresses itself in asking

This awareness is expressed in asking. “The expression of religiosity, inasmuch as it is aware of its dependence on God, is called prayer.” I’ll underline three points on this topic:

a) “Prayer is the ultimate awareness of self, an awareness of [this] structural dependence. Prayer represented the very substance of Christ’s perception of Himself.”⁵⁹ Thus prayer is becoming aware of what I am. “I have loved you with an eternal love and had pity on your nothingness” (Cf. *Jer* 31:3). Awareness of self, not praying thoughtlessly, not praying so-to-speak. See when the last time was that someone prayed and had such an awareness of self that he was moved. Not a mere pious gesture at all! It is this awareness, chock-full to its origin that moves you.

b) “In prayer, human existence is revived and finds consistency.”⁶⁰ It is impossible for someone to do this and not revive, not find his own consistency. “Devout wonder, respect, loving subjection are all contained in this act of awareness: this is the soul of prayer.”⁶¹ Certainly not getting bored! Devout wonder, loving subjection, being radically moved: this is prayer.

So, when someone becomes aware of this, “solitude is eliminated. Existence is realized, in substance, as dialogue with the Great Presence which constitutes it—it is an inseparable companion.” And, look here: “The company is *in* our I. There is nothing that we do by ourselves. Every human friendship is the reverberation of the original structure of being, and if this is denied, its truth is in jeopardy. In Jesus, the Emmanuel, the ‘God with us,’ the familiarity and dialogue with Him who creates us in every instant become not only a clarifying perception, but real, historical company.”⁶² This historical companionship is given to us so that this might become more transparent, not to take our place.

This is why we need prayer, not only as a dimension, but the act of prayer as a necessary exercise toward this awareness, to the point that it becomes familiar. Here’s the promise: “The height of prayer is not ecstasy, that is, such a profound awareness of the depths that one loses the sense of the everyday. Rather, it is seeing the depths as if they were everyday things.”⁶³

Most definitely not being visionaries! This is Christian mysticism: seeing the depths, seeing the origin, not staying at the apparent such that the depths of everything, of me and of reality, may become as transparent as everyday things.

What a broadening of reason it takes to see the depths the way you see everyday things! What training it takes to use reason according to the true nature of reason, to the point of being familiar with the Mystery who sees the depths as everyday things.

c) “The complete expression of prayer is *asking*.”⁶⁴

“Everything seems so complicated,” Camus said in his *Caligula*. “Yet, really, it’s quite simple. If I’d had the moon, if love were enough, all might have been different. But where could I quench this thirst? What human heart, what god, would have for me the depth of a great lake? There’s nothing in this world, or in the other, made to my stature. And yet I know, and you, too, know that all I need is for the impossible to be. The impossible! I’ve searched for it at the confines of the world, in the secret places of my heart. I’ve stretched out my hands.”⁶⁵ Everything is right here: I stretched out my hands. We want the impossible. This is why, since we can’t give it to ourselves, all our hope lies in having outstretched hands.

HOLY MASS

OPENING GREETING OF HIS EXCELLENCY, BISHOP STANISLAW RYLKO
PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY

Dear friends, I am deeply joyful to be here with you again in this extraordinarily intense time of the annual Spiritual Exercises of your Fraternity. It is good for my heart to see so many of you so intimately united before the mystery of the Eucharist: a priestly, prophetic, and kingly people, that is, the Church...

“Sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done wondrous deeds” (*Ps* 98:1), the psalmist exhorts us. And the history of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation is truly rich in wondrous deeds of the Lord. Many of us, in our memory and in our eyes, will long hold the vibrant images of the touching witness of faith which the spiritual children of Father Luigi Giussani gave before the whole Church this past Saturday, March 24, during the audience with our Holy Father Benedict XVI for the twenty-fifth anniversary of pontifical recognition of the Fraternity. In that people, gathered to receive the words of the Pope, packing Saint Peter’s Square and Via della Conciliazione, heedless of the driving rain, the charism of Communion and Liberation was made palpably visible. With hearts still overflowing with gratitude to the Lord for the gift of that encounter, let us now prepare ourselves for the celebration of the Eucharist with an act of sincere repentance for our sins.

I confess to almighty God...

HOMILY

“Your face, O Lord, I seek...” (*Ps* 27:8)

1. *Spiritual exercises, a return to what is essential in life...*

The time of the Spiritual Exercises, which each of you looks forward to so much, is a powerful time for the life of the whole Movement which meets every year in Rimini at this time to place itself in the sight of the Lord in the silence of recollection, prayer, listening to the Word, and meditation. It is a time given to you to come back to experience that deep communion which makes you one companionship, one big family, “a single body and a single soul.” And it is a *kairos*, when the Lord passes by, and so it is a time for returning to what is essential. Christ’s words to Martha come to mind: “You are anxious and troubled about

many things, but only one thing is necessary” (*Lk* 10:41). Today more than ever our existence runs the risk of being spent in an unstoppable activism that leaves us distracted, superficial, and forgetful of what really matters. The lifestyles defended by the dominant culture erode the faith and wither the spirit. Spiritual exercises, then, are a great opportunity which is given to us for coming back to ask ourselves about what is essential and for taking up a path of a personal search for the true answers, keeping our gaze fixed on Him who is the answer given by God to the deepest longings of man’s heart: that is, on Christ. The psalmist says, “Your face, O Lord, I seek” (*Ps* 27:8), and again, “Always seek His face” (*Ps* 105:5). Christian life is a constant search for the face of Christ, a search in which we are always beginners, and so in need of teachers who show us how to seek it... So great is the gratitude we have for the Holy Father who, with his book *Jesus of Nazareth*, wanted to make us sharers in his personal and passionate search for the face of Christ, in which faith and reason mutually sustain one another, resting on the sure foundation of the revealed Word of the Gospels. This book is the fruit, as he himself writes in the foreword, of “a long gestation” (p. xi) of the Christian, the theologian, the pastor and, finally, of the Pontiff. Our meditation on the gospel passage of this Eucharist will thus be guided precisely by the words of this great teacher in the faith.

2. *Thirst for God...*

The passage of the Gospel we listened to transports us in mind to the Upper Room where Christ, in His farewell discourse to the apostles, opens up His heart to them. It is a sort of last will and testament, with each word bearing very great weight. The Lord speaks to the disciples of His particular relationship with the Father, revealing His deepest identity to them: He is the Son. But they have difficulty understanding Him.

“Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us” (*Jn* 14:7). Philip’s request expresses the deepest thirst of man’s heart, namely, the thirst for God. Man’s greatness consists in a heart that only God can fill—nothing else! Yet the world tries in every way to exclude Him from its life, from the life of society, of culture. God becomes more and more “the great Absence,” and the Pope warns, “Faith in the one God is the only thing that truly liberates the world and makes it ‘rational.’ When faith is absent, the world only *appears* to be more rational” (p. 174). Without God, man and the world are an incomprehensible enigma, unexplainable, void of meaning.

The spiritual exercises are a truly privileged time for reviving our thirst for God, for reinvigorating our religious sense, hunger for God, hunger for the Mystery. Benedict XVI writes, “In the end, man needs just one thing, in which everything else is contained; but he must first delve beyond his superficial wishes and longings in order to learn to recognize what it is that he truly needs and truly wants. He needs God” (pp. 353-354). And he explains, “What did Jesus actually bring, if not world peace, universal prosperity, and a better world? What has he brought? The answer is very simple: God... He has brought God, and now we know His face, now we can call upon Him. Now we know the path that we human beings have to take in this world. Jesus has brought God and with God the truth about our origin and destiny: faith, hope, and love. It is only because of the hardness of our heart that we think this is too little. Yes indeed, God’s power works quietly in this world, but it is the true and lasting power. Again and again, God’s cause seems to be in its death throes. Yet over and over again it proves to be the thing that truly endures and saves” (p. 44). The pages written by the Holy Father touch our innermost realm; they give direction to our life. They make us want to pray with the words of the psalmist, “My soul is thirsting for God, the living God: when can I enter and see the face of God?” (*Ps* 42:2).

3. *Knowing Jesus...*

“Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus reacts to Philip’s request with a question of veiled reproach: “Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me?” (*Jn* 14:9). Today we should understand this question as being directed to each one of us, letting ourselves be shaken from our false certainties, letting the thought that perhaps what we all already know is not true creep into us, letting ourselves be prodded to never stop on our personal path of searching for the face of the Jesus of the Gospels: “You, who do you say that I am?” (*Mt* 16:15). In *Deus caritas est*, the Pope hints at the importance for the Christian of knowing the Master, as he writes, “The real novelty of the New Testament lies not so much in new ideas as in the figure of Christ himself, who gives flesh and blood to those concepts—an unprecedented realism” (1.12). Christianity is the living person of Christ. Commenting on Rabbi Jacob Neusner’s book, *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus*, Benedict XVI cites the passage where the author affirms that, in His teaching, Jesus left nothing out, but He added something that turns everything upside down: Himself. And he explains that precisely this is

“the central point where the believing Jew Neusner experiences alarm at Jesus’ message, and this is the central reason why he does not wish to follow Jesus, but remains with the ‘eternal Israel:’ the centrality of Jesus’ ‘I’ in his message, which gives everything a new direction [...]. Perfection, being holy as God is holy (cf. *Lev* 19:2, 11:44), as demanded by the Torah, now consists in following Jesus” (p. 105).

In the passage from the Gospel which we listened to, Christ presents Himself as the Son of the eternal Father, totally subject to Him and totally equal to Him, thus allowing us to look at His innermost identity, and along with this, at the inner life of God Himself. The Pope writes, “We have to reckon with the originality of Jesus. Only He is ‘the Son’” (p. 345). Thus, “Jesus’ teaching is not the product of human learning, of whatever kind. It originates from immediate contact with the Father, from ‘face-to-face’ dialogue, from the vision of the One who rests close to the Father’s heart. It is the Son’s word” (p. 7). Whoever walks with Jesus necessarily becomes wrapped up in communion with God.

“Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me?” The risk of following Jesus, of staying with Him without recognizing Him, is real. And the words of the Lord to Philip are a warning for us all and an invitation to unite ourselves to the humble profession of Peter: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life; we have come to believe and we know that you are the Holy One of God” (*Jn* 6:68-69).

BEFORE THE FINAL BLESSING

Carrón: Allow me, Your Excellency, on behalf of everyone, to thank you for the constant fatherhood with which you have been accompanying us for some time now, and even if your coming has been recurrent, it is no less fascinating for that reason—on the contrary. Thanks again for this.

Bishop Rylko: I always consider it a gift to be able to preside at this Eucharist, as a moment of spiritual recharging for me too: not only for you, but also for me.

And allow me to conclude this Eucharist by calling once again on the words of the Pope. As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, he said two years ago, “What we need most of all in this moment of history is men who, through an enlightened and lived faith, make God credible in in this world. The negative witness of many Christians who talk about God

and live against Him has darkened the image of God and opened the door to unbelief. We need men and women who keep their gaze straight on God, learning what true humanity is from this. Only through men who are touched by God, touched by God, can God make His return among men.”

During these Spiritual Exercises God passes among us. Let us restore to Him the centrality that belongs to Him in our personal life, in the fold of our families, in our work. Let us let the Lord truly touch us during these days of retreat!

Saturday afternoon, May 5

During the entrance and exit:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano concerto in D minor no. 20, K 466

Clara Haskil, piano

Igor Markevitch – Orchestre des Concerts Lamoureux

“Spirto Gentil,” Philips (Universal)

Julián Carrón: Let us thank the Patriarch of Venice, His Eminence, Cardinal Angelo Scola, for the message he sent us:

“Dearest friends, the attractiveness of Jesus Christ for our lives builds us up as a personality on a path: certain of the end, but also aware that this end demands a continuous tension. Herein lies the *value of man*. That is why each of us possesses an irrepressible dignity, which no person or thing can harm.

“Our dear Monsignor Giussani’s precious teaching, encapsulated in Jacopone’s awestruck verse, shines forth this year with even greater luminosity after the embrace and the words of Benedict XVI at the memorable audience of this past March 24. There is a blossoming forth of renewed communion which we continue to beg from the Father as the most convincing expression of human beauty.

