



YOU LIVE FOR LOVE
OF SOMETHING
HAPPENING NOW

EXERCISES OF THE FRATERNITY
OF COMMUNION AND LIBERATION



RIMINI 2006

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Cover: Chartres Cathedral, *The Creation of Adam*, (XI-XIII cent.).

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From the Vatican, April 20, 2006

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

With your letter of April 6th, and enclosure, you, in the name of this Fraternity, informed the Holy Father of the Spiritual Exercises that will take place in Rimini, April 29-30, 2006, in which you will preach on the theme, "You live for love of something happening now."

Grateful for your kind thought and sentiments expressed, His Holiness augurs that these days of reflection and prayer may kindle renewed commitment to Christ and faithfulness to the Church, and, while he entrusts to the most holy Virgin the good outcome of the encounter, he imparts with affection to you, to those who will take part in this important spiritual initiative, and to the entire Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, the Apostolic Blessing you requested.

I take this opportunity to greet you and express my esteem.

*Most devotedly in the Lord,
Angelo Cardinal Sodano, Secretary of State*

Friday evening, April 28

During the entrance and exit:

Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony no 7 in A major, op. 92

H. von Karajan – Berliner Philharmoniker

“Spirto Gentil”, Deutsche Grammophon (Universal)

■ INTRODUCTION

Julián Carrón. Immersed in the joy of Easter by His imposing, living presence, we begin our Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity.

I would like to begin by greeting all of you, those here in Rimini and all those linked by satellite in the various countries.

This year the Exercises of the Fraternity will be held in 59 countries. 24 countries are linked by satellite. This year, for the first time, the Canary Islands and Estonia are connected live. After a year of absence, Romania and Spain are with us again on satellite link.

Over the next few weeks, groups of the Fraternity in 35 countries will follow the exercises; this year, for the first time, the exercises will also be held in Malaysia.

Heartfelt greetings to all of you who have come here with your hearts full of expectation. Let us ask the Spirit to answer this expectation by singing together *Come Holy Spirit*.

Come Holy Spirit

I begin by reading the letter that the Secretary of State sent to me as President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation.

“With your letter of April 6th, and enclosure, you, in the name of this Fraternity, informed the Holy Father of the Spiritual Exercises that will take place in Rimini, April 29-30, 2006, in which you will preach on the theme, “You live for love of something happening now.”

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“When we get together, why do we do so?” Fr. Giussani asked some years ago. “To rid ourselves, our friends and, if possible, the whole world of the nothingness in which everyone finds himself.”¹

It is for the same reason that Jesus got together with the disciples who were going back to Emmaus disconcerted and bewildered after all that had happened. They, too, had begun to slip into nothingness. “We had hoped that he was the one who would deliver Israel.”² And Christ draws near to them precisely to rescue them, and they realize that it is He; it is He who rescues them from slipping into nothingness precisely through what happens. “Did our hearts not burn within us as he spoke to us on the way?”³ It is His presence, His companionship that shows itself victorious, that is not afraid of the disciples’ decay, not afraid of the distress that even they suffer.

Each one of us, like the disciples of Emmaus, knows how nothingness affects us. How? In what way? The suspicion that, in the end, Christ is not able to answer the expectation of our heart. Yes, perhaps we have come here with a certain expectation, but without exaggeration, a bit sceptical about whether in the end He can really answer, so we ourselves begin to slip into nothingness. We, too, can say, “At the start, we were hoping, too, but now many years have gone by since we met Him.” This cynicism can begin to get the better of us, and at times we are almost ashamed to confess it. But He keeps on coming up to us, as He did two thousand years ago to those disciples of Emmaus.

One of you wrote to me that, after inviting someone home to lunch, he received this letter from her: “Dear... Thank you very much for the lunch today. I was moved from start to finish, and a little ashamed because I was unable to stop crying. Thank God they were tears that came only from surprise at Him, from the evidence of Him in your person, and since I have been continually asking myself these days how I can abandon myself to Him, acknowledge Him with simplicity so as to want only to give in, I can say today not that I have understood it, but that I have experienced it by looking at you. I cannot but be profoundly grateful to you for this.”

Just like two thousand years ago, He challenges all scepticism, He challenges all cynicism.

Our meeting here is in order to allow Christ to rescue us from the nothingness in which we all are, because there is Someone who is more powerful than nothingness.

We have met Christianity in someone who the Pope said was “in love with man, because in love with Christ.” We have met a Christianity, a Christian experience, that lets us not need to forget anything, but challenges us, encourages us to look straight at the “I” that is each one of us, without censuring anything, a Christianity that has no fear of the heart, of looking straight at our own needs without reducing them, a Christianity that is not afraid to ask us, “What do you desire?”

Look, look into your heart, even at what you are unable to confess to yourself because you think it impossible. Look straight at all of this, and even if we all have the wound that makes us doubt that our heart’s desire can be fulfilled, a wound that at times makes us say, “We expect too much; we have to be satisfied with a bit less,” nihilism does not completely win in us, it is not able to win. The clearest proof of this is that we are here.

And why are we here? Why is each one of us here? Why have we made all the sacrifices needed to come here? Because nothing has been able to take away the expectation of our heart that the encounter with Christ has awoken in us.

Our being here, my friends, is the victory of this expectation, and this is the first defeat of nihilism. This is why the greatest action, the action most adequate to this expectation, that corresponds most to this expectation of the heart, is entreaty, daring, desiring everything our heart desires and which is expressed in entreaty.

What can give us the trust to entreat like this? As for the disciples of Emmaus, it is His presence among us that makes us ask like them, “Stay with us, Lord, this evening.” Let us ask with all the intensity of our heart, “Stay with us, Lord, this evening,” to fulfil our hearts’ expectation, because, like the disciples of Emmaus, what is it we need? That it happen now. This is the theme of this year’s Retreat: “You live for love of something happening now.”

You don’t live on past investments. Even the disciples of Emmaus were able to acknowledge that Jesus had been a prophet powerful in words and deeds, but this was not enough, it had not been enough to stop them going home disturbed and bewildered. They needed His presence now, because you live only for love of something that is happening now.

So let's pray, my friends, let's support each other during these days in the entreaty that it happen now. *Fac ut ardeat cor meum*, that our heart may burn, O Christ, *Fac ut ardeat cor meum in amando Christum Deum*,⁴ make our hearts burn in such a way that we may love You more and more, O Christ.

We are taking part not in a rite, but a gesture. Our Retreat is gesture through which Christ comes to meet our humanity decayed in its mortal illness. Christ comes to meet us in this gesture – everything is entrusted to our freedom, to our simple acceptance. So we all contribute to the generation of this gesture with our freedom. It is easy, we just need to let ourselves be drawn by His presence among us, by the way we are guided in this gesture.

Taking part in this gesture at times requires a lot of sacrifice – the discomfort of travelling to and fro, and so on, we all know it. Let's offer this sacrifice for the successful outcome of the Retreat, so that no one may leave here and go back to the nothingness he came from, that each of us may see Christ's victory now. Let the sacrifice be like a cry, an entreaty, an entreaty coming from the wretched people we are.

The silence we ask for in taking part in the gesture, while coming in and going out, during the trips back and forth between the hotel and the Exhibition Center, is in order to leave room for His presence to demonstrate His victory.

Christianity is easy, we just have to give in to the attraction that has brought us here.

I am sure that Our Lady and Fr Giussani will sustain us in this gesture, in this sacrifice, so that we take part, like them, in Christ's powerful victory here and now.

HOLY MASS

HOMILY BY FR PINO

That day He answered in extraordinary measure to those men's need and expectation. Raising His eyes, He saw a huge crowd following Him. They were five thousand, and we are five times as many, with the same needs, the same temptations, with an even greater cry, because ours is a greater history.

Just as then He used those few loaves they had, multiplying them, so in this moment He uses what we are to work the miracle of a change in us. He uses our freedom, which is a cry, perhaps even only a breath, and an entreaty, and this entreaty is sure, because this work, this Fraternity, does not come from man, but from God, from God through man.

Saturday morning, April 29

During the entrance and exit:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in D minor n. 20, K 466

Clara Haskil, pianoforte

I. Markevitch – Orchestre des Concerts Lamoureux

“Spirto Gentil”, Philips (Universal)

Fr Pino. Though it’s Easter time, we begin our morning assembly not with the *Regina Coeli*, but with the *Angelus*, which is the cry that, day after day, reawakens our awareness to the fact that we are Christians not for an ethical choice, nor for a lofty idea, but because of the Event of an encounter with a Presence: the annunciation of the Angel that reawakens our freedom, the *yes* as it blossomed on Our Lady’s lips as she accepted Christ’s human companionship to destiny, to each one’s journey to destiny.

Angelus

Lauds

■ FIRST MEDITATION

Our heart is not lost

Julián Carrón. What is it that we hold most dear? “What we hold most dear [in our lives] is Christ himself, because in Him dwells bodily the fullness of the Godhead.”⁵ I don’t think I am wrong in my interpretation of the desire of every one of us here today; the greatest desire we have is that Christ become dearer every time: for those taking part for the first time, that they may sense the beauty of Christ; and for the older ones amongst us, that every time the promise of the encounter may be fulfilled even more.

How can our love for Christ increase? Only through an experience of the exaltation of humanity in each of us, through an experience of an increase in our humanity, of a fullness of life, of intensity in living every instant.

