

“May the gift we have received always be this living flame”

Today we have with us the Spanish priest Julián Carrón, currently President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, just two days after an unforgettable gathering with Pope Francis in Saint Peter’s Square, where over 80,000 members of the Movement gathered from all over the world.

*The Pope asked the members of the Movement to be the hands, feet, arms, mind and heart of an outward-bound Church. How do you think this request of the Pope’s can be actuated in the daily life of the Movement?*

Fundamentally, in continuity with what is the DNA of the Movement itself. The Movement was born precisely in the outskirts, in the spheres of school, university, and workplaces, responding to the many needs that we see in the neighborhoods, people without work, who cannot make it to the end of the month, who are seeking hope, who need to find meaning in life, immigrants... All this is already part of our way of being in reality and living what has happened to us. Thus, in this further indication of the Pope we are encouraged to live what we are already living, but with greater awareness.

*What is the difference between keeping alive the freshness and vitality of the charism, now that Fr. Giussani is no longer present, and fossilizing it, as the Pope warned Saturday? How do you feel this responsibility of yours?*

It seems to me that every Christian has the responsibility of keeping the event of Christ from being reduced to something that belongs to the past, but living it as a present fact that shapes life. Human experience tells us this. It is one thing to fall in love with someone, and we all know how much this present fact shapes life, filling it with a presence that is so present that we overflow with joy and gladness; but we know well what happens when all this is reduced to a mere memory, is fossilized, or turns into something already dry, without the newness and freshness of the beginning. This happens with Christianity, too. If Christianity is only a memory of the past and not a present event, in the end it will not interest us. It will be unable to attract the heart, to grasp it with all its humanity, and thus Christianity will not interest us. We went to Rome precisely with the desire to ask for this, because we are well aware that we cannot give it to ourselves. Just as it was a gift to have received it through the charism of Fr. Giussani, we have to ask for it, as he taught us to ask for it, so that this gift we have received may always be that flame of which the Pope spoke.

*Those who do not know the reality of CL well might think that it is a typically Italian phenomenon, even though your presence here today would indicate otherwise, as would the fact that there were people from every continent in Saint Peter’s Square. So, could you please give us a quick overview of the presence of CL in the world?*

The Movement has grown considerably in recent years, touching eighty countries, obviously with different presences, also in terms of numbers, in the different nations. In some it is just at the beginning, while in others it is more consolidated. What interests us more than the numbers, which depend on how the Lord chooses to use this grace He has given us, is the verification of what we have received, that is, that when you live

Christianity as Fr. Giussani taught us, in the most essential, most elementary aspects of the faith, you can encounter the heart of any person, on any continent, in any culture, in any situation you are called to live your life. This is a continual surprise for us. Saturday in the Square there were people from China, New Zealand, the United States, Latin America, and Russia. This tells us that the human heart, that of any person at any latitude, awaits an encounter that can give the gusto of living.

*Pope Francis said that Christian morality is not a titanic effort to be coherent with a series of principles, but the moved response to the unexpected mercy of God. I have the sense that today in some ecclesiastical spheres this is a hot topic that provokes discussion; it certainly shows a particular accord with Fr. Giussani's perception.*

We are the first to be profoundly moved that something Fr. Giussani told us many years ago, which surprised us when we heard it the first time to the point of being moved, because we felt embraced in our humanity and our sin, should be said today by the Pope and the whole Church. This tells us something fundamental for understanding Christianity: that Christianity can be reduced—as already underlined by previous Popes, beginning with John Paul I, then John Paul II and Benedict XVI—to a system of ethics. Fr. Giussani always reminded us of John Paul I's famous affirmation that in the Church's attempt to present herself to modern people, she transformed the wonder of the beginning into a series of rules, into the titanic effort of the person. John Paul II and Benedict XVI insisted on this on many occasions: when Christianity is reduced to this alone, it loses its true nature of an event that changes life. Saturday the Pope referred to the famous scene from *The Calling of Matthew* painted by Caravaggio, in which Matthew himself, a sinner because of his occupation as a tax collector, is full of wonder in hearing himself called, he himself, by Jesus, who knew all his sinfulness. I can imagine what happened Saturday in the Square in some of the Italian prison inmates who had the opportunity to meet the Movement, what they must have felt when the Pope embraced them. It is the experience of Matthew, of every sinner in history in front of Christ, of each of us. For this reason, the experience brought home by those who participated in a gesture like the one we experienced Saturday in Saint Peter's Square, that stays in your heart and in every fiber of your being, is this embrace full of tenderness, of the mercy of Christ that has reached us once again through Pope Francis.