“I send you my greetings and I bless you in the Lord, Cardinal Angelo Scola.”

We also received a message from His Excellency Luigi Negri, Bishop of San Marino-Montefeltro; and I would like to greet His Excellency Paolo Romeo, Archbishop of Palermo and His Excellency Gianni Danzi, Archbishop of Loreto, who were here during these Exercises. I also would like to welcome His Excellency Giancarlo Vecerrica, Bishop of Fabriano and Monsignor Massimo Cenci, Undersecretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, and Dr. Guzman Carriquiry, Undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

■ SECOND LESSON

What value does life have if not to be given?

“What value does life have if not to be given?” What audacity! What audacity Jesus has, with the words we have just sung: “Go, sell all you have and come with me.”⁶⁶ It’s almost a plea. It’s almost as if He were

begging us: “Look, if you want to live, go, sell all you have and come with me.”

During the March 24th audience, the Pope launched us into mission again. At Verona he had described the path of mission: “The strong unity, that was present in the Church of the first centuries, between a faith that befriends intelligence and a way of life characterized by mutual love and caring attention to the poor and suffering, made the great missionary expansion of Christianity in the Greco-Roman world possible. So it also happened later, in different cultural contexts and historical situations. This continues to be the high road for evangelization”—that is, for mission. “May the Lord guide us to live this unity between truth and love in the conditions proper to our time, for the evangelization of Italy and of the world today.”⁶⁷

A faith that befriends intelligence (as we saw this morning), a life praxis characterized by love (as we will see now).

If the first part of the chapter on Jesus’ conception of life had as its central point the fact that the problem of the existence of the world is the happiness of the individual person, the issue now is how happiness is achieved. It deals with helping each other understand the path. Because all of us have tried and continue to try to achieve this happiness, and so each of us who cares about this happiness cannot avoid feeling Jesus’ provocation as a path he has to face. We can face this issue as a discourse we already know, or instead we can face it as the occasion to verify, to compare what each of us is living with the path proposed by Christ for achieving happiness. Only if we find the path can we become witnesses before men, that is, can we live mission.

The law of life

The gift of self

The law of life, says Jesus, is the gift of self. Father Giussani says at the beginning of this chapter, “If man as a being (person) is something greater than the world,” than his antecedent factors, “then, as one who exists (living dynamism), he is part of the cosmos. Therefore, while in the final analysis the aim of his actions is his own completeness or happiness, in immediate terms it is to serve the whole of which he is a part.”⁶⁸

This is what we have to help each other understand: if in the end the ultimate goal is completeness, happiness, we achieve happiness through this service to the whole, because “[e]ven though the objective of the

entire universe is to help man attain happiness more fully, man, as part of the world, must also serve it.”⁶⁹

As you can see, it’s an incredible challenge, because this seems to be a paradox to us, something difficult to accept, which provokes bewilderment. We often feel that serving the whole goes against our happiness. It is the paradox we find in the gospel: “Amen, amen I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains but a single grain. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life shall lose it; and he who hates his life in this world will keep it unto life eternal.”⁷⁰

“Human existence unfolds in the service of the world. Man,” says Father Giussani, following this Gospel paradox, “completes himself by giving of himself, sacrificing himself. The finest comment on this Christian principle are the words of Anne Vercors before the dead body of his daughter, Violaine, in Paul Claudel’s *The Tidings Brought to Mary*: ‘Perhaps the end of life is living? And perhaps the children of God remain sure-footed on this wretched earth? Not living, but dying—and giving in gladness all that we have. This is joy, liberty, grace, eternal youth! ... What value does the world have compared with life? And what value does life have if not to be given?’ Human existence is a consuming of oneself ‘for’ something.”⁷¹

Why is this so? Why is life a consuming of oneself for something? What is the nature of this consuming? Life is like this because the Mystery, which is at the origin of all that we are, the Mystery of the Trinity, besides being relationship, is gift—we saw it this morning—a gift of oneself, moved. It is charity. God’s nature has been revealed in sending His Son who looks with total compassion on our nothingness. “God so loved the world that He sent His only Son;” He had compassion on them.⁷² The fact that God not only loves us with an eternal love and has compassion on our nothingness, feels compassion for me, but that He sends His Son, is something of out of this world. This speaks of God’s nature. “My heart is moved within me,” says the prophet Hosea, “my innermost being trembles with compassion.”⁷³

This is God’s nature, says the Pope: “God is the absolute and ultimate source of all being; but this universal principle of creation—the *Logos*, primordial reason—is at the same time a lover with all the passion of a true love.”⁷⁴ Therefore the greatness of man created by this God who trembles with compassion lies in being gift, because he is created in God’s likeness, thus, man’s consuming of himself must become gift. The law of existence, therefore, is love, gift of self.

“In this way, he underscores the paradoxical nature of this law: happiness [is achieved] through sacrifice.”⁷⁵ Who isn’t almost scandalized by such a statement? Christ’s proposal challenges the mentality that surrounds us and in which we are often immersed, that takes its toll on us as well.

The objection about *eros* that Nietzsche makes and that the Pope cites in his encyclical *Deus caritas est* could be broadened to include the whole of existence. “According to Friedrich Nietzsche, Christianity had poisoned *eros*, which for its part, while not completely succumbing, gradually degenerated into vice. Here the German philosopher was expressing a widely-held perception: doesn’t the Church, with all her commandments and prohibitions, turn to bitterness the most precious thing in life? Doesn’t she blow the whistle just when the joy which is the Creator’s gift offers us a happiness which is itself a certain foretaste of the Divine?”⁷⁶

Given this context, it will be impossible to withstand the pressure of the mentality that surrounds us if we do not have another kind of experience. It is not enough to counter the wrong discourse with the correct one in order to survive in this situation. What is needed is a different experience, an experience of fullness; otherwise we cannot hold out, and sooner or later we, too, succumb to this mentality that everyone else has.

This is precisely the challenge, and Father Giussani responds to it by saying, “[T]he more one accepts [giving himself], the more one experiences a greater completeness”—pay attention to these words!—“already in this world.”⁷⁷ It is an experience in this world, not in the here-after. They are words that invite one to experience, to verify this law: that giving oneself brings a greater fullness to life. Because it is not by reasoning, trying to understand the paradox, that one makes progress, but in looking at experience. No one will ever be able to convince us of this paradox with arguments: it is only if one sees that the more he loves, the more he is himself; that life is gift of self and that in giving himself he is not lost, but gains himself. You intuit this when, in a loving relationship, giving yourself to a “you” is your own fullness. Anyone who has loved understands this. Anyone who has loved someone else understands that the more one loves, the more one gives himself to the other, the more fullness he experiences.

This shows us the path to understanding and challenges the ordinary way of behaving, in which we become the measure. We often hear these words: “I will not do it until I understand it,” that is, first understanding

and then doing. No! Because we cannot understand if our criterion is our reason as measure. Experience is what makes this law evident to me. This is why Father Giussani created a gesture to help us understand this law starting from experience: charitable work. Because he says that, in order to understand, knowing is not enough; doing is necessary.

This is the educational value for everyone of the gesture of charitable work, where one learns, verifies the law of existence as gift. “Our nature gives us the need to take interest in others. We go to charitable work in order to satisfy this need,”⁷⁸ says Father Giussani, and there, in finding the need of the other, in the face of the need that has one sole meaning, as I experience my disproportion I begin to understand my incapacity to resolve it, and the need becomes more conscious. So, if we want to learn this law, we must not neglect this fundamental educational gesture.

Father Giussani says, “Jesus proposes a human personality that is the result of two components: sacrifice and love. ‘There is no one who has left house, or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the Gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.’”⁷⁹ This is the experience of those who begin to give themselves: the hundredfold. This is the promise: one hundred times as much. Jesus does not mean to say that in earthly life one must sacrifice oneself in order to achieve happiness later in the hereafter, in life eternal, after death, but that introducing ourselves into this dynamic is what allows us to anticipate eternal life in the here and now, to begin to take part right now in definitive fullness.

The law of existence is the gift of self. Father Giussani continues, “A law is nothing more than the description of a stable mechanism. Man, too, as such (a being with a conscience and a will), is a fundamentally fixed mechanism. The so-called moral law describes this fundamental stability.”⁸⁰

Thus it is necessary to understand this law, this stable mechanism, because we often reduce it to a set of operating instructions, to moralism. “This is bad because the law forbids it”—and deep down we think that if we break the law nothing serious happens. We conceive of the law as a convention, not as the description of the dynamism that corresponds to the I. As Heschel says, “The ultimate principle of ethics is not an imperative but an ontological fact... An act is not good because we

feel obliged to do it; it is rather that we feel obliged to do it because it is good.”⁸¹ For example, no one resists cutting off his arm because it is against the fifth commandment! No one who cuts off his arm thinks that he has simply broken a rule, that he’s not acted in accordance with a rule, but that he has harmed himself. It is the description of a good, of what I am and of what is the true, adequate way of relating to myself. But we so often think that the law is only a thing, the rule that keeps us from doing what we want. Now that everyone does what he wants, he ends up in nihilism. Because they aren’t just rules; the law is the description of a stable mechanism that allows us to understand the nature of our I. The good that one adheres to is what corresponds to us, and that is why it is good: having an arm corresponds to us more than not having one.

“On what criterion will man establish this law of his action? In order to describe a mechanism, we must first consider its function, its objective. Now, since the I is destined for totality,”—since our I is desire of totality, a limitless desire for totality—“its law”—our nature, the dynamism of our nature—“is the giving of itself to the totality.” Therefore, it is only in this giving oneself to the whole that the I finds correspondence; otherwise, as Father Giussani says, “outside of this awareness of the totality, man will always feel imprisoned or bored.”⁸² We are made for the whole, and if one loses this awareness, this openness to totality, this angle opened up to the infinite, he feels imprisoned. And how can we free ourselves from this prison, from this boredom when we are trapped there at work or within our circumstances?

Look at the title of a section from *In Search of the Human Face*: “Offering: Act of Human Liberation.” “The act of offering, of giving oneself, fulfills man’s liberation [...] it is a most simple and concise gesture, which every man can perform in any circumstance, as long as a grain of self-determination remains.”⁸³ What allows him to breathe in any circumstance is this most simple gesture.

This is the challenge that each of us must be able to verify, which we must be able to experience so as to verify whether or not Christ’s proposal truly frees us from prison, from suffocating in our circumstances, from boredom. Saint Paul says it in those two incomparable verses of the Epistle to the Romans: “I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.”⁸⁴ In oth-

er words, the apostle beseeches us, offer your concrete reality, according to all its factors.

And what helps us to do this? Reality, reality pushes us to seek meaning in order to not suffocate in prison.

Someone recently asked me, “How can I remember Christ at work?” I answered him, “And how do you manage to work without remembering Christ? How can you live at work, in your circumstances, without the memory of Christ, without the breath of offering?” What we can say about work can also be said of leisure time: it is not only because work is burdensome. How can you rest, with all the need for totality that you have, without remembering, without offering, without opening your whole self to totality? Because without living in this sphere of totality one cannot avoid feeling trapped or bored. How can you manage to put up with yourself, live your circumstances, take a vacation? How can we live without breathing the infinite? Since we do not accept this, we stir ourselves up and we return from vacation more worn out than when we left, because it is not a matter of stirring ourselves up more. It is this openness, this liberation that lies in this most simple and concise gesture of offering, which is not a passive thing that one does when he has nothing else to do. Only the person who broadens reason truly offers with adequate reasons, because “offering,” Father Giussani reminds us, “means recognizing that Christ is the *substantia* [substance] of all of life. If, while he studies or works, a person says, ‘I offer you my study or my work,’ if in a difficult moment he says, ‘I offer you the hardship or the uncertainty of the mess I am in,’ this above all means, ‘I recognize that the consistency and the substance, that is, the breath, the material of the instant that I am living is You, O Christ.’”⁸⁵

This is Christ’s claim. Outside of this we are prisoners. This is the meaning of His promise, and this is what you compare everything with! Do what you want, but compare it with everything else and see if something can better respond to this need for totality that we find within us in every instant, in any life circumstance, besides this: “The material of the instant I am living is You, O Christ. I recognize that what gives truth to studies, to work, to the problem I am wrestling with is your Presence.”⁸⁶ This is the true recognition of Christ, because He is not an abstract Christ, but the Lord who is within time and will never go away. Familiarity with Christ is necessary for breathing in any circumstance precisely in this recognition, asking that He reveal Himself, that He manifest Himself: “If You, O Christ, are the consistency of the instant I am living, of the page I am reading, of the work I do hastily, of the sad-

ness or rage”—excluding nothing—“that has taken hold of me, then manifest Yourself within everything.”⁸⁷

The starting point is experience. Who Christ is and the import of the proposal He makes for us to reach happiness are only revealed in experience. All of us, at least at some point in life, have had this experience, yet many times this experience does not become a change of mentality. We are unreasonable, we do not submit reason to experience, and thus we go on looking, as if we hadn’t understood, as if we hadn’t learned anything, as if the experience had been useless, and thus life is more toilsome. It’s worth looking this experience in the face, because all the effort in life consists in this, understanding these things: the longer the time we need, the more effort it takes. As with the child, until certain basic things are learned, the more time it takes, the more effort it takes. All our difficulty lies precisely in this conversion, which is understanding what life is, that life is this giving of oneself to the You. “[C]hange ... is understanding better what one really is,”⁸⁸ Eliot used to say.