Fr. Giussani concern was always this: the reasonability of faith. “Our method has an aim: to show that faith is pertinent to life’s needs,” for “I am deeply convinced that a faith that cannot be found in

present experience, confirmed by this experience, useful for answering its needs, would be a faith unable to stand firm in a world where everything, *everything* affirmed and still affirms the opposite. [...] To show that faith is pertinent to life's need [...] means that faith corresponds to the basic and original needs of every human heart, [...] the fundamental needs with which, whether he likes it or not, whether he knows it or not, a man ultimately judges everything.”⁶

The charism we have encountered, as I told you in my letter to the Fraternity, will fascinate us more and more only if this greater humanity, this correspondence of Christ to the needs of our heart becomes experience in our daily lives, because this is how our faith began. As the Pope reminded us in the encyclical letter, *Deus Caritas est*, “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”⁷

The encounter, that is to say, the “I” of each one of us struck by Christ's presence, struck because He corresponds to the needs of our heart, because He realizes these needs, He fulfils them. So, from the start, the proof of Christianity was this increase in the “I,” this “something more” in our “I.”

In the encounter, my friends, is revealed the method of every step of the way. What do we mean by an increase in the “I,” the event of the “I”? The reawakening of the heart, the opening up of reason, the challenge of freedom and its fulfilment, a greater capacity for affection, a greater capacity to be present in reality with our whole selves.

The encounter with Christ does not eliminate the religious sense but reawakens it. Fr. Giussani used to say that it is the perception of this Christ event that resuscitates and strengthens the original evidences that constitute the religious sense, that is, that gives the “I” a greater capacity to be present in reality, to live everything intensely. This is why it is alarming when we discover that we “are not there” in reality.

A friend of ours said, “Yesterday evening I went to see the people in the ‘Comet’ in Como. ⁸ It was like being struck by lightning, because I found myself face to face with a reality that challenged me. It's not important how I went there yesterday evening, weighed down by all the things I had to do in the following days, by tiredness and by my worries. I was overcome, struck by something that took me completely by surprise, something I had not imagined, even though other people had told me about it. While there at supper, I asked myself, ‘Where am I when I am working and when I go home? Where am I

compared with these people who are living a total, absolute presence before Christ, with those children who come here and then are taken away every other day, with a capacity of attention that I don't have for my own children, who were born to me and my wife?" And I felt wounded and thankful for what I saw."

"Where am I?" Where is my "I" when I am working, when I get up in the morning, when I am slotted into my day-to-day routine? Am I present in what I am doing? This is the genuine face of nihilism that takes hold even of us. It can be seen in the fact that we are not present in what we are doing. This fact is a challenge for our faith. Christ will go on interesting us if He is able to answer the needs of the "I," the present need to live our work, our relationship with our children, the things we worry about. The crucial point is the present. If we do not live in the present, if Christ does not answer in the present, we all know that we begin to doubt that Christ is able to respond to our real needs. It is true that we have had an encounter, but we cannot live on the profits from past investments.

1 The "I" in the present

The dramatic situation we often find ourselves in is cleverly described by a character in Graham Greene's novel, *The End of the Affair*. He says, "For me, the present is never now." How awful! "For me, the present is never now."

This is the characteristic of the modern world, as Péguy tells us, "The modern world operates an immense, total unloading of the present [...] Over the immense barrier of stiffening, over the immense bar of cataract, the modern world operates a total unloading of the present."¹⁰

The modern world, which started off wanting to recuperate reality, from the whole of reality right down to the "I", to the point of affirming its total autonomy, finds itself losing its grip on everything

Pascal describes this agonizingly, "We never bother about the present time. We anticipate the future, as if it were too slow in coming, as if to hurry it on; or we affirm the past as if to halt it, as if it were too fast: so imprudent as to wander in times that are not ours and not think at all about what alone belongs to us; so vain as to think of things that are no longer and to flee without thinking from the only thing that is. The fact is that, usually, the present wounds us. We hide it from our sight because it torments us and if it gives us joy we grieve to see it

flee away [...] Let everyone examine his thoughts: he will find them all bent on the past or on the future. We never think about the present; and, if we do, we do so only to find light for the future. In this way we never live, but hope to live; and, disposing ourselves to be happy, it is inevitable that we are never happy.”¹¹ So we resign ourselves, and life becomes more of a burden.

In day-to-day life we pay the price for this conformism, as Pavese says, “Man’s life is lived down among the houses, in the fields. In front of the fire and in bed. And every day that dawns sets you before the same burdens and the same failings. In the end it is tedious. There is a storm that renews the countryside – neither death nor great sufferings discourage us, but the endless strain, the effort to stay alive hour after hour, and news of others’ pain, the superficial pain, annoying like flies in summer – this is the living that shatters you.”¹² Living like this shatters you.

The only way we can think of for escaping from the present is to run away from our “I.” This is how Ibsen describes it, “O adorable sun, you have shed your rays on an empty room: the owner was always out.”¹³ We are the owner, always out, except when a stabbing pain, or a terrible, abnormal fear makes us come back in for an instant.

What is revealed in the fact that I am not present in reality, so much so that I can hardly bear myself and have to run away from my room? And this happens to us after the encounter we have had, not before. So what is Christ for us? If I am not there, then what is the presence of Christ? What are we talking about when we speak of Christ? What experience do we have of this Presence? Are they just dreams?

If Christ does not make me present with the whole of my “I,” what does Christ mean? It is just a name, and it is unable to draw my “I.” My friends, whether we like it or not, in time, He will have no more interest for us. He will no longer be the dearest thing we have. So the most urgent thing is how can Christ not remain just a name, but become more and more real, in such a way as to make the “I” present in reality.

Fr. Giussani tells us that in order to approach the person of Christ we need humanity, a possibility of correspondence with Him. In *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, he writes, “In approaching the matter of the hypothesis of a revelation and of Christian revelation, nothing is more important than the question about man’s real situation. It would be impossible to grasp fully what Jesus Christ means without first

grasping the nature of that dynamics that makes man man. For Christ presents himself as an answer to what “I” am, and only an attentive, tender and impassioned awareness of who I am can open me up and dispose me to acknowledge, to admire, to thank and to live Christ.” Then he concludes, “Without this awareness [tender and impassioned, of who I am], even Jesus Christ is merely a name,”¹⁴ and a mere name does not make us present in reality, it cannot take hold of us.

I can recognize what Christ is if I become aware of my “I.” We normally tend to be dialectical: if we speak of the heart, of the “I,” we seem to leave Christ aside; and if we speak of Christ, then we seem to exclude the heart.

The strength of the charism in which we have encountered and learned Christianity lies in always referring Christ to the “I” and vice versa, never speaking of one without the other. What was fascinating in Fr. Giussani was just this. We heard him speaking of the “I” in a way that would have been impossible unless Christ was really there. He spoke of the “I” in a way that would have been impossible if this “I” were not taken hold of by Christ. He spoke of Christ with all the human intensity of his “I.” There is no dualism here; for him, Christ was far from being merely a name!

Years ago, Fr. Giussani said, “In this historical moment, in which a heavy responsibility of change and example weighs upon us, the Christian subject must be quite solid.” And he added, “The Christian subject is solid when: 1) *it is humanly solid*, in other words, it affirms its own heart before anything at all; 2) *recognizing Christ*, without which the affirmation of one’s heart falls to pieces.”¹⁵

The heart and Christ. The only way for Christ not to become merely a name is for Him to become present to the human heart as an answer; the only thing that saves the human heart from falling to pieces is Christ.

2. The heart

We all remember the opening words of *In search of the human face* “The supreme obstacle on our human journey is “neglect” of the “I”; whereas the first step of a truly human journey – concern for our “I” – is the exact opposite of that “neglect”. It might seem obvious that one should have this interest but in fact it is not obvious at all. Just think of all those gaping voids [our being “absent” to ourselves] that open up in the daily fabric of our consciousness and all our forgetfulness”¹⁶

This neglect of the “I” affects one’s faith. The reason why people no longer believe, or believe without believing (reducing belief to a formal, ritualistic participation, or to moralism) is because they don’t live their own humanity; they are not seriously engaged with their own humanity.

What does it mean to be engaged with your own humanity? To be engaged with your own “I,” as it has been given you.

The “I” is the event of a heart, that is to say, of a reality that can be described in its desires and its needs, that all refer to, are all rooted in one desire, one basic need that cannot be realized, because the deeper you go, the more the desire increases.

The human “I” is an event that is characterized by what the Bible calls the heart, an inexorable desire for happiness and fulfilment. To be engaged with one’s own humanity means to take seriously this heart, this inexorable desire for happiness and fulfilment. Far from reducing the heart to mere sentiment! It is this inexorable desire, this structural disproportion that constitutes us.

Why should we engage ourselves with this heart? Because this heart, Fr Giussani tells us, is the fundamental criterion with which we approach things, it is the ultimate criterion for discovering the truth of man, for recognizing what is true.