“We should note here,” says Father Giussani, “that the goal of the human question is pursued with the means available, with ‘what one is.’”⁸⁹ And we have two means at our disposal:

a) Instinctivity. “This is what I find ‘already there,’ what determines, attracts, stimulates me. It is precisely by this that man is introduced to the service to reality, by a whole series of data which he cannot avoid.”⁹⁰ Hence, for Father Giussani, instinctivity is not an obstacle, something to be discarded, but an instrument, something to be used, that cannot be ignored, because it is exactly by this means that man is introduced to the service of reality.

Last summer a young woman wrote me, “It seems to me that in the journey of my desire to the point of Christ there is a crucial moment of really great drama. Like in a Russian song, a man sees a beautiful woman and is reminded of his wife, so I, too, upon seeing things, upon loving men, would like to remember Christ, this You, and luckily it does happen to me, but there is an instant when you must tear away from yourself the instinctivity that would want to grab what is in front of you.”

The first reaction that comes to us is tearing away from ourselves the instinctivity that would want to grab what is in front of us. Like we were saying this morning, we want to throw away our need because we see it as a weakness. Now we want to throw away instinctivity because it pushes us to grab what is in front of us.

How different is Father Giussani's way of looking, who in front of something like this says, "How human is the human, how human is humanity." Instead of throwing it away, the question that it must raise instead is, "Why is this humanity given to me?"⁹¹ If God has put all this bundle of given factors there, why are they there? It is for a good. It is the positivity with which Father Giussani looks at everything given in reality, everything given by Another. It is this gaze of sympathy for what is human, for everything human in us.

"Since there is always this dramatic moment," our friend continues, "I wish that there were not even the person"—something that attracts me—"who passes by and moves me, I wish I did not feel the fascination of things and faces so deeply, so as not to risk making mistakes." It seems very human: one wants to love and does not want to make mistakes, and so, in order not to make mistakes, the first idea that comes to her is, "I wish I did not feel the fascination of things, of faces." She would like to erase the beauty that attracts her.

First we want to eliminate instinctivity and now we want to erase beauty, both times for the same reason: to spare ourselves the drama of living.

Look at how Father Giussani unveils the truth of what lies behind this: "If someone loves a person, he would even die for her,"—sacrifice himself for her. This is natural. However, "it is because of a resistance within us that we refrain from sacrifice. Resistance to what? It is not resistance to sacrifice [...]; it is a resistance to beauty. It is a resistance [...] to truth; it's not wanting the truth. This is the endless confusion of original sin: it's called lie. Resistance to sacrifice is due to an attachment to a lie, because of giving in to a lie, it is because we are liars. [Ours] is a resistance to beauty, to truth."⁹² We start defending ourselves against beauty because beauty gets us started, calls us back to Something else!

The letter continues, "You always speak of never censoring our humanity. On the contrary, you say that this [humanity] is precisely what leads us to recognize Christ. It is true I am here because there was a place that was not afraid of my humanity." Yes, we stay in a place that is not afraid of our humanity, of looking with sympathy at our humanity, because, as we saw this morning, this is indispensable for recognizing Christ, for being fascinated with Christ. We need both things: our humanity and the fascination of a beauty that attracts us. If one does not feel the fascination of things and faces, if one wants to erase them, it means that he will not even feel the fascination of Christ.

It is very important to understand these things well, because sometimes, when facing the vertigo, the fear of mistakes, the temptation is to erase our humanity or the beauty (not to let the thing attract us so much). But if I get rid of my humanity and become a stone, if I cut off, destroy my humanity, how can I be moved in front of Christ, how can I be drawn by Christ? For this reason, it is not enough to replace humanity with principles, as Bradley said: “Our principles may be true, but they are not reality. They no more make that Whole which commands our devotion than some shredded dissection of human tatters is that warm and breathing beauty of flesh which our hearts found delightful.”⁹³

Paul Claudel, too, said, “[T]hese senses which God has made ... are not base acolytes; they are our servants ranging the whole world through till they find at last Beauty.”⁹⁴

All of this is given to us so we can find and recognize Beauty. I cannot do without my humanity, I cannot tear instinctivity away from myself, because it is what determines me, attracts me, stimulates me, introduces me to the service of reality. Thus I need to ask myself—Father Giussani’s second step—why this humanity has been given to me.

b) “This attraction, this stimulus, this contingent impulse all have an end. Therefore, the second factor is consciousness of the proper goal of this bundle of instinctiveness. For not only does human nature possess, as a factor of its dynamism, a sense of urgency, it is also aware of the aim of this same urgency.”⁹⁵ I who have this instinctivity am not just instinctivity but an I who has awareness of the purpose for which I have it, and who knows that this energy, this impetus is made for an end. The only thing is, I can’t stop halfway; I can’t block the impetus that pushes us beyond in order to avoid the sacrifice it implies, the drama in which it places us.

Rather, what often happens is that, as our friend adds, “I often reduce my desire to ‘feeling like’ something, and Christ to a rule.” Desire is reduced to “feeling like” something, to instinct, reaction. But if my desire is just feeling like this or that, without a purpose, if this instinctivity, which has the breath of the infinite by virtue of the fact of being inside my I, is reduced to “feeling like” and Christ is reduced to a rule, it is no surprise that someone gets scared. All that’s left is moralism: let’s block instinctivity in order not to break the rule.

Where is the falsehood in this reduction of desire to “feeling like,” to instinct? Father Giussani says that “man, unlike animals and other

things, is conscious of the relationship connecting his emerging instinct and the whole order of things.”⁹⁶ Instinct cannot be detached from the totality of the I, with all the infinite thrust it carries inside. Hence, there is not only what I feel like: I am this instinctivity that is aware of the end, that is entirely open to the infinite. Even somebody like Pavese recognizes this: “What man seeks in pleasure is an infinite, and nobody would ever give up the hope of reaching this infinite.”⁹⁷

What then is the purpose of this instinctivity, of this urge? Father Giussani again says, “Ordering one’s instinct toward the goal (which is to say, the whole) is the fundamental gift of self to the whole.”⁹⁸ Thus, this instinctivity, urge, energy (this bundle of givens) has been given to us so that we can give ourselves, order it to totality, because it is in giving himself to totality that man finds himself again, as the experience of love suggests. Pope Benedict says in the encyclical, “Love is indeed ‘ecstasy,’ not in the sense of a moment of intoxication, but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God.”⁹⁹

The Christian ideal is not being stones, affectively handicapped: the issue is that my energy, all my desire for fulfillment, along with my instinctivity, find fulfillment only in giving itself to totality, in giving itself to the infinite.

“Since there is nothing useless in the world, the desire to possess, the will to possess becomes the occasion for starting the long journey to the You.”¹⁰⁰ This is what we are often not up to doing, and thus we slide into instinctivity, or we cut our humanity short. And since this journey seems mysterious to us, in trying to understand it we think that detachment comes first and only then do I affirm these things. In one passage Fr. Giussani says, “No, it is the opposite! Not ‘detachment comes first and then there is truth:’ there is truth, and *as a result* there is detachment.”¹⁰¹ This is Christ’s claim, that it is only because there is truth, because there is truth where man can see all of his life fulfilled, all his affection, that he can relate in a true way to everything.

A university student tells a friend about his reaction to an indecent proposal: “She was beautiful, and I was about to say yes to her; I wanted to say yes to her, but when I started answering, tears welled up in my eyes, thanks be to God. I stopped for a moment and I thought of the beginning day, of the fact of giving oneself reasons for everything, of my friends. And so I said no, because I loved her and I was convinced that that was the most instinctive and unreasonable thing that we could have done.”

This happens not only in the relationship with a person; it happens in the relationship with things, with everything. A group of friends was asking me about the attempt to live with power or live out [political] interests, “How can we live in a way that does not succumb to power or to interests?” Do you know what I answered? I talked about virginity: only if there is truth, if there is Christ, if there is something that fulfills life more than anything else, can one live in a truthful relationship with everything—with the other person, with interests, with power and with things. Will we have the courage some day to verify this proposal of Christ, to verify to the end whether the proposal of life that Christ offers us as the fulfillment of our humanity and thus of our affection, is able to answer, or will we always stop halfway?

It is only the truth, it is only the beauty of something I live that makes it possible not to give in to instinctivity. It is not a matter of cutting short or censoring, but rather of ordering instinct to the goal, having something more powerful, with a greater attraction, to which all my being with all my energies is magnetically attracted.

How can I order instinct, desire, to totality? Here Father Giussani reaches the climax of what he is saying: “Giving oneself is not human unless it is to a person. Loving is only human if one loves a person. The ‘whole,’ in the final analysis, is the expression of a person: God.”¹⁰² Why? Because He is the only one who corresponds to all my expectation, to all my desire for infinity, to all my need for happiness to which my humanity pushes me. Only this can order everything.

“Above the activity of the powers of the soul,” says Julien Green, “there is something deeper and more essential, and when this deep instinct is ordered to and oriented toward God, then everything else goes well; but if this deep instinct turns away from God, everything else is turned away too, whether or not man notices.”¹⁰³ But if God, the Mystery remains far away, abstract, He is in no condition to attract all of our humanity. This is why the incarnation was necessary. It was necessary, as Leopardi intuited, that Beauty, with a capital B, put on a “sensible form,” that it became flesh. An “affectively attractive presence” was necessary in order to attract all my energy, all my affection, all my desire toward Him.

Thus this is the only hope: “Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him!”¹⁰⁴ Without this, we can go wrong as much as we want or we can slip or we can cut short: but we don’t solve anything, because neither instinctivity nor moralism can solve the problem of the person, the problem of [finding] something that can really adequately respond to

the whole need for totality. For this reason, without the beauty of Christ present, who “wholly draws” us, there is no way to fulfill what is human, to become affectively fulfilled people.

“[T]he life of every man,” Saint Thomas said, “would seem to be that wherein he delights most, and on which he is most intent.”¹⁰⁵ Where true satisfaction is, there lies the answer to man’s affective problem.

This is why Christianity as beauty, as attraction, is the only thing able to respond to the challenge of the heart, the only thing able to face, to cope with this need for totality that the heart has. This is why it is the only thing able to overcome the distance, if the heart gives in to its attraction.

Without Christ there is no fullness, and so there is no virginity, which allows a true relationship with everything: with things, with people, with your wife, with your children, with those who work with you, without letting power determine everything; in other words, a gratuitous relationship, a relationship of an affectively fulfilled person, who does not exploit the other in order to fill up the emptiness that still remains. If this is lacking, all moralism is useless, because sooner or later we will succumb.

This is why on so many occasions the Pope uses the word “attracts”: “The incarnate God attracts us”,¹⁰⁶ and he continuously repeats the verb “to attract,” the verb “to draw.” Saint Augustine says, “[I]f it was right in the poet to say,”—he’s quoting Virgil (Ec. 2)—“‘Every man is drawn by his own pleasure,’ —not necessity, but pleasure; not obligation, but delight,—how much more boldly ought we to say that a man is drawn to Christ when he delights in the truth, when he delights in blessedness, delights in righteousness, delights in everlasting life, all which Christ is?”¹⁰⁷

Life is to give oneself, to love Christ, to find satisfaction in Him. Because of this, if Christ is only a rule and not this affectively attractive presence, He cannot possibly fulfill man affectively. Here is where you see the import of Christ’s promise. When someone has experienced that nothing satisfies, he begins to understand that perhaps he had better open himself up to Him.

One of you was telling me, “When I heard you speak of a promise of infinity and happiness, which is sparked by falling in love, and of the structural inability of the other to satisfy this promise, it struck me: you were talking about the wound that this produces, and about the fact that from this wound springs the entreaty for Christ. These things touched me very, very much and I keep thinking about them, how true

they are, how much the wound of an unfulfilled promise burns. Every one of us can think of a thousand situations, of a thousand aspects of this great truth, but I would like to ask you: how can one keep this wound open? It seems to me humanly unbearable to keep up such a position. A promise needs to be fulfilled, sooner or later, and if 'later' is too far away in time and the waiting becomes long, it wears us out. I personally fall regularly into these two opposite and contradictory attitudes: either I anesthetize myself by looking for satisfaction in a thousand activities that can fulfill me somewhat and I devote myself to a thousand superficial relationships, in which I do not feel my solitude too much, or otherwise cynicism comes to the surface, the doubt that a truly different humanity is possible. Yes, I would say, a lack of faith." It is inevitable that sooner or later one will wonder: but can Christ, can Christ's promise fulfill?

It is here that we are called once again to a leap in this relationship with Christ; it is here that the promise is seen. Jesus presents Himself as the center of man's affectivity and freedom: by placing Himself at the heart of human feelings themselves, He asserts Himself with full right as their true root. In this way Jesus reveals the import of the promise. Jesus makes the claim that it is only by following Him that man can truly find the answer to these things. As Saint Gregory of Nyssa says, "Only that Good," with a capital G, "is truly sweet and desirable and lovable; its enjoyment becomes ever more a spur to a greater desire."¹⁰⁸ And he continues, "Every time desire is satisfied,"—it begins to be answered now, it doesn't put everything off until eternal life—"it produces a new desire for the higher reality. Hence, since the veil of despair was lifted [from the soul] and could see the infinite and unbounded beauty of the beloved object [...] it stretches out into an ever stronger desire."¹⁰⁹

So will we some day take the risk of verifying this promise to the end?

Only those who verify it see that they don't have to suppress their desire, but that what we were saying yesterday miraculously happens: the conversion of desire. One begins to desire, catches himself beginning to desire. What fulfills him, and he starts desiring more and more that Good, that Presence in which the heart finds satisfaction, not to fulfill it definitively, but in order to desire it ever more. It is such an unsettling challenge, so dramatic, that we can only see its fulfillment if we are able to accept this challenge.

Conclusion

I conclude with what Father Giussani says at the end of this very beautiful chapter: “Jesus Christ did not come into the world as a substitute for human effort, human freedom, or to eliminate human trial... He came ... to call man back to the depths of all questions, to his own fundamental structure, and to his own real situation... Jesus ... came to call man back to true *religiosity*, without which every claim to a solution ... is a lie.”¹¹⁰ Love, politics, work, all become confused if this religiosity is not lived well.

This is why life is a journey, a tension. “Jesus Christ’s conception of human life, then, is essentially tension, a struggle.”¹¹¹

“Bestial as always before,” Eliot said, “carnal, self-seeking as always before, selfish and purblind as ever before./ Yet always struggling, always reaffirming, always resuming their march on the way that was lit by the light;/ Often halting, loitering, straying, delaying, returning, yet following no other way.”¹¹²

“It is a pressing on, a seeking—seeking one’s own completeness, one’s own true ‘self.’”¹¹³

Benedict XVI spoke as follows of Saint Augustine: “By following closely the journey of Saint Augustine’s life, one can clearly see that conversion was not the event of only one moment but, precisely, a journey.”¹¹⁴

It is to this journey that we are all invited. And Father Giussani finishes the chapter with an ingenious sentence, which I read as I conclude: “Following Christ (faith) thus generates a characteristic existential attitude by which man walks upright and untiring toward a destination not yet reached although sure (hope). [...] In abandonment and adherence to Jesus Christ”—take heed!—“a new affection”—a fulfilled affection—“for everything blossoms (charity) ... that generates a new experience of peace, the fundamental experience of life on its pathway.”¹¹⁵

Sunday morning, May 6

*During the entrance and exit:
Basque Songs, Oldarra vocal group
"Spirto Gentil," distributed by Universal*

Father Pino: In a few moments we will sing, in the hymn for Sunday morning, "May Christ show Himself in His glory/ To us, as unto Mary Magdalene;/ He'll come and call each one by name,/ The Lord who was dead, but has risen."

In the path of life, in the passage of each day, our humanity lives as awareness, as affection, only if this initiative exists: the initiative of the Mystery who meets us and calls us by name. Every time we say the Angelus, whether there are 26,000 of us like today or whether we are going to work or cleaning the house alone, it is this evidence which sweeps away every temptation to measure, all the pettiness of our little faith: "Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him."

Angelus

Morning Prayer

■ ASSEMBLY

Giancarlo Cesana: We've gathered the questions that emerged during the assemblies at the hotels yesterday evening, and these are the ones we've selected. The first is from Hungary: "How can we look at our need with sympathy and not as a phase to get over? In other words, how can we maintain that our hunger won't be eliminated by food, and that having a bit of an appetite allows us to enjoy the meal more?"

Father Julián Carrón: Who has the problem of getting rid of hunger? Someone with no food. Does someone with food have the problem of getting rid of pleasure, of desire, or does he want to have desire in order to enjoy his food? Does someone want this to be a phase to overcome, or would he like to always have all his humanity in the right position to enjoy a good wine or good food? This shows us how far gone we are in detaching ourselves from our experience, because what comes out in experience, if you observe it, is that need, in this case

hunger, is at the service of something else, because if it weren't for hunger, I wouldn't enjoy good food or a good wine.

The same holds for the need to be loved. Who has the problem of getting over the phase of being loved, of needing to be loved? Someone who hasn't met his beloved. Whoever's met his beloved doesn't feel the urgency to get over this phase: his desire to see her again, to go find her is constantly being awakened. He doesn't think, "Now let's get over this phase, so that I won't care less whether or not she exists." It's an abstraction, pure and simple. Christianity is often an abstraction for us! When we talk about Christianity the way we talk about real things, it doesn't work like this. The reason we have a hard time understanding is because it's an abstraction. That's why, if we don't have an experience, if we don't look at experience, we don't understand and we debate each other over abstruse things.

The disciples didn't have this problem. In fact, from the start His presence showed itself to be so decisive that when they got up the next day, they caught themselves desiring to go see Him. It didn't even cross their minds to worry about getting over this desire. And the more they met Him, the more they desired to go back again to see Him, because their entire need was embraced, entirely taken by Another, looked upon in the companionship of Another. That's why this is what I desire for myself, and I wish for you what I wish for myself, namely, that desire, that need, not be a phase to get over, because this would mean that we haven't met anything that we need in order to live. We meet many people in life who talk about Christ till they're blue in the face, but how many people do you know who need Christ in order to live? To live!!! To get up in the morning, to go to work, to look at themselves, to look at their own need.... To live! Otherwise what does it matter to me if I'm Christian?

Cesana: So, need is not only the expression of a limit, it's also the condition for being able to enjoy the response.

Carrón: Sure.

Cesana: Because otherwise it's an abstract humanity.

Carrón: Yes.

Cesana: Now we have a number of questions about desire.

"If desire is for happiness, why are we afraid of our own humanity, to the point that we resist desire itself?"

Carrón: Because we're alone! We're afraid of our desire like someone is afraid of hunger because he doesn't have anything to eat. We are afraid of our desire because we're alone, because we think of ourselves as being alone, and we can't get through it alone, we can't live with this desire. This is why we have to distract ourselves, we have to look for something that can separate us from ourselves, from our desire. It's hard to find people who live in a way that coincides with themselves, who are fully present to themselves, since in order to be present to yourself you have to have a Presence in front of you that fulfills your desire.

It's possible, friends, it's possible! Life is much greater than our philosophy, because Christ exists. But you have to be open to a path where this becomes a greater and greater experience every step of the way. It's possible: life is much greater than what we usually take for life, and it can acquire a fullness, an intensity, in everything, of the next world in this world: a hundred times greater, a hundred times greater! The challenge that Christianity poses to life, to someone who desires to live, is at this level.

You can say, "This is all garbage," or you can at least begin to think that maybe it can be this way. I wouldn't be able to talk about this, I wouldn't even be able to imagine it, because Christianity can't be imagined before it happens. In fact, after 2,000 years of history, we can't imagine it now either, after having heard about it for years, after having lived it; we don't even believe now that it's possible. Try to imagine whether someone who had not experienced this could imagine it or think it up. It's a challenge, because you find yourself in front of a presence that testifies to Something else.

Cesana: "So, what does it mean to say that conversion is at the level of desire, given that we tend to think that conversion pertains instead to action or mentality?"

And then there's another question that came up a lot: "We're asking for help on how one can order instinct toward the goal." On the one hand, there are those who reduce desire because there's no answer, on the other hand, you have the dictatorship of desires: I'm thirsty,—like Saint Ephraim said—so I go to the source and bleed it dry.

Carrón: The first question shows that for us, Christianity, despite everything, when you scratch the surface, is moralism; in other words it's something to do, some kind of rule to follow.

Sometimes people come to tell me, "If I were able to follow my desire, I'd do it, but since I'm an implacable moralist and the Church tells me not to do it, I don't do it; but I would if I could." This is why we're always affectively handicapped; we're stuck, because we haven't accepted the risk of verifying Christ. This is what it is for everyone, for the majority: a rule. It's desire reduced to "feeling like" and Christ reduced to a rule. This is the issue. But if someone starts to have an experience of satisfaction, that there's something that satisfies, then he starts to shift his desire. Instead of doing stupid things that don't fulfill, he starts picking something else that does. I leave what I used to desire because it's less, it gives me less satisfaction, it fills me less than what I've begun to taste. If this isn't what Christ is, the Christian claim is a lie, because in the end Christ doesn't fulfill, He's not in any condition to fulfill the promise.

If you begin to experience this fulfillment of the promise, what shifts is desire: I desire this more than what I was desiring before, because it fulfills me more, and since I'm not an idiot, since I get more fullness in this thing... Would you still stick to a dish that you don't like even after you've found something you like more? Does your desire shift or not? Look at experience, only out of moralism can you say, "No, I prefer to stick with this"? No! Your desire shifts. Then perhaps you have the money to pay for it or not, this is another issue, but if I could I'd always eat that, and since the "food" we're talking about is really free, you'd be an idiot... not to take advantage of it.

"Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him!" This is the significance of Christ's promise, which is a promise because it's real, and therefore it challenges our desire, to the point of shifting it. Conversion of desire: you shift your desire to somewhere else. If this isn't the way it is, we can go on proclaiming the whole faith of the Creed, but we don't believe. We might be orthodox down to the marrow, with correct doctrines, but we don't believe that there was Someone in history up to the task of responding to man's desire, and therefore Christ is not the answer, even if we're orthodox to the marrow: orthodox, doctrinally correct, but in the end the wrong experience. You can't live on correct doctrine, because Christianity isn't correct doctrine. Christianity is doctrine become flesh, and I can experience it. The *Logos*, Beauty, became flesh, and therefore I can experience it.