This criterion, which is the heart with which we are launched into the universal comparison with everything, has two characteristics.

a) It is an *objective* criterion. I quote from the first chapter of *The Religious Sense*, “The fundamental criterion for facing things is an objective one, with which nature thrusts man into a universal comparison, endowing him with that nucleus of original needs, with that elementary experience,”¹⁷ in other words, the heart. We always have the suspicion that the heart is subjective. No; the heart is this objective criterion, and Fr. Giussani’s genius consists in recognizing this. Why is it objective? Because it is given us with our nature; we don’t give ourselves this disproportion that we find within us, this inexorable desire for happiness and fulfillment; we cannot manipulate it, we find it in us, whether we like it or not; it is objective, given. Fr. Giussani’s genius lies in recognizing this objective criterion in the subject, but recognizing at the same time that the subject cannot manipulate this criterion. This is Fr. Giussani’s wonderful, true modernity: he affirms the subject, but also affirms a given, objective criterion in the subject.

b) The second characteristic is that this criterion is *infallible*. Yes, you heard correctly, infallible. In his book, *Si può (veramente?!)*

vivere così?, Fr. Giussani says that, as a criterion, the elementary needs are infallible. This criterion is objective and infallible, so much so that it continually exposes the falsity of the images we have of the heart, because the more we engage ourselves with reality, however we picture it, the more our experience exposes the falsity of our images.

An example. I know an engaged couple who were about to get married. They were getting prepared and they talked with a friend who challenged them, the boy in particular, saying, "Be sure you correspond to each other." The boy went away angry, saying, "How dare you? It's years I've been waiting for this girl; I knew her at school, then we both went our separate ways. Now that we have found each other again, you come along with this question. You must be crazy!" Not put off, the next time they met, he told his friend how he was feeling, and she looked him in the eye and asked him again, "But does she correspond to you or not? Is she able to fulfil this inexorable desire you have in your heart?" And the boy answered, "No." He can get as angry as he likes over an image of the heart, of what corresponds, but when he verifies in experience, he will realize that there is a criterion he cannot manipulate that makes him understand that the girl does not correspond to him.

Another person writes to me, "For a long time I have been mistaking dreams for desires. At first I perceived clearly that Christ was the answer to the desire of my heart, but then, as time passed, I told myself, "He cannot answer this. So I suppressed my desires. This year, as I listened to the reminder about the heart, I realized that I was mistaking dreams for the desires of my heart and now I realize that what we are being told has reawakened my heart, revealing its true nature as expectation." We become aware of this objective, infallible nature of the heart when we truly engage ourselves with reality in what we undergo, not when we think outside experience. It is in experience that the heart is revealed in its objectivity and infallibility which prevent us from making mistakes.

We usually mistake the heart as *criterion* (what I am talking about), which is infallible (this structural disproportion is infallible, I didn't give it to myself), for the heart as *judgment*, in which often the criterion can be applied wrongly, like, to use a banal example, you can apply a mathematical formula wrongly: the formula is correct, but it can be wrongly applied. It doesn't mean that the formula is wrong, or that I need to suspect the formula is wrong, I just need to learn how to use it. The heart is objective and infallible as a criterion, but fallible in its

application; as a judgment, it can be wrongly applied. The fact that it is wrongly applied does not question the validity of the formula. So, since this is crucial for recognizing Christ, as Fr Giussani says, the first thing is to have this affection for our heart, for our “I,” this tenderness for ourselves. It is an attentive, tender and impassioned awareness of myself, that is to say, of my heart, that can enable me to admire and recognize Christ. So it is this tenderness towards myself that can help me to recognize Christ.

He used to say, “Man must say “I” with a little of that love of Him who created it, because if man is created in the image of God, there is nothing that makes him more imitator of God than this love for himself.¹⁸ And this love for oneself is not for an abstract self, but for one’s own concrete “I,” just as we were made. The heart is the fundamental instrument for the human journey. This is why it is no mere chance that Fr Giussani introduces it at the beginning of the human journey (the first chapter of *The Religious Sense*). Not to use our heart as the criterion for judging everything, leaves us judging nothing, and leads us to the total confusion in which we all too often find ourselves. As Hannah Arendt says, unless we judge, “all facts can be changed and all lies made true. [...] Reality [...] has become an agglomeration of continually changing events and slogans in which something can be true today and false tomorrow. [...] What we come across is not so much indoctrination as inability or unreadiness to distinguish between facts and opinions.”¹⁹

Unless we use our heart, unless we compare everything with our heart, our “I” is weakened as we said, the personality of the “I” is annulled, and we become more and more fragile and confused before everything. Life, which is given us for the adventure of knowing more and more the meaning of everything, for judging everything with the needs of our heart, becomes more and more confused.

Finkelkraut says, “We are living in the age of *feelings*, there are no more truths, lies, stereotypes, inventions, beautiful things or ugly, but a infinite range of pleasures, all different and all equal.”²⁰

It is the opposite of someone who is used to making use of his heart as a criterion of judgment, and begins to judge everything, as Romano Guardini shrewdly describes, “All that is finite is defective. And the defect constitutes a delusion for the heart, which longs for the absolute. The delusion grows and becomes the feeling of a great void... There is nothing worth living for. There is nothing worth our being concerned about.”²¹ We feel a particularly violent dissatisfaction

for what is finite and so we come to a stop, we are afraid of this, but this is only the first step. Guardini goes on “It is the melancholic man who has the most profound relationship with the fullness of existence. [...] The infinite testifies to itself, in the depth of the heart. Melancholy is the expression of the fact that we are limited creatures, but live next door to [...] the “absolute,” next door to God. We are called by God, chosen to welcome him into our existence. Melancholy is the price of the birth of the eternal in man. Melancholy is the disquiet of the man who is aware of the nearness of the infinite.”²²

Kafka, too, recognized the criterion of the heart; he called it a “center of gravity.” He writes, “I, too, like anyone else, have in me, since birth, a center of gravity that not even the maddest education was able to remove. I still have this center of gravity, but, in some way, there is no longer the corresponding body.”²³ Though the corresponding body is not there, the center of gravity is; I realize that there is no corresponding body because there is a center of gravity.

But even Kafka, who says there is no body corresponding to this center of gravity, desires it. It’s tremendous! We cannot not go on desiring, as he affirms in his *Zürcher Aphorisms*: “This life seems unbearable, another beyond reach. There is no longer any shame in wanting to die; people ask to be taken from the old prison cell, that they hate, to a new one that they will soon learn to hate.”²⁴ It’s the usual mechanism: change the circumstances (from one cell to another). But even for Kafka, as for everyone of us, we hope that during the transfer the Lord might pass by chance in the corridor, look in the prisoner’s eyes and say, “Don’t lock him up any more. He’s coming with me.” He would like there to be a “corresponding body”: someone who comes up to him between one cell and the other. Now, this corresponding body, this center of gravity, is there.

The hearts of John and Andrew, “that day had encountered a presence which unexpectedly and evidently corresponded to the desire for truth, for beauty, for justice that constituted their simple, unpretentious humanity. From then on, though betraying him and misunderstanding a thousand times, they would never leave him and would become ‘his own’.”²⁵

The body corresponding to this center of gravity that constitutes the heart is really there. Why is it there? Because they have become “his” forever.

3. Christ

How did they recognize the body corresponding to their center of gravity? Years ago Cardinal Ratzinger said, “We can recognize only what finds a correspondence within us”²⁶ we can recognize what corresponds to our heart, the ultimate criterion of judgment, if there is something we meet in life that takes our whole heart in such a way that we become His.

This is the event. Werfel says, “The truth lies only in the power of an event and not in the proclamations of thinkers”²⁷ The only thing that can enable us to be present to our whole selves, now, is something that is happening. This is the truth: an event. Lévinas writes, “The Good [...] has taken over the subject before the subject has had necessary time – or distance – for the choice. There is no submission more complete than this shiver that the Good all of a sudden commands: a sure choice.”²⁸ Good that takes over the subject, like the presence of Christ that took over the hearts of John and Andrew.

This is how the “I” and Christ are interlocked. On one hand, the heart that prevents us succumbing to any reduction of Christianity to ethics, to a discourse or an organization, because these do not take over the “I.” On the other hand, Christ, who cannot be reduced to any discourse or any moralism, because discourses and moralism do not make us present to reality, they do not take over our heart.

Being taken over, becoming His, is the on-going proof of whether Christ is present or not. We have come to know Christ as John and Andrew got to know Him, through a correspondence that happened. When this correspondence does not happen again, we are not speaking of Christ, we are speaking of something else. It can be seen that we recognize that Christ is there from the capacity of the “I” to be totally taken over, totally present in reality now, and this requires a presence in the flesh, a historical presence. St. Bernard said, “The love of the heart is in a certain sense carnal, because it impresses the human heart above all as regards Christ’s flesh and what Christ in the flesh did and commanded. [...] I believe that this was the main reason why the invisible God wished to make himself visible in the flesh and live as a man among men, to channel, that is, first towards the healing love of his flesh the affections of those who were unable to love if not in a carnal way, so as to lead them, gradually, to spiritual love.”²⁹

This is what the Pope reminded us of in the encyclical “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” and in this way he draws us, he attracts us to himself, as he attracted John and Andrew. He is always the one who gives and draws us up towards himself, says the Pope, and so we become His. “More than just statically receiving the incarnate Logos, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving.”³⁰

Taken over. Fr. Giussani told us in the marvelous “Page One” at Christmas, “Feeling oneself taken over by the love that has taken hold of us, by Him who has taken hold of us, feeling ourselves taken hold of by this Presence, feeling ourselves taken hold of by what has happened [...] is a *tenderness* a million times greater, more acute, more penetrating than a man’s embrace for his woman, or the embrace of a brother.”³¹

Someone has happened to us, has taken us over so powerfully as to take over our whole heart. If you don’t not feel yourself taken over like this, this coincidence is impossible, a distance remains between the present and the “I.” And if He does not take us over, then what is Christ, what are we speaking of when we speak of Christ? He seems an abstraction. But Fr. Giussani tells us that what seems an abstraction is not Christ, because Christ is so powerful, so real, so fascinating that He is more powerful, a thousand times more powerful than a man’s embrace of his woman.