This is the only thing that explains that the entire human dynamic that I find within myself (called instinct, called this complex of givens) is given to me in order to adhere to that Presence which is the goal for

which it was made. This complex of givens, desires, instinctivity, was all given to me in order to adhere, so that I might take and adhere: my hand was given to me for the goal of grasping, picking something up, possessing in the true sense of the term. The only issue is to discover, to be available, open to a path, in such a way that little by little you start to direct everything to this goal—precisely because of the attraction of beauty. And then you truly begin to understand: “Now I understand why instinctivity was given to me, why desire was given to me, why all this need was given to me.” Why? Because that’s how the Mystery made me. The Mystery didn’t make me like a dog with a complex of reduced needs, because He wanted me to participate in a fullness from the next world, the fullness of Him. Therefore it’s the desire for Him who, little by little, unveils Himself before our eyes. Christ reveals what the goal is by being it. It’s like someone who at a certain moment has the still confused desire of being loved, and he’s desiring, but keeps on saying, “This is not enough for me,” “This is not enough for me, nor this, nor that...” Then his beloved appears and he says, “Now I understand! Now I understand what I was desiring in all this confusion. I was still entirely in the dark, but when she (or he) appeared, responding to my need, I understood why I had this whole complex of givens, all of my humanity, completely drawn toward something else. So then all the instinctivity, all the desire, all my humanity, all of my need is ordered toward the goal.”

This is an education; it’s a following. In other words, it’s letting oneself be carried along by beauty. For example, someone who’s carried along by this beauty orders all his desire to applaud to the goal. The gesture is beautiful, and then he stops himself. He doesn’t stop himself because he says moralistically, “I have to hold back my applause,” but because he’s so drawn toward the goal, so intent on beauty, that all his energy goes there and he doesn’t need to give in to instinctivity and applaud (as happened, instead, this morning during the singing). Think about the order and the songs in our gestures: why is it that oftentimes we can’t stand another way of staying together, of singing? Because it’s more beautiful, because we have been educated to a beauty out of this world. So, it’s not that we’re renouncing anything, but that we have been educated to order this whole complex of givens (while other people let themselves go, like an instinctivity that hasn’t understood what the goal is). We have been educated to see that it’s more beautiful when instinctivity is completely attracted, empowered, magnetized by the goal. And there’s no comparison; even a newcomer recognizes it in the way we sing, in the way we stay together. There’s been an education.

Such is life: it's for something more. We order instinct toward the goal in every single thing because of this "something more," not for something less, not to get ripped off, not because "I can't." No, no, no: it's for something more. No one regrets, when he sees other ways of being together, "Why aren't we like them?" We prefer our songs, the intensity with which we sing, the intensity with which we pay attention to songs. We can't trade it for anything else.

Cesana: So are you saying that the factor that facilitates the conversion of desire, that's necessary for the conversion of desire, is the presence of the object of desire?

Carrón: For sure!

Cesana: In contrast, our temptation is to work on desire. For instance, we work on desire for the woman at the expense of the presence of the woman.

Carrón: This is why I say that it's moralism. That is, we have to do something like this because they told us to do it like this and not because you've fallen in love, you've found the woman and so you say, "How beautiful! That's what I want," or you've seen people singing in a certain way, or you've seen things ordered in a certain... It took one [person]—Father Giussani—who had this and testified to it. A people was born from this authority, because he helped everyone to see this beauty, to taste, to desire this Beauty, and now we can no longer do without it.

Cesana: Therefore the dictatorship of desire isn't so much in having excessive or acute desires as in having desires without an object.

Carrón: Exactly! Like a loose cannon.

Cesana: The next question, from this point of view, is: "It seems to me, on the one hand, that my life is a continual verification of the truth of this path. On the other hand, your insistence on running the risk of verifying this promise makes me intuit that you're asking for a deeper work from us. What is it?"

There is also this other question: "Until today I thought that willingness of heart (desire) was enough. But you asked us to work. How can I avoid contending that this work is my effort to be adequate?"

Carrón: For us, “effort” is very often equivalent to “moralism,” and therefore using the word “work” or the phrase “put something in motion” is synonymous with moralism. No! Someone who likes soccer makes an effort, commits himself. If someone tells him, “Why don’t you stay home? After all, it’s on TV.” “No way, seeing it on TV isn’t the same as going to the stadium!” Someone who likes soccer commits himself just for the beauty of it; he commits himself, he works. Someone falls in love: “Why don’t you just call her on the telephone? You’re two hours away by car ...?” Because it’s not the same.

In other words, we can tell that something’s happened to us if it sets us in motion. This is why the opposite position, at times widespread among us, that Christianity is wonder and not effort, is colossal stupidity, because if you like something, it sets you in motion. Precisely because it amazes you, it unleashes all your humanity. In fact, as we read yesterday, Father Giussani says that Christ is the only genius who grasped all the different human factors and exalted them; in other words, He put all our humanity in motion. He reawakened the desire to follow Him, and to keep following, one day, the next day, and the day after that. This is work; it’s a commitment, says the School of Community. Without this, without freedom that adheres, I can’t experience the fulfillment of the promise. If you don’t share life, if you don’t live life together, what justification have you got? What are you talking to me about? We get the urge, the desire, to taste what we’ve had a foretaste of in the encounter, and we can only reach this, to the point that it becomes ours, through work.

I challenge all of you to find me any page of Father Giussani (let’s think for instance about *The Religious Sense* or *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*) that does not contain both the fact and the constant appeal to freedom, that is, to a human commitment. If there’s someone in the Church of God who has appealed to freedom, who didn’t spare anyone in this appeal, it’s Father Luigi Giussani. He didn’t want to slip it by us: he laid the proposal out to us, in all his freedom, and called us to verify it. If we don’t follow, if we don’t commit to this verification, if our freedom doesn’t commit to this verification, if I don’t learn to use reason the way he tells me, if I don’t learn to live prayer the way he tells me, if I don’t learn to put myself in front of reality like he tells me, if I don’t learn to stay together with others like he tells me, I can’t experience this.

We can stay within our companionship and be passive, presumptuous enough to believe that all we have to do is to stay in the fold. Like

the example I gave of the guy who thinks all he has to do is to attend class: “Look, don’t ask any more of me. I went to the Exercises; don’t ask me to work, too!” I don’t want to promise you anything without telling you all the reasons. I don’t promise you that this can become yours if you don’t commit yourselves, because I know no road other than the road of commitment.

Cesana: So you can’t go to School of Community like you’re going to the movies or to the theater, waiting for something to happen.

Carrón: This is obvious.

Cesana: And, like Father Giussani says in the *Traces* insert on Lent, we have to stop saying, “It’s difficult,” because the problem isn’t the effort, which is unavoidable, but rather the goal.

Carrón: Exactly.

Cesana: “What does it mean to say that the companionship is in the I?”

Carrón: It means that if one is aware of himself, in this instant the most evident thing is that he doesn’t make himself. If I’m aware of myself, if I realize what I’m made of, if I become aware of this vibration of my I right now, I realize I don’t make myself. If you want proof of this, all you have to do is think, “Can you guarantee yourself one more instant of life?” If someone gets a heart attack right now, can he give himself one more minute? Can you give your child another minute? Can you give your friends another minute? Can we, all of us together, give life to our friends? If we can’t do it for ourselves, nor all together, and we do have life, then who gives it to us?

Do you know what the problem is? That we take everything for granted; we live like children, taking for granted that the I exists, that it exists of its own making, that we exist. Instead it doesn’t go on its own. This is what we want to start calling into judgment: it doesn’t go on its own. And so, when one starts to realize that he doesn’t go on his own, he begins to realize that each instant of life is given to him, and that if I’m alive in this instant it’s because there’s Another. So you begin to realize that saying I, as Father Giussani says, is saying: “I am you who make me.” This is only an example of that work we need to do. For years I read that page of *The Religious Sense*, chapter ten, point four,

where it says this (I'm telling you this because it's fundamental to help each other understand what this work means). I could say I knew that "I am You who make me," that in this moment I don't give myself life; yet I was very, I mean very, far from saying "I have the awareness of a You who makes me." I knew it, but I didn't say "I" that way, usually. This is the difference, as Father Giussani said in one of the most recent *Traces* inserts, between knowing and knowing in the biblical sense. The Bible speaks of knowing in the sense of a familiarity, so that it becomes so familiar to say "I" with this presence within that one discovers that the companionship is in the I.

It's easy. Those of you with children, tell me if you're able to say "I" without thinking of your children. At a certain moment of life they became so familiar that you can't say "I" without them. Think of how many times "What am I doing this weekend?" came to mind without thinking of them. First you have to take care of all of them! More than saying "I" without your children... you have them within you up to your neck! This means that your children are within the I, are within the modality with which you say "I."

I mean "I" with this awareness of the Mystery, with the same awareness with which you say "I" with your children inside. You can be on a fantastic beach in the Bahamas, and be thinking: "How are my children?" Not only when they're home, but even when you're far away, you can't avoid thinking about them, so much are they a part of you.

Christ became a companionship, like your children are such a real companionship for you, so powerfully real that in the end you catch yourself saying "I" with this awareness. This is why Christ came: He became a real, historical companion, put us together with others, gave us children and friends so that our I would be so invested with the presence of others to the point that we can't say "I" without them. Yet this is often what is most foreign among us, because for us the others are like a toll to pay, and not the way I say "I," the way the others are within. I hope that being here makes the Mystery so present that it becomes, precisely because of this presence in this place, as familiar as your children. We can be here now, twenty-five thousand of us, in such a way that tomorrow morning, precisely because of this being together in this place where the Mystery made itself present, you catch yourself when you wake up with this awareness of the Mystery, like you get up with the awareness of your children. Otherwise, sooner or later our being together will no longer matter to us.

Cesana: So the companionship isn't only a factor of correction; it's really the possibility to enjoy oneself. This is the reason why God became flesh: that is, He became an aesthetic factor.

Carrón: Exactly.

Cesana: "So what does it mean that Christ is present in each instant in 'a form that can be sensed'? If I don't recognize Him is He present all the same? Is Christ here now if I can tell He's here?" And another, "There are moments in which I don't see anything beautiful, whether it's in the community or in reality. I wonder if Christ is missing in those moments or if it's I who can't see this beauty." Or yet again, "If Christ is so beautiful, why is it so difficult to live this dependency?"

Carrón: I'll simply tell you: if the disciples had asked all these questions, what would Jesus have answered?

First, some of these questions wouldn't have been asked. Let's not say that all questions are true: some really show that we don't know what we're talking about. Think whether Christopher Columbus would have asked himself, "Is it true that I've discovered America?" Do you think that at some moment he would have doubted that he'd discovered America?

For the disciples, what made the Mystery present in a 'sensible form'? The fact of being in front of an exceptional Presence. Someone could have asked the disciples, "So how do you know this is God? Where is God in a sensible form? Where is He?" Like now: where is Christ in a sensible form? Where is He? And what would the disciples have said? "Right here, in sensible form, and I recognize Him; I know because of the exceptionality that He brings me," not because I'm a visionary—I see what you see but add something because I'm a visionary. No! You're the one who has to explain this exceptionality to me, because what comes to me, upon seeing this exceptionality, is, "So who is this man?"

How often, when we are together, does the question arise, "But who is this man?!" in front of a sensible form? We take it for granted. For us, School of Community is a lesson, not the chance to really verify, like a test that I'm having the same experience as the disciples. And I understand this very well because this is what I used to do. For me, reading in the Gospel the question, "Who is this man?!" meant reading a question that was there in the Gospel, but this question never came to me starting from reality. The difference now is that the question comes to me more and more from reality, from what I'm living.

Somebody was telling me, “Carrón, where did you see Christ in Saint Peter’s Square?” This is the issue, don’t you see? We take everything for granted. Can you imagine the gesture we lived in Saint Peter’s without asking yourselves, “What are we doing here? Who brought us together?” What is the sensible form of this presence? What is the sensible form by which I perceive that my life is accompanied? Where is a proposal like this made to me? Where is humanity spoken of in this way? Where does one have such sympathy for the human? Where can one find a person, a place in the whole world where he can look at humanity like this, like we’ve felt looked at in these days? Now, if we begin to not take this for granted, we begin to recognize that Christ is present, that Christ stays. Why can we say He remains? Because the same gaze that we find in the gospels remains. And so I’m not a visionary when I recognize Him, because I touch Him with my hands, I see Him present, I recognize Him present in the way I’m looked at, that I feel myself looked at: a gaze that gives form to that gaze.

All you have to do is think about how we’ve come here and how we’re looked at here. See if something happened during these days, and don’t take it for granted. “How is this possible? What makes this possible?” Let’s not do “theology;” let’s start from experience. “What experience have we had during these days?” And maybe we’ll begin to recognize His presence in a sensible form. If instead of coming here, I’d gone to the beach, would the same thing have happened? Do I go home different when I only go to the beach?

Cesana: You always say we abolish the Mystery, and in this sense we reduce reason because we lose the most realistic aspect of reality.

Carrón: This is why the relationship with reality always interests me. Otherwise we’re doing theology, however correct: we’re orthodox, with correct discourse, but this is not enough.

Father Giussani is a genius because he always made us start from reality, from real experience, in order to introduce us to the Mystery. For him reality is sign; it’s the first ray of the Mystery, the first sign, the dawn. Why can I, in front of the first sign of dawn, affirm that there is light? Not because I imagine it, but because I see the first ray. Not because I’m a visionary, but because I don’t stop using reason with all of its breadth, I don’t stop halfway, so that I can give an adequate reason for that presence that’s in front of my eyes, in such a way that for me the depth of reality becomes familiar, as familiar as the surface, that is,

that I see the depths with the same familiarity with which I see the surface. This is what gives breath to life.

Cesana: The last group of questions have to do with sacrifice and offering. “What does it mean that our resistance is to the truth and not to sacrifice?” “I don’t understand what I’m supposed to offer: in daily life, what works, works; but when trouble starts, then maybe you pray. So, do I offer only when something goes wrong? To what degree does offering change reality, and what does it mean to give everything?” ...in the relationship with our children, with money, with normal life, in the life of someone who doesn’t make choices like Mother Teresa of Calcutta, that is, someone like us, that is, like Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Carrón: Yesterday a father told me that he had said to his son, “Carrón wants us to be saints.” Saints, yes, but in the sense that Giussani talks about: true men. That is, what matters to me isn’t “being saints” according to the collective image we have of the saint (as someone strange); I want to live, get it? I want to live with all of my capacity for affection, with all of my capacity for intensity of living. I want to live! If this coincides with sanctity, great: it’s what I’m saying. What matters to me is that you live, not that you be “pious,” because if you’re “pious” you won’t live.

So, since I want to live in every moment, what I find happening in me is this desire for fullness, and I find it when there’s trouble as well as when there’s no trouble. For us, the Mystery is like something that only plugs up holes. No! The Mystery, as we said, is within the I, within. But we are rationalists right down to the marrow because we conceive of the I without the Mystery and we think that the Mystery has to do with us only when there’s a problem, because something else prevails: since we can’t make it... But when someone’s in the Bahamas, doesn’t he need the memory of Christ? Is it only when he’s stuck at work? This is the issue we don’t understand. This is why yesterday I gave the example of rest. The conception you have of the I is most revealed in leisure time, because for many people rest, vacation time, is synonymous with doing nothing, that is, with not living memory, from the minute there are no problems... except that—as Giancarlo once said—you go vacation in a beautiful place, but you blow a tire and then...

Again, what’s at stake is the conception of the I. What we have trouble understanding is the religious sense; as a mentality we’re not there, after years of work on *The Religious Sense* we’re still not there. We keep saying “I” without the Mystery, and therefore we need a relationship with the

Mystery only when there's a problem. But do you need the person you love only when there's a problem? Or when you listen to a beautiful song, when you see something beautiful? Everything reminds you of the person you love. If not, then what does it mean to be Christian? Why does it matter to you? What happened in life that was different?

So, offering is the simplest gesture I can do in order to breathe, whatever the circumstance, however beautiful or ugly it may be. This very simple gesture: "Thank God you're here, Christ, because otherwise this would be suffocating," even the fantastic beach, because everything is small for the capacity of the soul.

Cesana: So you offer yourself...

Carrón: ...you offer yourself totally, because it's my I, all of my I that needs to recognize Another in order to breathe: "It is no longer I, but Another who lives in me."¹⁶ This is the breath of life. This is why Christianity is the greatest promise that can be given to a man who wants to live, who has the desire to live each instant. Otherwise life would be desperate, whether with or without trouble, because someone who has everything and for whom everything isn't enough isn't a sad sack, because the problem is that everything is small for the capacity of the soul. "*Quid animo satis?*" ("What can satisfy the soul?")¹⁷

This is why, friends, we have quite a road in front of us. This giving ourselves to totality, giving ourselves fully in whatever circumstance of daily life, is the possibility to breathe; this giving ourselves fully to totality, like Father Giussani says, can't be anything but giving ourselves to a person. It's not giving ourselves to the "Movement-y" organization, to the party: what do I care about the party or the organization? The only reasonable possibility for giving ourselves to totality is to give ourselves to a person, to the Mystery, and for us the Mystery is only the Mystery made flesh: Jesus.

"Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him!" This is an entire challenge and a program. Every time you read it during the coming months, you will have a challenge in front of you: "Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him!", as the most powerful promise a man has ever heard spoken to him.

To help us on this path, the most decisive instrument is the School of Community. It's a work; one can take up this work in a manner of speaking, that is, like someone who goes to class without doing his homework. But then, don't complain that nothing happens anymore, because nothing is automatic. As I often say to the novices in *Memores*

Domini, we all want to be Beethoven without beginning to learn the scales. This is our presumption.

To finish, we have two chapters of School of Community still to go: “The Gift of the Spirit” and “Christian Existence,” as our work before summer.

For the summer I propose that you take up the content of the Exercises again as soon as they’re published, because we can all take up again what we’ve heard during these days and we can help one another to understand it and to have an experience of everything we’ve told one another.

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF FATHER FRANCESCO VENTORINO

The Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in Him. In Him the name of God has been revealed to us: *Deus caritas est*. It was necessary that the Son of Man should suffer death, because in His death God has been glorified, the name of God as love. In His death He has conquered; His love for the Father has conquered all our fear, all our sin, all our nothingness. In His death He has shown us the beauty of the Mystery. This is why only the beauty of the Crucified One attracts man, because it includes everything, it includes all of man, all human experience.

Thus it was necessary to pass through many trials to enter the Kingdom of God. But these trials are due to the fact that it is the life of Another that must grow within ours. The trial necessary for entering the Kingdom of God is like that of generating life, like that of the necessary birth process, the suffering of giving birth is necessary for a new life to come into the world. It is the life of Another that must grow within ours; it is the truth of Another, it is the charity of Another that must grow within our humanity. And within our humanity lies all the temptation of the world that must be endured and overcome, conquered by the life of Christ. This is the necessary trial, necessary so that this victory of Christ, this victory of God might be manifested in the world: “This is the dwelling place of God with men. He shall dwell among them and they shall be His people, and He shall be their God.”

The victory of Christ, Father Giussani often reminded us, is manifested in the Christian people. This sign is given to us continually; this is the sign that must be given to the world through us.

MESSAGES RECEIVED

*Reverend Father
Julián Carrón
President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation*

On the occasion of the Spiritual Exercises of Communion and Liberation on the theme, “Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him,” the Supreme Pontiff expresses to the many participants His cordial good wishes with the assurance of His spiritual closeness and, while desiring that this providential meeting may give rise to faithfulness to Christ for a generous engagement in the new work of evangelization, He invokes a broad outpouring of heavenly graces and sends to you, to the responsables of the Fraternity and to all those gathered His special apostolic blessing.

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

Dearest friends,

The attractiveness of Jesus Christ for our lives builds us up as a personality on a path: certain of the end, but also aware that this end asks for a continuous tension. Herein lies the *value of man*. That is why each of us possesses an irrepressible dignity, which no person or thing can harm.

Our dear Monsignor Giussani’s precious teaching, encapsulated in Jacopone’s awestruck verse, shines forth this year with even greater luminosity after the embrace and the words of Benedict XVI at the memorable audience of last March 24. There is a blossoming forth of renewed communion which we continue to beg from the Father as the most convincing expression of human beauty.

I send you my greetings and I bless you in the Lord.

*His Eminence Cardinal Angelo Scola
Patriarch of Venice*

Dear Father Julián,

I cannot take part in the Exercises because I must attend a meeting of the European bishops, which is taking place in Romania, on the problem of the relationship between faith and culture.

I wish, however, to send you a sign of my ever more total belonging to this great friendship and history of ours, and of my personal affection for you and for your responsibility.

I still hold within my heart the great event of Rome. The more I keep and deepen it within my memory, the more it surprises me, to the point of moving me, to consider the extraordinary “predilection” the Spirit of the Lord had for the life of Father Giussani and for the extraordinary freedom that Fr. Gius had in identifying with this predilection. Through his presence, this predilection has impacted and impacts, still today, every day of our life: it enlightens it with the light of truth, the comfort of the gift of charity; it opens up the great and unique perspective of mission in front of every moment. Thus, as Fr. Gius taught us, our daily life shares in the building up of the human glory of the risen Lord.

I assure you of my constant prayer for your great responsibility and I ask you to carry my blessing to all our friends.

*His Excellency Luigi Negri
Bishop of San Marino-Montefeltro*

Dear friends,

I wish to greet all those taking part in the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, while I attend the General Assembly of the Episcopal Conference of Brazil, where we are preparing for the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American Bishops, which will take place at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Aparecida.

The Holy Father wanted to explicitly invite our Movement to take part in this event and I have been named as our representative in this meeting which will be very important not only for Latin America, but for the entire Church.

I entrust myself to the prayers of all of you, asking you to pray that the fascination of the encounter with the Lord and the passion to communicate it, which we have learned in the experience of the charism, may be a living point of novelty in the course of our work.

I also pray for all of you in this great moment of grace, so that we may be able to respond to the urgent invitation to mission which was strongly confirmed for us by Benedict XVI in Saint Peter's Square.

An embrace, with the Lord's blessing,

His Excellency Filippo Santoro
Bishop of Petrópolis

TELEGRAMS SENT

*His Holiness,
Benedict XVII*

Your Holiness,

The memory of the gift of the Spirit which was the great encounter in Saint Peter's Square has dominated the sentiments of the 26,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation who took part in the Spiritual Exercises in Rimini, and of all our friends from 66 countries connected by satellite, and this year for the first time including those in Bethlehem.

"Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him." This sentence of Jacopone da Todi was the theme of our days of retreat, reminding us of Your insistence on the beauty of Christ present which draws us.

Your invitation to live "a deep, personalized faith, solidly rooted in the living Body of Christ, the Church, which guarantees the contemporaneity of Jesus with us," stirred us to deepen our awareness of the conception that Jesus has of life, as we learn from the mysteriously living witness of Father Giussani.

In this way, we have rediscovered the necessity to "broaden reason" in order to verify the promise of Jesus of Nazareth of being the answer to the desire and to the infinite need of our heart.

We pray for your approaching apostolic voyage to Latin America, asking Our Lady of Aparecida to sustain Your long-lasting passion for the destiny of Your fellowman and the indomitable announcement that God has had pity on our nothingness and has become flesh and blood to save our humanity and to give us a "faith that befriends intelligence."

As a small token of our desire to be faithful to Peter in everything, we have named as the "book of the month" for all our friends scattered throughout the world Your *Jesus of Nazareth*, as we desire to begin living our days in the same familiarity with Christ that You have.

Father Julián Carrón

His Eminence, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone
Secretary of State

Your Eminence,

26,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, gathered in Rimini for our traditional Spiritual Exercises, and thousands more people in 66 nations linked to us, are grateful to You for the message sent to us in the name of the Holy Father, whose presence has dominated our days of retreat, in the still very much living wonder of the great encounter at Saint Peter's Square on March 24.

Always ready to serve the Church which moves ahead in history, witnessing that "Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him," according to the expression of Jacopone da Todi which has been the title of these Exercises, we ask Our Lady and Father Giussani to accompany You in Your responsibility before God and men.

Father Julián Carrón

His Excellency, Bishop Angelo Bagnasco
President of the Italian Bishops' Conference

Your Excellency,

26,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, gathered in Rimini for our traditional Spiritual Exercises, and thousands more people in 66 nations linked to us, meditating on the theme "Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him" (Jacopone da Todi), have deepened our awareness that the Christian event corresponds to the needs of our humanity. For this reason we renew our gratitude to You for Your most reasonable defense of the original nature of man as dependent solely on God, and therefore free from every other power.

We ask Our Lady to be the comfort in Your battle for truth, along the road pointed out for everyone by Benedict XVI.