An “I” with all the needs of the heart, all taken over by Christ’s presence: these are things that cannot be understood by reasoning, but by looking at experience. You realize you are all present, by looking at your experience, like when you are in love, and you are all blocked, intent on the face of the person you love, and you realize, as you look at that experience, that you are there present, with the whole of your “I.” This is why you have to look at that experience within the awareness of that event that has made its home in me, of this You who are me. Where am I? I am where there is a You like this, where there is a You of Christ so real as to take over the whole of my “I.”

This is the method not only of the encounter, but of every step of the way; so, if we leave behind our heart, we cannot recognize Christ, because the method has always been the same: an “I” that goes on discovering Christ corresponding to me in the present. The heart is not a complication to set aside, but the resource for discovering and for recognizing Christ. It is not a premise, but the criterion for recognizing what corresponds.

Someone told me, “For many years, I was afraid of my heart, I felt it, but I didn’t know how to deal with it, it scared me. Now I can look

at someone who is not afraid of my heart and finally I can deal with myself differently, without censuring and hiding my feelings, beginning to say “I” with my whole self. This does not take away the difficulty or the fear, but I can look at a road already travelled and sure, and that is now indicated and offered to my freedom.”

Another writes, “I have taken a moment to write to you about the reaction to our dinner the other evening. It is an immense gratitude, because even though I like my job and all is going well generally, now and then it seems that my heart explodes before the fact that I want so many things – to learn to be an architect, to do something grandiose, to spend time with my fiancé. Since life is going well and, as my father reminds me, you have to be realistic and practical, the initial enthusiasm ends up fading away, often because I am the first to consider it naïve [You see: if it doesn’t correspond, we consider it naïve, once we have had the encounter]. Seeing you and your friends, who live without reducing the desire that drives you to do things, frees the heart.”

An encounter that happens again in the present, which, even though I consider it naïve, frees the heart again. In order to come close to Christ you don’t need an “I” with particular characteristics. “Approaching the Mystery requires only one thing: the awareness of our ineptitude, which is more than nothingness; of our basic incapacity and our continuous betrayal; of our culpable poverty; of our conniving incapacity; of our being nothing.”³² You go to that meeting as you are able, like the blind man of Jericho. “They came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.’ And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, ‘Son of David, have pity on me.’ Jesus stopped and said, ‘Call him.’ So they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Take courage; get up, he is calling you.’ He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ The blind man replied to him, ‘Master, I want to see.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go your way; your faith has saved you.’ Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.”³³

It is beauty that convinces people of a new Presence that is there. This beauty is what releases us from nothingness, that is able to draw the “I” and make it present. Cardinal Ratzinger reminded us of this in

his message for the Rimini Meeting in 2002, quoting Plato: “Beauty draws our heart out of accommodation with daily routine, from decaying into nothingness, from not being present to ourselves”³⁴ But Plato did not know what beauty was, he could not put a name to it.

A Byzantine theologian of the 14th century, Nikolas Kabasilas, gives a name to that experience of which Plato speaks. He says, “Men who have in them a desire so powerful that it surpasses their nature, and they long and desire more than man normally aspires to, these men have been struck by the Bridegroom himself, He Himself sent to their eyes a burning ray of his beauty. The breadth of the wound already reveals what is the arrow, and the intensity of the desire let’s us guess who shot the dart.”³⁵

Ratzinger comments, “Beauty wounds, but precisely in this way it reminds man of his Destiny,” it reawakens the “I”, makes it present. “The encounter with [Christ’s] beauty can become the arrow that wounds the heart and in this way opens its eyes, so that, now, from this experience, the heart has criteria for judging,”³⁶ for recognizing Who it is that corresponds.

A Christianity as beauty cannot avoid it wounding, whatever condition we are in, and reopening the wound. Just as one cannot avoid the mountains being beautiful; so no power in this world can defeat Christianity. It will always reopen a wound in us, it will go on rescuing us. This is our hope. This is how Christ will be more and more dear to us.

“Take my soul,” Jean Leclercq used to say, “and impregnate it with your presence.”³⁷

HOLY MASS

INTRODUCTORY GREETING BY
ARCHBISHOP STANISLAW RYŁKO,
PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY

Dear friends: A cordial greeting to all of you who have come in such great numbers to the annual meeting of the Fraternity Spiritual Exercises. Looking at you, my thoughts turn to the whole people of the Movement of Communion and Liberation, spread throughout sixty countries on five continents, who in these days join together in spirit in this strong time of recollection, prayer, and meditation: an intense encounter with the Lord, who restores our spirit, regenerates our strength, and charges our journey anew with meaning. Greetings to Fr. Julián Carrón, to whom I am profoundly grateful for his gift of friendship and his generous willingness to collaborate with the Pontifical Council for the Laity. I also greet Professor Giorgio Feliciani, Vice-President of the Fraternity and faithful consultant of the Council for the Laity, which has for many years availed itself of his invaluable expertise.

I gladly preside at this Eucharistic celebration, as a sign of the profound bond uniting you with the Holy See, through the Dicastery I have the honor to serve as President, and as an expression of the affectionate paternity the pastors of the Church feel for the Movement, as Fr. Giussani often had occasion to speak of with me.

St. John writes, as we will hear shortly, “If we say we are free of the guilt of sin, we deceive ourselves; the truth is not to be found in us” (1 *Jn* 1:8). Let us begin, then, our celebration, placing ourselves before God in truth, acknowledging our sins. In the spirit of repentance and humility, let us say together:

I confess to Almighty God...

HOMILY

1. Dear friends, those who go on spiritual exercises enter into a time different from the normal – a sacred time, charged with the presence of and a particular closeness to God. Spiritual exercises are a true *kairós*, the time of the Lord’s passing, as He comes to encounter each of us personally. It is a time when Christ speaks to our heart, in an ever-new and ever-deeper way, of the things that are most important for our

life. Each one of us arrives at this appointment with the Lord burdened with many problems and questions that fill us with disquiet because, alone, we are unable to resolve them. One in particular is the object of your meditation these days: “Where is the life that we have lost in living?” This question, formulated by Eliot with brilliant incisiveness, presses again urgently in our world, so dramatically and thoughtlessly superficial, distracted, and confused. “Where is our life?” “Where is my life?” We must be vigilant today, to avoid being defrauded of our own life, leaving our own identity, our own conscience, our own freedom at the mercy of a secular and secularizing culture, ideologies of all kinds, the dictates of fashion, the latest opinion leader. The danger is real, and we must be conscious of it. Thus, spiritual exercises are also a time to take back control of our own lives, to correct if necessary our route, and renew our commitment to take responsibility for our choices before God. He is the true Guarantor of our subjectivity, our freedom, of a truly successful and happy life.

The need for light that each of us brings to the spiritual exercises – the need for light truly capable of sweeping away all the darkness of our existence – finds comfort in the reassuring certainty that St. John has given us in the first reading: “God is light; in Him there is no darkness... If we walk in light... we are in communion with one another” (1 *Jn* 1:5-7). Christians are called to live in the embrace of this light, not as solitary, isolated beings, but in communion with others, as a people, as Church. Thus, during the time of spiritual exercises, the Lord invites us to let the light of His word and His love penetrate every aspect of our existence, every nook and cranny, even the most deep and hidden. He invites us to a deeper communion with Him and our sisters and brothers. God is light, the light that transforms us and truly makes us born again, the light that enables us to find again the life “we have lost in living,” a miracle that happens in the sacraments, in Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