Father Julián Carrón

His Excellency, Bishop Giuseppe Betori
Secretary of the Italian Bishops' Conference

Your Excellency,

26,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation,

gathered in Rimini for our traditional Spiritual Exercises, and thousands more people in 66 nations linked to us, have meditated on the theme “Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him” (Jacopone da Todi).

Animated by the desire to continue to serve Benedict XVI, who at Verona gave new momentum to the passion for communicating the beauty of being Christians in Italian society, we are committed in every ambit of life to carry the announcement of Jesus of Nazareth, the beginning of that full life which everyone desires.

Father Julián Carrón

*His Excellency, Bishop Josef Clemens
Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity*

Your Excellency,

26,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, gathered in Rimini for our traditional Spiritual Exercises, and thousands more people in 66 nations linked to us, have meditated on the theme “Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him” (Jacopone da Todi).

Once again this year, His Excellency Bishop Ryłko brought us the concrete embrace of the whole Church, our mother, which we want to continue to serve as the baptized in all the ambits of life and work, following the great Pope Benedict XVI, the foremost witness of the beauty of Christ in the world.

Father Julián Carrón

*His Eminence Cardinal Angelo Scola
Patriarch of Venice*

Dearest eminence,

We thank You for the words you sent us for our Spiritual Exercises, during which we sought to deepen our awareness of the conception that Jesus has of life, from which emerges all the value of our humanity, needful of the infinite, which alone is able to draw us all toward the truth. Wishing to live, as Benedict XVI has asked us, a deep, personalized faith, rooted in the Church and faithful to the living fatherhood of Father Giussani, we ask You to offer a prayer for the holiness of the whole Movement.

Father Julián Carrón

His Excellency Luigi Negri
Bishop of San Marino-Montefeltro

Dearest Excellency,

Grateful for the message you sent to us in our Spiritual Exercises, we want You to know that, having meditated on the theme, “Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him,” we are more certain of the beauty of Christ who draws us to Himself, to which Father Giussani introduced us for the first time. Continue to feel us close to You in the common witness of that “faith that befriends reason” of which Benedict XVI spoke at Verona.

Father Julián Carrón

His Excellency Filippo Santoro
Bishop of Petrópolis (Brazil)

Dearest Excellency,

Grateful for the greeting we received, we assure You of a prayer for Your participation in the Meeting of the Bishops of Latin America, so that it may be a witness of the beauty of Christ who draws us, as a contribution to the mission of the Church in faithfulness to the invitation which Benedict XVI renewed in Rome on March 24.

Father Julián Carrón

Appendix

ART IN OUR COMPANIONSHIP

Prepared by Sandro Chierici

(A guide to the images from art history accompanying the classical music played during the entrance and exit.)

The more attentive and conscious a man is, that is, the more he is capable of humanity, the more he realizes that he cannot live up to this humanity. Man cannot realize himself unless he accepts the love of Another. [...] Following Christ (faith) thus generates a characteristic existential attitude by which man walks upright and untiring towards a destination not yet reached although sure (hope). It is an attitude which is always struggling with the void of risk because the remoteness of the destination always tempts us to fall into uncertainty. This is overcome at a point beyond our own criteria - in abandonment and adherence to Jesus Christ (charity). It is this that generates a new experience of peace, the fundamental experience of life on its pathway. (Luigi Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*)

I

1. Vincent Van Gogh, *Portrait of Camille Roulin*. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum
2. Vincent Van Gogh, *Portrait of Patience Escalier*. Private Collection
3. Vincent Van Gogh, *Peasant Woman with Straw Hat*. Bern, Private Collection
4. Franco Griosi, *Hail on the Harvest*. Naples, Griosi Collection
5. Edvard Munch, *Melancholy*. Oslo, Munch Museum
6. Edvard Munch, *Melancholy (Laura)*. Oslo, Munch Museum
7. Henri Matisse, *Woman before Aquarium*. Chicago, The Art Institute
8. Edvard Munch, *Girls on a Bridge*. Moscow, Pushkin Museum
9. Carlo Carrà, *The Wait*. Rome, Private Collection
10. Carlo Carrà, *Beachgoers*. Genoa, Private Collection
11. Fausto Pirandello, *The Drought*. Rome, National Gallery of Modern Art

12. Vincent Van Gogh, *Old Man in Sorrow*. Otterlo, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller
13. Charles de Groux, *The Drunkard*. Tournai, Beaux-Arts Museum

II

14. Caravaggio, *The Calling of Saint Matthew*. Rome, San Luigi dei Francesi
15. *Resurrection of the widow of Nain's son*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
16. *Peter saved from the water*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
17. *Resurrection of the daughter of Jairus*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
18. *Healing the bleeding woman*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
19. *Healing of the possessed*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
20. *Healing of the leper*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
21. *Healing of the crippled and blind*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
22. *Healing of the man born blind*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
23. *Healing of the withered hand*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
24. *Multiplication of the bread and fish*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
25. *Healing of the crooked woman*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
26. *Healing of ten lepers*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
27. *Healing of two blind men*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
28. *Healing of the paralytic*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
29. *Healing of the paralytic by the pool*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
30. *Jesus and the samaritan woman*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
31. *Resurrection of Lazarus*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
32. *Disciples of Emmaus*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
33. *Dinner at Emmaus*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)

34. “*Didn’t our hearts burn within us?*”, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)
35. *Return of the Disciples to Jerusalem*, mosaic. Cathedral of Monreale (Italy)

III

36. Paul Gauguin, *Valletta with Trees in Tahiti*. Winterthur, Jaeggli-Hahnloser
37. Vincent Van Gogh, *The Church of Auvers*. Paris, Musee d’Orsay
38. Vincent Van Gogh, *The Evening Stroll*. San Paolo, Museu de Arte
39. Vincent Van Gogh, *Couple in Love*, Private Collection
40. Vincent Van Gogh, *Road with houses near Arles*. Kiel, Pommern Foundation
41. Edvard Munch, *Fertility*. Oslo, Munch Museum
42. Vincent Van Gogh, *Potato Farmers*. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum
43. Jean-François Millet, *Potato Planters*. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
44. Jean-François Millet, *Winter Evening*. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
45. Jean-François Millet, *Women Sewing by Lamplight*. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
46. Cagnaccio di San Pietro, *Tears of the Onion*. Venice, Camera del Lavoro
47. Jean-François Millet, *Harvest of Saracen Corn*. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
48. Galileo Chini, *Hemp Harvest*. Private Collection
49. Paul Gauguin, *The Harvesters*. London, Courtauld Institute Galleries
50. Vincent Van Gogh, *Woman Reaping Wheat*. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum
51. Vincent Van Gogh, *The Sower, detail*. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum
52. Jean-François Millet, *Shepherd Girl with Herd and Dog*. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
53. Pietro Cavallini, *The Last Judgment*, detail. Rome, Saint Cecilia

54. *Icon of Christ*, Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai
55. *Christ on the Throne*, mosaic. Istanbul, Hagia Sofia
56. *Christ “Chalkites”*, mosaic. Istanbul, Chora Monastery
57. *Christ “Pantocrator”*, mosaic. Istanbul, Chora Monastery.

DIRECTORY FOR FRATERNITY GROUPS

The following indications, which have emerged from the last twelve years' experience, aim to reply to Fraternity groups who have expressed the desire for a greater seriousness in the way they lead their lives, both personal and in communion.

1. Obedience to the indications given by the person guiding the whole Fraternity

Those who participate in the life of the Fraternity are invited to obey the indications given by the person guiding the whole Fraternity, in a responsible immanency in the life of the Movement that goes as far as one's affectivity.

2. Nature and consistency of the group

A group is made up of adults who freely choose it or constitute it. The idea guiding the Fraternity is the discovery that an adult is just as responsible for his work and family as he is for his sanctity, for his life as a path to sanctity, that is to say, for his life as vocation.

The adult, in so far as he is responsible, joins up with others who recognize the same responsibility before life as vocation.

According to the method the Movement teaches, everyone should desire a Fraternity group, even though adherence to it is personal.

3. Guidance: each group must be guided

Each group must be guided. The person guiding the group is not necessarily the prior, but must be someone authoritative, in the evangelical sense of the term: someone who has faith, who can even be from outside the group. The person guiding must communicate a method of life: he must teach how to bring everything back to one fundamental idea, and by meditating upon it, watching it, loving it, "all the rest" may spring forth. This is the origin of our method: Christian life springs from the encounter with a presence, and by following this presence one is changed. It is precisely in this change of self that the idea of a rule slowly matures.

The person guiding must encourage an authentic seriousness in the faith. He should be one who gives the group a direction, comforts it, and helps it to correct the inevitable tendency toward artificiality and moralism.

A stable relationship with someone "external" to the group (a priest, a responsible of the Movement, a member of *Memores Domini*) is a way to avoid emphasizing one's own group to the detriment of the unity of the entire Fraternity, which is not a federation of autonomous entities.

Each group must have a prior, who performs a secretarial function (notices, document distribution, etc.) and maintains order. The prior follows the directives received from the Center through the diocesan and regional responsables as well as the member of the executive committee in charge of the region.

4. The rule

In the life of the group, the rule is in function of an increase of the relationship between the person and Christ, and thus as a consequence, of an increase of the Movement in service to the Church.

a) Prayer

Each group must give itself a rule of prayer: it may be reciting a Hail Mary in the evening or going to daily Mass. Whether one chooses the minimum or maximum hypothesis is not important. What is important is the gesture of prayer, and the faithfulness to it.

b) Poverty

Monthly support of the common fund of the entire Fraternity, which implies sacrifice, is in function of an increase in the consciousness of poverty as an evangelical virtue. As St Paul says: "We have nothing yet we possess everything." The true way to possess everything is to be detached from everything. One can pledge even a few coins, but to pay them with faithfulness has a fundamental value as a reminder, because it is both a concrete and unitary gesture. Whoever does not commit himself to this directive may not be considered part of the Fraternity.

c) Development of the knowledge of Church doctrine

The Movement's catechetical study is the School of Community: this illuminates our formation, which is our whole life's task. It should be carried out while taking into account the Exercises and the latest documents of the Movement which clarify the context in which the "course" set by the School of Community is placed.

In cases where the School of Community is done elsewhere (as the result of a missionary presence of adults in their environment), the Fraternity group should meditate on the spiritual Exercises or documents indicated by the Movement, without failing nevertheless to refer back to the School of Community.

5. Work

The work of the Fraternity is the increase of the Movement in service to the Church. Taking on specific commitments is therefore in function of this (see the letter to new enrollees to the Fraternity).

IMAGE OF THE FRATERNITY GROUP

1. Premise

Adherence to the Fraternity is personal: it is valid with or without a group. This is a basic principle by which the person lives the faith in obedience “of heart,” that is to say freely and directly, “to the form of teaching to which we have been entrusted” (Joseph Ratzinger, “Presentazione del nuovo Catechismo” [Presentation of the new Catechism], *L'Osservatore Romano*, January 20, 1993). The following image of the fraternity group is the way in which one can be supported in his personal adherence to the Fraternity as a whole.

2. Aim and nature of the fraternity group

The fraternity group is a place of Christian friendship, in other words, of reminder and memory as regards one's own conversion. It is a place which makes one's will to live for Christ easier and more stable. There is no doubt that it is easier to be corrected than to correct oneself; this is why a place of reminder is useful. The fraternity group, as the sign of the Fraternity as a whole, “is the consciousness made explicit that we are on a journey, we have a destiny, and thus is an aid to deepening this consciousness, an aid to deepening knowledge and consciousness.” (Luigi Giussani, *The Fraternity of Communion and Liberation*, Società Cooperativa Editoriale Nuovo Mondo, Milano 2005, p. 108). It is “a nearness of persons who accept each other as a school, a school for loving others, for learning to love others” (*op. cit.*, p. 170).

“It must become a *locus* that mobilizes and changes us” (*op. cit.*, p. 39).

The fraternities help in the pursuit of personal holiness and in the vocation that each one lives: “the need [...] to live our faith and consequently to engage with it,” (Giussani, “Letter to the new Members of the Fraternity,” in *op. cit.*, p. 255) in such a way as to contribute to the work of salvation which Christ brought into the world with His Church.