2. If we truly walk in the light, writes St. John, we are in communion with each other. We all need this companionship, and we particularly need the companionship of the saints, masters of life from whom so much can be learned. Today, the Church celebrates the Feast of St. Catherine of Siena, a Doctor of the Church and the Patroness of Italy. A humble Third Order Dominican, Catherine influenced not only the life of her country, but the life of the Church in a dark era for the papacy. A point of reference and critical conscience for the popes

and for the mighty of her times, powerfully present in the vicissitudes of the world and the Church, Catherine was a great contemplative whom God introduced into the abysses of His mystery! She wrote of her intimate experience of Mystery, “You, eternal Trinity, are like a profound sea, in which the more I search, the more I find; and the more I find, the more my thirst for seeking You increases. You are insatiable, and the soul, sating herself in your abyss, is not sated, because the hunger for You remains. I long for You more and more, O eternal Trinity, desiring to see You with the light of your light. I have tasted and seen your abyss with the light of the intellect in your light, O eternal Trinity” (*Dialogue*, also known as *Treatise on Divine Providence*). This is an extraordinary mystical commentary on the words of John, “God is light; in Him there is no darkness” (1 Jn 1:5). Like the wise virgins of the Gospel parable, Catherine is full of the wisdom that comes from on high, and has a great deal to teach twenty-first century men and women, afflicted with a deleterious activism, thinking we are living intensely, when instead we are losing our life. This saint shows all of us how contemplation is an indispensable dimension of the life of the baptized. The sensitivity to the ephemeral, typical of our times and our societies, also contaminates Christians, and we often forget that there is only one way not to “lose life in living;” not to let ourselves be stripped of what we are: living strongly anchored in God, grafted onto Him like the branches of a vine, living, that is, as true contemplatives. Today there is a widespread, erroneous conception of contemplation as escape from reality. It isn’t like this. The opposite is true: contemplation of the Mystery is the light that drives away the darkness and enables us to see more, and better; therefore, it is the way for finding ourselves again as creatures, as persons, as children of God, the way for finding our own life again. “He is your Lord, bow down before Him” (*Pss* 45 [44]:12), we have repeated in the responsorial psalm. Man is never so much himself, never so great, as when he prostrates himself in contemplation before the fascinating mystery of God. It is precisely this act of prostration that exalts man’s dignity, making him the true subject of his actions, making him truly present where the life of the world is pulsing. I experience this every time I go to visit the Trappistines at the Vitorchiano Monastery, immersed in contemplative prayer and extraordinarily present at the heart of the world and the Church. Spiritual exercises are a special occasion for rediscovering in contemplation a fundamental dimension of our Christian life. Contemplation is not

something optional or incidental; rather, it is a necessary gesture for all Christians, be they laypersons, religious, or priests. We are all called to become “contemplatives in action”! You who are here today have found your anchorage in the mystery of God through the Movement, an encounter through which you have understood that immersing yourselves in Christ is the way to grow in humanity, to “be more,” to be Christians who are more present, and present in a new way in the life of the Church and the world, to find again the life that we are always in danger of losing....

3. I will conclude with a brief mention of the ecclesial event awaiting us in Rome on the Vigil of Pentecost, the Holy Father’s meeting with the ecclesial movements and new communities. Like the servant of God, John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI has great affection for these new realities that have sprung up in the Church, and has reserved ample space in his pastoral program for the Church for the great sign of hope represented by the charisms that the Holy Spirit has so generously poured out on the Church of our times. On June 3rd, ecclesial movements and new communities are invited to give a common witness to their love for the Church and their faithfulness to her mission in the world. The Pope desires to meet you, and it will be a new, precious occasion to listen to his teaching, always so incisive and penetrating. It is an important appointment that we cannot miss. Thank you for the Fraternity’s generous collaboration in preparing this event. I’ll see you all again in Saint Peter’s Square!

BEFORE THE FINAL BLESSING

Carrón. I wish to thank Archbishop Ryłko, on behalf of all of you, firstly for his renewed and strengthened paternity towards the experience of our Movement, not only in virtue of his office, but out of true friendship.

We would like to thank him, too, for having supported the Holy Father Benedict XVI in the decision to call us to Rome for June 3rd next. May this help us in a more and more lively awareness of belonging to Christ and the Church in faithfulness to Fr. Giussani’s charism.

Thank you!

Archbishop Ryłko. May these Spiritual Exercises bring forth much fruit in the life of each one of you.

And thank you again for this beautiful witness of faith you are giv-

ing here in Rimini during these days. It is a great sign of hope for all of us, but not only, for the whole Church.

I renew once again a heartfelt greeting to those following via satellite, this modern technology that makes present in our time the great miracle of Pentecost, of this widespread presence of the Lord amongst us. Thanks once again, and *arrivederci* in St. Peter's Square!

Saturday Afternoon, April 29

During the entrance and exit:

Antonín Dvořák, Trio n. 4 in E minor, op. 90 "Dumky"

The Prague Trio

"Spirto Gentil" (Universal)

Julián Carrón. We thank the Patriarch of Venice, His Eminence Cardinal Angelo Scola, for this message he sent us.

"Dear friends, 'You live for love of something happening now.' This profound affirmation of our ever dearer Monsignor Luigi Giussani opens our hearts and minds to change. For what is happening now in the companionship of the followers of Him who died and rose for us, is His objective presence that assures us fulfillment. Love thus becomes a commandment because, as the Holy Father reminded us in *Deus Caritas Est*, Jesus gives himself to us as living, personal Mercy.

In the faith and the sacraments of the Church is renewed, again this year, on the occasion of the Exercises, the miracle of the resurrection of our "I" for the good of all our brother men.

May the Blessed Virgin accompany the freedom of each one in that humble Yes to her Son Jesus from whom flows, continuously renewed, the fascination of the Christian adventure.

In the Lord I greet you and bless you, Angelo Cardinal Scola."

I also greet the other bishops here present for their participation. I greet Archbishop Gianni Danzi of Loreto, Bishop Luigi Negri of San Marino-Montefeltro, Bishop Giancarlo Vecerrica of Fabriano-Matelica, Bishop Domenico Graziani of Cassano all'Jonio, Bishop Piergiorgio Debernardi of Pinerolo; and Fr. Massimo Cenci, Undersecretary at the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

■ SECOND MEDITATION

The power of his resurrection (Phil 3:10)

There is only one way for what we have just sung – "Our heart is not lost"³⁸ – to be true. Someone present is needed, someone who corresponds to our heart eternally. Otherwise, as often happens in life, something else wins us over, and in time disappoints us and in the end our heart is lost. And what we need is not just anyone, but someone who corresponds – Christ. And someone who corresponds now, in the

present. This is why St. Paul said, “If Christ is not risen your faith is in vain.”⁷³⁹ But He is risen. “I am with you all days, till the end of the world.”⁷⁴⁰ This is what makes the fulfillment of our heart possible.

1. The resurrection of Christ

It is what happened in the first place to the man Jesus, as Pope Benedict explained at the Easter Vigil: “He is risen, He is not here.” This Gospel affirmation announces to us that Christ did not remain in the tomb, His body did not know corruption, but belongs to the world of the living. But the Pope went on to ask, “Of what exactly does this ‘rising’ consist? What does it mean for us?” Not simply the reanimation of a corpse. He goes on, “Christ’s Resurrection is something more, something different. If we may borrow the language of the theory of evolution, it is the greatest ‘mutation’, absolutely the most crucial leap into a totally new [...] a leap into a completely new order which does concern us, and concerns the whole of history.”⁷⁴¹

What happened to Jesus, the Pope goes on to ask, “Jesus is no longer in the tomb. He is in a totally new life. But how could this happen? [...] The crucial point is that this man Jesus was not alone, he was not an “I” closed in upon itself. He was one single reality with the living God, so closely united with him as to form one person with him. [...] His own life was not just his own, it was an existential communion with God, a “being taken up” into God, and hence it could not in reality be taken away from him. [Because] his existential communion with God was concretely an existential communion with God’s love, and this love [to which Jesus abandons Himself] is the real power against death, it is stronger than death. [Therefore] the Resurrection [...] ushered in a new dimension of being, a new dimension of life in which, in a transformed way, matter too was integrated and through which a new world emerges.”⁷⁴²

The man Jesus, who had totally abandoned himself to the Father’s love, saw how, when a man leaves room to the power of God’s love, this love transforms the whole “I.” His communion with the Father made possible Jesus’ victory over death. Since He had entrusted Himself totally to God’s love, he was able to see the power of this love, and so Jesus, the risen Jesus, Jesus Christ risen can become a companion to every one of us in every instant of life. We are no longer alone with our nothingness, with our frailty, with the needs of our heart. We are accompanied by Someone living now.

The first who experienced what His resurrection meant were the disciples. The Gospels are not afraid to present them just as they were after Jesus' death, bewildered (Matthew's Gospel says, "All the disciples abandoned him and fled"),⁴³ afraid (the doors were shut for fear of the Jews...);⁴⁴ the women "fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment had come upon them";⁴⁵ "Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"⁴⁶ Jesus had even to reprove them for their incredulity; the disciples of Emmaus were disappointed, "We had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel."⁴⁷

What is crucial, once more, is the present. All they had seen was not enough, all the miracles had not been enough for them not to be afraid, bewildered and deluded. Jesus' death had been such a blow for them that their hopes had been shattered. Their "We had hoped" would have remained forever an epitaph of their adventure with Jesus. A remembrance of the past was not enough to make it present now; and if the present is not powerful now, the past begins to drift away and all that is left is nostalgia.

To read the Gospels of the Resurrection is a great comfort because Jesus was not put off by the disciples' frailty (in a way it was normal: it's not every day you see a dead man come to life!), He comes up to them and has to give them time and signs so as to attract their affection.

Jesus' tenderness towards each one of us is striking: "Come here Thomas, and put your finger here and see my hands; put out your hand and place it in my side."⁴⁸ To Mary who is weeping, He says, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" Thinking Him to be the gardener, she says, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put Him and I will go to take Him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!"⁴⁹ In an instant Mary becomes completely present now, as never before. To Simon, all immersed in his failure and betrayal, He puts a disarming question, "Simon, do you love me?"⁵⁰ We can all imagine Peter's overwhelming surprise. They are not alone with their fears, their remorse and their mistakes. By the patient repetition of His appearances, of His living presence, Jesus draws His disciples on until they recognize Him. "It is the Lord!"⁵¹ they say, full of astonishment when they see Him from the boat on the shore. And after eating something with Him, as John comments in his Gospel, "None of the disciples dared to ask Him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord."⁵² The living Christ rescues us from whatever plight we are in, nothing frightens Him.

“It is the Lord!” “Christ is risen,” we read in Fr. Giussani’s comment on the resurrection published in *Traces*, “is a judgment, an act of the intellect that breaks through the normal horizon of rationality and grasps and witnesses a Presence that surpasses on all sides the horizon of human action, of human existence and of history. This judgment is given by our ‘poor’ intelligence, the original intelligence, that which by its nature is the affirmation of the positivity of the reality that appears before it, that offers itself to it; it is the loving affirmation of the reality”⁵³ the disciples have before them.

“He is risen” is a judgment, not a feeling, not a passing impression that disappears tomorrow. He is risen, He is here, forever! “Faith is human intelligence that surpasses itself. And all this is only grace, this believing in the affirmation of an intelligence supported by love for reality [that is, by His presence], by an affectivity open [...] to what truly ‘is’.”⁵⁴

For the disciples, what is “what truly is”? What did they have before them in that presence more powerful than death? What can be more “being” than someone alive, whom they had laid in the tomb? This is why, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “Christ’s Resurrection cannot be interpreted as something outside the physical order, and it is impossible not to acknowledge it as an historical fact. It is clear from the facts that the disciples’ faith was drastically put to the test by their master’s Passion and death [...] The shock provoked by the Passion was so great that [...] the disciples did not at once believe in the news of the Resurrection. Far from showing us a community seized by a mystical exaltation, the Gospels present us with disciples demoralized [or sad or deluded]. Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples [are still amazed, or, like Thomas] are still doubtful. [...] Therefore the hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the apostles’ faith (or credulity) will not hold up. On the contrary their faith in the Resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus.”⁵⁵

In order to recover, a devout remembrance is not enough, nor a teaching, nor the miracles of the past, nor an organization. None of these reasons would be enough to explain that faith, that recovery on the part of the Apostles. It was Him with His imposing presence that redeemed each of them from their situation, as if to say to each one of us, “Don’t be afraid, friends, whatever situation you are in I can rescue you if you abandon yourself, if you let yourself be grasped by my

presence.” But we are frail, and this loving affirmation of the reality with which we are created, that affectivity open to what is worthwhile, what is truly real, as that of a child, is corrupted because of our frailty; it rots, becomes infested with worms, fades away and is lost. This is why the Church, which brings us the message of the risen Christ, which makes the risen Christ present here and now, prays in these words: “Safeguard Your family, Lord, with Your constant loving care, and always support the frailty of our existence.”⁵⁶ We have to ask. The heart is need, desire; the truth of desire is only in its becoming entreaty to the Lord that he support our frailty in recognizing what truly is, in adhering to his presence here present, entreaty to recognize Christ because without Christ there is no longer any reality. We are immersed in the great mystery of Christ’s resurrection.

2. Baptism

“How can this event reach me?”, the Pope asks again during the Easter Vigil. “It is clear that this event is not just some miracle from the past [...]. It is a qualitative leap in the history of “evolution” [...] towards a new world which, starting from Christ, already continuously permeates this world of ours, transforms it and draws it to itself. But how does this happen? How can this event effectively reach me and draw my life upwards towards itself? The answer, perhaps surprising at first but totally real, is: this event comes to me through faith and Baptism. [...] Baptism means precisely this, that we are not dealing with an event in the past, but that a qualitative leap in world history comes to me, seizing hold of me in order to draw me on.”⁵⁷ Note the expression the Pope uses: “seizing hold of me in order to draw me on.” “Baptism is something quite different from an act of ecclesial socialization, from a slightly old-fashioned and complicated rite for receiving people into the Church. It is also more than a simple washing, more than a kind of purification and beautification of the soul. It is [...] rebirth, transformation to a new life. How can we understand this?” The Pope goes on to introduce us into this mystery.

“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me”⁵⁸This is the explanation of what happens in Baptism: “I live, but I am no longer I. The ‘I,’ the essential identity of man [...] has been changed.” St. Paul’s “I” still exists, and no longer exists, “he has passed through a ‘not’ and he now finds himself continually in this ‘not’: *I, but no longer I.* [...] This [...] is an expression of what happened at Baptism. My “I”

is taken away from me and is incorporated into a new and greater subject. This means that my “I” is back again, but now transformed, broken up, opened through incorporation into the other, in whom it acquires its new breadth of existence.”⁵⁹

As you see, what the Pope says is what Fr. Giussani recalled to us. “Someone has happened to us,”⁶⁰ has been given to us, so much so as to insert himself into our flesh and blood, into our soul. “It is no longer I who live, but it is He who lives in me” Someone has made his home in me: You, Christ, who are me. This is the change we read about in the School of Community: an “I,” but more than an “I,” an ontological exaltation of the “I.” Fr. Giussani uses the same expression as the Pope: “A qualitative leap in participation in Being”.⁶¹ This is the true mutation that happens in Baptism, which makes a new creature of the “I.” If someone is in Christ, he is a new creature. So what counts is not circumcision or lack of circumcision, but being a new creature, living every instant of life in the awareness of this “You” that has made its home in me.

3. The Church

So it is that those who have been taken hold of by Christ in Baptism are one thing. The Pope goes on, “ But what then happens with us? Paul answers: You have become one in Christ (cf. *Gal* 3:28). Not just one thing, but one, one only, one single new subject [We are not alone, not an isolated subject, the Christian is not an isolated subject!]. This liberation of our “I” from its isolation, this finding oneself in a new subject means finding oneself within the vastness of God and being drawn into a [new] life [...] The great explosion of the Resurrection has seized us in Baptism so as to draw us on. Thus we are associated with a new dimension of life into which, [...] we are already in some way introduced. To live one’s own life as a continual entry into this open space: this is the meaning of being baptized, of being Christian. [...] The Resurrection is not a thing of the past, the Resurrection has reached us and seized us”⁶² so as to make us present now in Him.

This is nothing else but the Church’s tradition. As St. Cyprian said, “since He who dwells in us is one, everywhere He ties and binds together those who are His with the bond of unity.”⁶³ We are not alone! We are taken hold of, inserted into his Body. Thus the Church is the instrument, the mode with which God becomes companionship for us

and “Christ remains for ever [the Pope told us on Holy Thursday] contemporary with us: in the Body of his Church.”⁶⁴

A remembrance is not enough to rescue us, as Lewis says, remembering his deceased wife, in *A Grief Observed*. “Remembering is not enough, I have to think more of my wife and less of myself. I think of her almost all the time. I think of the things that were her: her words, her looks, her laughs, her actions. But it’s my mind that chooses them and puts them together. It’s no more than a month since her death, and I already feel the slow insidious beginning of a process that will make of H., whom I am thinking of, a more and more imaginary woman. Based on facts, of course: I will not put (at least, I hope not) anything invented. But will the composition not become inevitably more and more my own? There is no longer the reality to hold me back, to stop me short, as the real H. did so often, and in such unexpected ways, with her being totally she and not me. The most precious gift that I got from marriage was this continuous impact with something very close and intimate yet all the same always unmistakeably other, resistant—in a word, real.”⁶⁵

If this is not the case, if Christ is not real through the body of His Church, He becomes more and more something in our imagination.

Remembrance is not enough, we need a presence made of flesh, historical, irreducible, that goes on seizing hold of me and drawing me on, as the Pope says. This is why St. Gregory of Nyssa said, “The Church is the Body of Christ, and Christ is the head of the body, who outlines the face of the Church with His character, the friends of the Bridegroom, fixing their eyes on this reality [the Church] are made more able to understand: for by means of the Church they can see more transparently the Bridegroom himself, who by nature is invisible to their eyes.”⁶⁶

The Church is the face that reflects the Bridegroom himself, as the Pope said in his encyclical, “Nor has the Lord been absent from subsequent Church history: he encounters us ever anew, in the men and women who reflect his presence, in his word, in the sacraments, and especially in the Eucharist”⁶⁷

This historical place made of flesh, that is the Church, reaches us through the Movement, through our Fraternity, which has the aim of witnessing Christ’s presence, of reaching each one of us, in his particular situation, so as to reawaken the heart continually, so as to make Christ present, and to keep His memory alive.

4. Memory

The new subject, the new creature is the person who lives of the memory of Christ, of Someone who has made his home in us, that every time defines more and more our “I,” which becomes the “I”’s self awareness – a You that has made his home in me. This is the novelty brought by baptism, Fr. Giussani tells us again, “Our ‘I’ is slowly fused more and more with Christ. To say, ‘I’ means more and more to say ‘You’, ‘You, O Christ [...]’. The identity between us and Christ, that is, life as memory.”⁶⁸ To live the memory is to live the presence of Someone who has taken hold of me in Baptism, who has made his home in me, who has become more and more existentially present through my frequenting a companionship that makes him become familiar, because the companionship that is the Church does not lend itself to any reduction. This is why we can say now with total awareness, “We live for love of something happening now,” for love of Someone who is happening now. Only Someone who is happening now can draw along my whole life, my whole heart, all my love towards Himself. This is what fills life with silence.

5. Morality

Morality is not something added to this, but the acknowledgment of this You, it is yielding to the winning attraction of this You present here and now, to the imposition of his presence. Like St. Gregory of Nyssa says, when you look at this, “you receive the likeness of that which you fix with your eyes.”⁶⁹

In fixing our eyes on Him we become like Him.