3. Method (What is the criterion for choosing a group?)

The criterion for choosing a group is proximity, the opportunity to live together that is to be desired. The first proximity, the one that enables us to acknowledge the value of all the others, is vocational proximity. In this sense, the fraternity groups “have to arise in accordance with the natural convergences and choices of persons, without preset schemes (the “environment” is relationships between people more than a territory or a social class).” (*op. cit.*, p. 40).

The fraternity group can emerge from a previous friendship, but above all it implies one's decision that he needs the companionship of those people for his faith and for the necessities of life.

The outcome of such a particular companionship is the discovery of more and more people as brothers, in other words, a missionary attitude: the truest expression of the experience of fraternity.

“The way this becomes explicit is thus the involvement of one’s entire life, so that what happens to others cannot help affecting and engaging one’s own life” (“Letter to the new members of the Fraternity,” *op. cit.*, p. 258).

4. Rule and guidance

The rule suggested for the fraternity groups is proposed as a help offered to each one in the commitment he has taken up in adhering to the Fraternity. This calls for:

- a minimum daily commitment to *prayer*.
- concrete education in *poverty* (and to the value of money, through the common fund)
- support for the *work of the Movement* (possibly through a particular initiative);
- study of the *Church’s social doctrine*.

Whatever the case, the fraternity groups “cannot have the debate about a text as their expression” (*op. cit.*, p. 83) unless this becomes a self-evaluation on the spiritual and material needs of life.

This also clarifies the function and the method of School of Community. “For adults, School of Community, if lived well, should become the Fraternity. [...] Therefore a School of Community is a ‘would-be’ Fraternity, that is to say it is not yet a Fraternity because it is more on the surface of our commitment: it is an exercise, more than a life.” (*op. cit.*, pp. 169-170). Everything is potentially a fraternity.

The fraternities are guided: by the *Spiritual Exercises or Annual Retreat*; by the *Recollections* which are moments of further reflection on the Exercises; and, possibly, by *Regional Assemblies*. The *prior* has an important secretarial role, which consists mainly in communicating directives from the Center, the prior is not irremovable, since each one is responsible for the life of his fraternity. The fraternity groups can choose “guides,” persons who are authoritative in the evangelical sense. They can be chosen from outside the group, but are always subject to approval by the Executive.

All the directives are aimed at the increase of a Christian humanity: a humanity concretely different in our way of thinking, feeling and even of behaving.

The whole Fraternity finds its consistency within the Movement and from the direction given to the Movement. There is no point in adding instruments

for guiding the Fraternity, other than those already foreseen (letters and addresses by the founder; central diaconia; regional responsables, and so on). It is important, rather, that the instruments already at hand be lived seriously and possibly prepared, by sending contributions and questions to those responsible for them. In particular, it is important to stress the value of the Recollections, which must have: a moment of reflection (which points out the current relevance of the Annual Retreat); a moment of silence; a moment of assembly, and Holy Mass.

Notes

- ¹ Cf. *Mt* 6:21.
- ² L. Giussani, “Familiarity with Christ,” *Traces*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2007, pp. 1-10.
- ³ L. Giussani, “Familiarity with Christ,” op. cit., pp. 2-4.
- ⁴ 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, 1.
- ⁵ Jacopone da Todi, *The Lauds* [S. and E. Hughes, trans.]. New York: Paulist Press, 1982, p. 260.
- ⁶ *Ps* 80:8.
- ⁷ Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, op. cit., 1.
- ⁸ He is referring to a conversation with Father Giussani at a “Day of Meditation for Couples,” Milan, Italy, January 23, 1977, pro manuscripto.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ A. Cechov, “Storia noiosa”, in *Racconti*, vol. I. Milan, Italy: Oscar Mondadori, 1996, p. 351.
- ¹² “Day of Meditation for Couples”, Milan, Italy, January 23, 1977, pro manuscripto.
- ¹³ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, op. cit., 1.
- ¹⁴ Benedict XVI, “Address to the Participants in the Fourth National Ecclesial Convention,” October 19, 2006.
- ¹⁵ Benedict XVI, “Speech to Participants in the Pilgrimage sponsored by the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation on the Occasion of the XXV Anniversary of its Pontifical Recognition. March 24, 2007,” in “Drawn by the Beauty of Christ,” p. 13, supplement to *Traces*, April 2007.
- ¹⁶ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim* [V. Hewitt, trans.]. Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998, p. 80.
- ¹⁷ He is referring to a conversation Father Giussani had during the National CLE Equipe, Milan, Italy, February 26, 1984, pro manuscripto.
- ¹⁸ Cf. C.S. Lewis. *The Screwtape Letters* (Letter 13). New York: HarperCollins, 1982, p. 65.
- ¹⁹ John Paul II, “Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City, Mexico: Homily of the Holy Father,” January 26, 1979.
- ²⁰ Cf. *Mt* 18:3.
- ²¹ L. Giussani, *The Journey to Truth is an Experience* [J. Zucchi, trans.]. Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006, p. 53.

- ²² L. Giussani, S. Alberto, & J. Prades, *Generare tracce nella storia del mondo* [Generating Traces in the History of the World]. Milan, Italy: Rizzoli, 1998, p. vii.
- ²³ Cf. L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., pp. 80-98.
- ²⁴ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., pp. 83.
- ²⁵ A. Tarkovsky, *Andrey Rublyov* [film], USSR, 1969. Translated from the Italian production by William Vouk.
- ²⁶ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., pp. 83-84.
- ²⁷ William of St. Thierry, *Exposition on the Song of Songs*, vol. II. [Mother Columba Hart, OSB, trans.]. Spencer, Massachusetts: Cistercian Publications, 1970, p. 5.
- ²⁸ Saint Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine* [J. K. Ryan, trans.]. New York: Doubleday, 1960, Book I, Chapter 5:5, p. 46.
- ²⁹ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 84.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ E. Sábato. *La Resistencia* [Resistance]. Barcelona, Spain: Seix Barral, 2000, p. 104.
- ³² N. Berdyaev. *Slavery and Freedom* [R. M. French, trans.]. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944, p. 36.
- ³³ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 84.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 85.
- ³⁹ R. Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982, p. xlii.
- ⁴⁰ L. Giussani, *La libertà di Dio* [God's Freedom]. Genoa, Italy: Marietti, 2005, p. 16.
- ⁴¹ L. Giussani, *La libertà di Dio*, op. cit., p. 20.
- ⁴² O. Paz, *Tiempo Nublado*. Barcelona, Spain: Seix Barral, 1983.
- ⁴³ M. Steyn, "Blacksburg, la codardia..." *Il Foglio*, April 2, 2007, p. 2.
- ⁴⁴ L. Giussani, *Why the Church?* [V. Hewitt, trans.]. Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001, p. 34.
- ⁴⁵ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 85.
- ⁴⁶ L. Giussani, "God is Mercy," *Traces*, Vol. 9. No. 3, 2007, p. 1-9.
- ⁴⁷ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 86.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ M. Zambrano, "Filosofía y Poesía," *Obras reunidas*, Madrid, Spain: Aguilar, 1971, p. 206.
- ⁵⁰ M. Zambrano, *Dell'Aurora*, Genoa, Italy: Marietti, 2000, p. 32.
- ⁵¹ M. Zambrano, *Chiari del bosco*, Milan, Italy: Bruno Mondadori, 2004, p. 16.
- ⁵² AA.VV., "Drawn by the Beauty of Christ," DVD of the Audience with His Holiness Benedict XVI on the occasion of the XXV Anniversary of the Pontifical Recognition

- of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, Saint Peter's Square, Rome. March 24, 2007. Società Cooperativa Editoriale Nuovo Mondo.
- ⁵³ L. Giussani, *The Journey to the Truth Is an Experience*, op. cit., p. 69.
- ⁵⁴ L. Giussani, S. Alberto, & J. Prades, *Generare Tracce nella Storia del Mondo*, op. cit., p. 74.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- ⁵⁶ Conversation with Father Giussani at the National CLE Equipe CLE, Milan, Italy, February 26, 1984, pro manuscripto.
- ⁵⁷ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 86.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 87.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 89.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ A. Camus, "Caligula" [J. O'Brien, trans.], in *Caligula and Three Other Plays*. New York: Vintage, 1958, p. 73.
- ⁶⁶ C. Chieffo, "The Young Rich Man", in *Canti*. Milan, Italy: Società Cooperativa Editoriale Nuovo Mondo, 2002, p. 192.
- ⁶⁷ Benedict XVI, Pastoral Visit of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Verona on the Occasion of the Fourth National Ecclesial Convention, October 19, 2006.
- ⁶⁸ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 92.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁰ *Jn* 12:24-25.
- ⁷¹ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 93.
- ⁷² *Jn* 3:16.
- ⁷³ *Hs* 11:8.
- ⁷⁴ Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 10.
- ⁷⁵ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 93.
- ⁷⁶ Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 3.
- ⁷⁷ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 93.
- ⁷⁸ L. Giussani. *Realtà e giovinezza. La sfida* [Reality and Youth: The Challenge]. Turin, Italy: SEI, 1995, p. 192.
- ⁷⁹ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 93.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁸¹ A. J. Heschel, *Man is not Alone*. New York: The Noonday Press, 1951, p. 120.
- ⁸² L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 94.
- ⁸³ L. Giussani. *Alla ricerca del volto umano* [In Search of the Human Face]. Milan, Italy: Rizzoli, 1995, pp. 87-88.

- ⁸⁴ Cf. *Rm* 12:1-2.
- ⁸⁵ L. Giussani, *Alla ricerca del volto umano*, op. cit., p. 88.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.
- ⁸⁸ T.S. Eliot, *The Confidential Clerk*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982, p. 67.
- ⁸⁹ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 94
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁹¹ L. Giussani, *Affezione e dimora* [Affection and Dwelling Place]. Milan, Italy: BUR, 2001, p. 44.
- ⁹² L. Giussani, *Affezione e dimora*, op. cit., pp. 66-67.
- ⁹³ F. H. Bradley, *Principles of Logic*. Boston, Massachusetts: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005, p. 501.
- ⁹⁴ P. Claudel. *The Satin Slipper*. London: Sheed & Ward, 1935. p. 35.
- ⁹⁵ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 94.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁷ Cf. C. Pavese, *Il mestiere di vivere* [The chore of living]. Turin, Italy: Einaudi, 1952, p. 190.
- ⁹⁸ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 94.
- ⁹⁹ Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 6.
- ¹⁰⁰ L. Giussani, *Affezione e dimora*, op. cit., p. 266.
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.
- ¹⁰² L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 94.
- ¹⁰³ J. Green, *Ce qui reste de jour*. Paris: Plon, 1972, p. 104. Quotation translated by Stephen Lewis.
- ¹⁰⁴ Jacopone da Todi, “Lauda XC”, in *Le Laude*. Florence, Italy: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1989, p. 313.
- ¹⁰⁵ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II, II, q. 179, a1 co.
- ¹⁰⁶ Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 14.
- ¹⁰⁷ Saint Augustine. Augustine: Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 7 [P. Schaff, Ed.]. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1995, p. 169.
- ¹⁰⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Omelia sul Cantico dei Cantici* [Homilies on the Song of Songs]. Rome, Italy: Città Nuova, 1996, p. 47.
- ¹⁰⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Omelia sul Cantico dei Cantici*, op. cit., p. 257.
- ¹¹⁰ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 97.
- ¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- ¹¹² T.S. Eliot, “Choruses from the Rock, VII,” in T. S. Eliot: *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1980, p. 108.
- ¹¹³ Cf. L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 98.

¹¹⁴ Benedict XVI, “Omelia. Impariamo da Agostino l’umiltà della fede che depone la superbia saccente e si china entrando nella comunione della Chiesa,” in *L’Osservatore Romano*, April 23, 2007, p. 10.

¹¹⁵ L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, op. cit., p. 98.

¹¹⁶ Cf. *Gal* 2:20.

¹¹⁷ Cf. A. Gemelli, *Il Francescanesimo* [Franciscanism]. Milan, Italy: Edizioni O. R., 1932, chapter XIII.

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«CHRIST IN HIS BEAUTY
DRAWS ME TO HIM»

EXERCISES OF THE FRATERNITY
OF COMMUNION AND LIBERATION



RIMINI 2007