Mario Luzi astutely said this, “This is the Christian fullness of destiny/ being ready for the event, letting its power flow over us/ so that it can remold us and recast us”⁷⁰

True immorality is not incoherence, but the impenetrability that Werfel describes: “Never in my life did I have such a clear awareness of men’s impenetrability as I did then. But I did not feel it as a datum of life to which you have to adapt, but as the demonic origin of every despair.”⁷¹ Impenetrability is the demonic origin of all despair, because not even sin can be an alibi for Someone who comes close to our “I,” whatever we have done, and asks, “Do you love me?” Someone who lets himself be overwhelmed cannot but answer like Peter, “You know everything, You know everything, Christ; You know I love You. All

my human fondness is for You, Christ.”⁷² So, everything rests on an Other: “You know everything,” I don’t have anything I can stand on, my whole “I” rests on Christ.

6. Living reality intensely

This affection for Christ that draws along the whole “I,” enables us to live reality intensely, to be whole, to be my whole self, now. Jesus’ presence that has become dominant, determines my self-awareness, enables us to be present in reality with our whole “I.” We have no need to run away, we have everything. What is truly fascinating, though, is that this does not cancel our “I,” it does not cancel the religious sense, but exalts our reason, our freedom and our affection because it makes it possible for our reason not to close itself inside its own measure, but to look at reality without losing sight of His presence.

What Fr. Giussani says is striking, though it sometimes passes unnoticed, “Reason and affectivity: this is the human heart [...]The condition for the healthy activation of reason is the heart – as reason and affectivity. The condition for reason to be reason [i.e. openness to reality in the whole of its factors] is that affectivity take hold of it and thus move the whole man,”⁷³ in this way preventing reason becoming the measure.

When reason is not used according to its nature, man is not able to recognize the Presence within reality and this leads to boredom, as Julien Green describes it, “Deep boredom comes from the absence of God, [and then he seems to correct himself] or rather from our absence when God is present, and He is always present, but we prefer our petty elsewheres and we die of boredom.”⁷⁴

It is when reason is all taken up and opened wide by affection for Christ, that it makes us so present as to recognize His presence in reality, because He is always present, but our reason has not to lose its capacity to be true reason. If God is always in reality, then every circumstance is a provocation and a suggestion, a sign that moves us to look into it and recognize the vanishing point in reality, which is Christ. This is what enables us to breathe in circumstances that would otherwise be suffocating. This is what enables us to live always with ourselves present now, as one of you said, “The grace that He gives us when He takes hold of us is unimaginably fruitful. I, too, in my wretchedness, realize that if it weren’t for the grace that Christ gives me, I would not be able to love those I am given, I would be unable to

be moved by people who go on dying in the attacks, I would not be able to pray for the new government. Christ [and this is the finest thing], makes us one thing with Him and opens our eyes to the whole of reality and nothing is foreign to us any more.”

The best is still to come! It is the promise for everyone, and it depends on the fact that affection for Christ wins so powerfully that no circumstance can draw our eyes away from Christ. Everything is played in the space of my freedom which says, “You” to the Mystery. To say “You” to Jesus is to be aware of His ongoing tenderness that surprises us every morning with the light of the new day.

“What characterizes the new “I” is the truth of things [this open look], the truth of reality, [...] an immersion in reality as truth, an immersion in the truth of reality.⁷⁵ And what is the truth of reality? Reality is Christ. But for us this is an abstract affirmation.

Only if Christ becomes the center of affection, as a husband or boyfriend does, do you understand what “reality is Christ” means, that everything existing has Christ as its meaning. “Amore, amore omne cosa conclama” “All things cry out, ‘love, love’”⁷⁶ “Everything in Him consists”⁷⁷ The whole world, the whole of history consists in that Man, alive and risen, present amongst us.

Who are You, Christ? Who are you, able to draw along the whole “I” and make it a place of life, a space where one can live in freedom whatever the circumstances? Who are You? I am glad because you are there. I am because you are, Christ. This is why the question comes up again and again: Who are You, Christ? This is what makes faith reasonable, makes Christianity reasonable. This is what makes us more and more attached to Christ. Mission is placing a subject like this in the world, not doing other things.

A fine expression from a poem by Ada Negri expresses what I wanted to say these last two days, “Everything for me you were and are.”⁷⁸ Perhaps one could say “Everything for me you were” of many people, but it’s quite another thing to say not only “you were” in the past, but “you are now.” “Everything for me you were and are.”

Sunday Morning, April 30

During the entrance and exit:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Great Mass in D major, K 427

H. von Karajan – Berliner Philharmoniker

“Spirto Gentil”, Deutsche Grammophon (Universal)

Fr Pino. The Angel’s announcement is happening now. Our whole life, in this instant, is reached by this feast of certainty, by this challenge to our freedom. So there is never a day when we are alone in the journey towards our destiny. The consistency of everything, of faces, of things, is a friendly Presence, friendly to our destiny of happiness in our life.

Angelus

Lauds

■ ASSEMBLY

Giancarlo Cesana. The first question on the two lessons that we have heard is the one that represents the overriding majority of those we received. It deals with an explanation that has already been given, but I think it is worthwhile re-proposing: “If the heart is infallible, then why does it in fact often go wrong?” I will add another directly to Carrón: why, since he was given and he accepted the responsibility over us, does he go on insisting so forcibly, so obstinately, on the matter of the heart, on this word “heart”?

Julián Carrón. Because this is one of the things I have been most enthusiastic about ever since I met the movement, because it put into my hands a criterion for traveling the road.

I often repeated to Fr. Giussani, “I will always be grateful to you because you have enabled me to make a human journey.” It’s not that I didn’t have the faith, I had been a priest for ten years when I met the Movement; no one could have told me that I had not taken the proposal made to me seriously, but in my experience there was something not quite right, there was always the remnants of a dualism that prevented me from staying in reality with my whole self. So I was fascinated by the fact that from the first pages of *The Religious Sense*, when he explains the question of experience, he insists on the criterion that

enables us to judge everything, what he calls the “elementary experience,” that is, the heart, with which every one of us can compare everything that happens. Since then it has been a fascinating adventure for me, and I wouldn’t like anyone to miss the chance of it.

It has fascinated me more and more every time, because everything that happened began to be useful for my life, because I was always learning, even when I would go wrong; because if something didn’t correspond to me, I had learned something: that wasn’t it, but there was something that corresponded and I had the criterion for judging it. In other words, by means of my heart I could always judge what corresponded, and what did not, to the needs of my heart, and this exalted Christ more.

I am not interested in the heart in itself, what interests me is Christ, because He is the only one able to fulfill my heart and I become more and more enthusiastic for Christ when I am able to grasp the difference between Christ and any other thing. So I can challenge you and the whole world to compare everything with the heart, because until you find Christ, you will not find the one in whom your heart can rest. Reality becomes transparent in experience. I had heard speak of Christ, but the reality of Christ becomes transparent in experience, that is to say, when I compare it with my heart. So I cannot set aside my heart when I speak of Christ: I discover over and over again who Christ is through this comparison with my heart, otherwise, as Fr. Giussani says, Christ is just a name. The value of your wife or your husband became evident in this correspondence with your heart. The other person was there before you got to know each other, but when you met you discovered the value, you reached this judgment in the encounter. Now this happens not only in the moment of the encounter, but even more along the road; because when you start walking, you don’t stop making mistakes, you go on making them; we all go on making mistakes, but every time we see what does not correspond. I know what corresponds: it is as if Christ were saying to me in my experience, “I am what you are missing in everything you enjoy, I am the one.”

Let’s go back to the question: “If the heart is infallible, then why does it in fact often go wrong?” The heart is infallible as a criterion, not as a judgment. You go wrong because you apply the infallible criterion of the heart wrongly.

It is like asking why, if a mathematical formula for certain problems is infallible, do you get the wrong answer? Because you have not applied yourself enough, you have to learn to use it, you have to prac-

tice. This doesn't cast doubts on the validity of the formula. It is still valid, infallible, but you can apply it wrongly.

I am not concerned about the fact that we apply it wrongly, but rather that we be sure of this infallibility, because even when I apply it wrongly, the judgment comes to the surface, because if I go wrong, I realize it. This is why the mythical example of the shoes has become famous: it is infallible because you don't decide the size of your shoes. Why? Because the criterion for buying a pair of shoes is a given value, like the heart. Your feet are given you, otherwise you could buy that pair in the sales. See if the criterion is objective or subjective, try buying a pair because it is in the sales because you like it more, or because it saves you money... You are not the one who decides any more than I am. The criterion has been given me.

When I am sick, the criterion is infallible. If I have a certain illness, this criterion is useful for all the doctor's attempts to cure me. If the doctor tells me that if I do this I will get over the sickness, I can say, "Okay, let's see. I'll do as you say, but you are not the one to decide whether or not it corresponds to me. Reality is what decides whether this course of treatment or this medicine you have given me will cure me." The criterion is in me, it is infallible." If the doctor does not give me what corresponds to my sickness, he will not cure me. And when I go to the doctor I don't leave my sickness at home, I bring it with me, and it is always the criterion with which I judge if all the doctor tells me is able to cure me, that is, whether it corresponds to me, if the treatment he gives me is that which corresponds to the sickness I have.

We find ourselves made in a particular way; this has been given us, with a desire for the infinite, and whether we like it or not, as Fr. Giussani said, it is with this that we judge everything, truly everything, so much so that anything at all that does not correspond to that desire, will sooner or later cease to interest me. Look at how many things you have in your homes that interested you for a while, but you have long forgotten. They are not valuable enough to remain interesting, and so they are forgotten.

So, in synthesis, there is only one question in life, if there is something that remains interesting over time, for eternity, to the heart, to this desire for the infinite, if there is something that remains interesting, otherwise we can say what we like, but if this is not the case, then sooner or later nihilism triumphs, because there is nothing able to interest me for ever.

I challenge you, I don't want to solve the problem for you, as I have often said. Sort it out yourselves. You have your heart, you have met Christ; keep on verifying this and tell me if you find something that corresponds to you more. I have not come here to spare anyone the drama of living, but, on the contrary, to reawaken the drama in all of us. It is not for lack of interest, but because there is something we have to experience personally, otherwise, sooner or later, the faith will not interest us any more.

You are the one who needs this certainty of Christ in order to live, in order to wake up tomorrow morning, and this can happen only if you have this experience. I am concerned about this because what is at stake is living. The problem is not the moralism we all slip into: this is nothing compared to the real problem. You know what the real problem is? Nihilism. This is the real problem. Either we have an answer to this problem, or we can all go home defeated.

We do have an answer to nihilism, but every one of us has to discover this in his unique personal relationship with Christ present here and now amongst us.

Cesana. You cannot hide behind God or behind the Movement, or behind your priest's cassock, or behind your vocation. This leads us to the second question: "Why is freedom afraid of the infallible heart?" I could also phrase it as follows. The problem is that the law written in the heart is what makes freedom possible. After all, we are afraid of freedom because we want instructions for use, we want prescriptions.

Carrón. Freedom is not afraid of the infallible heart, because freedom is the experience of the heart's satisfaction.

As we have learned, I feel free when I manage to satisfy a desire. I experience freedom when I experience the satisfaction of my human desire, which is desire for the infinite. The heart is not afraid of this, freedom is not afraid of a heart that recognizes what corresponds and where it finds satisfaction. What it is afraid of is the image of freedom we make ourselves, that we shall be more ourselves, more free by doing what we like. Try it. Try to see when it is you are more free, and you will realize that we are more free when we find this correspondence to our heart, and in this our heart is infallible. So freedom is on the sides of the heart.

Cesana. "What does it mean that affection prevents reason from becoming the measure?"

Carrón. A fine question, this. I'll give two examples.

Once when I was a teacher in Spain, a boy in GS had an accident and all the other GSers came to me a little upset. "How can God allow this?" I told them, "it depends on how we approach what happens to us," and I gave this example, which I have since repeated a thousand times. If you are on your way home and meet someone you don't know who hits you, what do you do? One of them, a fiery type, said, "I'd hit him back." I said, "And what if you reach home and it's your mother who hits you?" He stopped a moment and said, "I would ask her why." What makes him act differently? His affection for his mother. His affection for his mother prevents him closing himself up in his own measure.

Another example: the disciples. They had not understood much more than the others who left Jesus after He had spoken of the bread of life. Why did they stay? Because of their experience of affection for Jesus. "If we go away from You, where shall we go?" It is this affection that prevents their reason becoming the measure. "Since I don't understand Him I'm going away." Affection prevents reason becoming the measure.

The more your affection for Christ, the more you are attached to Christ, the more impossible it is to remove Him from your eyes and heart when you relate to reality, like the boy with his mother, like the disciples with Jesus, in such a way that reason cannot become the measure. Why? Because this attachment to your mother, to Jesus or to Christ now, prevents reason becoming the measure and keeps it wide open to reality.

This is what enables us to live in the circumstances according to the truth, because when you find yourself faced with difficulties or in circumstances that seem to stifle you (think about yourself with your children or your husband), when the question comes, "Why is life worth living?" what do you think of? What prevents you succumbing to your own measure? Your affection for your children and husband.

The question is whether there is something true that binds us in whatever circumstances, something to which we are so firmly attached that we can avoid reason becoming the measure. This is why it is only an ever-growing familiarity with Christ that prevents us reducing the whole of reality to our own measure, because everything, as Fr. Giussani always taught us, speaks of Him, even in the toughest moments of life. It is as if difficulties, sickness and pain were unable to close us up, because our attachment to Christ is so powerful that not

even the greatest suffering we have is able to detach us from Him, just as for Christ in his passion, not even his passion and death detached Him from the Father's love. So, if we leave this opening to the Mystery, the Mystery works.

Everything depends on affection. Not because affection is everything, but because affection, as Fr. Giussani says, enables the reason to keep its nature as reason: openness to reality in all its factors. Without this, when it doesn't understand or when the pain is too great, reason inevitably becomes the measure – since I don't understand, it has no meaning. No! Someone who has met Christ, who is totally attached to Him, cannot let himself be closed up in any reality as measure; not because he is naïf, but because he has verified his faith, because he would have to tear what he has met from his eyes, his skin and his heart.

The real question is whether we follow a course in life that allows us to become more and more attached to Christ that no reality, no suffering, no circumstance can close us up, break the bond that keeps us open and all our reason open to the Mystery. This is what Fr. Giussani tells us when he affirms that the Church is an education in the religious sense, in that openness of reason that does not close itself. Without attachment to Christ, without affection for Christ, we are hopeless, and when we don't understand we say, "There's no sense in it." Reason becomes our measure. It is this affection that keeps us open to Christ, and so we can see reality as a sign, which always has a vanishing point.

"Amore, amore, omne cosa conclama": everything speaks to us of Him, because reality is Christ, not because we are visionaries, and this enables us to live reality for what it is, just as it is, according to its nature as reality, that is to say, sign of the Mystery. But the condition for living it in this way is affection for Christ. This is why the incarnation was necessary, in order that the "I" could attach itself to Christ's flesh, to affection for Christ, in such a way as to be able to understand what "reality is Christ" means. The disciples came to understand this, not because Jesus gave them a philosophy lesson so that they could say that reality is Christ; it was living with Him, recognizing that He was the meaning of everything, that He made everything interesting, that they understood: "Reality is Christ. All things were made for Him. In Him all things consist."

Cesana. Moreover, the word "*affectus*" in Latin means "struck." So affection means letting yourself be struck, in other words, accepting

that we are not the measure of reality, but Someone Else. The whole problem is to let yourself be struck, not to soften the blow, but to accept it.

“Graham Greene wrote, ‘For me the present is never now.’ In the Introduction, Carrón said, ‘It is easy, we just need to let ourselves be drawn by His presence among us.’ If it is easy, then why is the present never now for me?”

Another word we use as a synonym for “easy” comes to mind, the word “simple,” and I will always remember once asking Fr. Giussani “How can we be simple?” and he answered, “in order to be simple you have to be determined.” So, people never live the present unless they are determined to live it.

Carrón They don’t let themselves be drawn.

Cesana. People don’t let themselves be struck. This is the sickness of the century. I remember Fr. Giussani’s fine example of Chernobyl, when he was speaking to University students in 1987, to illustrate how young people are empty of affection, unable to attach themselves to anything, unable to be struck, thick-headedness. “I would like to understand better the question of impenetrability. Is it a work of education that makes simplicity of heart possible?” For me, meeting the Movement and living it put an end to thick-headedness, which is different from impenetrability. You are thick-headed when you don’t understand; you are impenetrable when you don’t want to understand. It’s quite different. And I have to thank all those who helped me get over this thick-headedness, because education is the development of a person’s generative nucleus, the provocation must wait until freedom opens up, until the person is ready to open up.

I must thank all those who were close to me, because I understand, above all when I think of my relationship with Fr. Giussani, that he waited for me. He waited for me to come out, he didn’t impose what he was thinking on me. Impenetrability, on the other hand, is opposition to the proposal.

Carrón. Impenetrability, in the terms that Giancarlo used, is not letting yourself be struck; the fact that whatever reality wants to say, I won’t accept it, even if what I have before me is the most beautiful thing. That’s why I am crazy about the example of the children on the square, and repeat it often when we meet. Jesus reproves the people,

because this is impenetrability – the “I” all closed up, not letting itself be touched, not letting itself be saved.

Cesana. In adults this is terrible.

Carrón. Yes, you’re right. Amongst other things Jesus insisted on being like children, in the sense of this openness. “To whom shall I compare this generation?” Who were they? The ones who wouldn’t see. They saw all the miracles He was doing, but wouldn’t be struck. This is the point; not the fact that we are weak. We mistake frailty for impenetrability. He is not afraid of our frailty.

Cesana. Or is it thick-headedness?

Carrón. The apostles were very frail; they were always getting things wrong. When they were not angry with each other they were arguing who was the first, or were wanting to call down fire on the Samaritans. They just couldn’t get it right, but this is not the problem.

We are always concerned with ethics. The problem is not one of ethics but of ontology, our relationship with reality. Because if I have a desire for infinity in my heart, I cannot find the answer myself, I have to accept Someone Else, I have to let Someone Else come in. And if I am impenetrable I cannot let Someone Else in, and this is my damnation. Hell is this: this ultimate impenetrability.

Cesana. It’s being alone.

Carrón. It’s being alone, with no strings. This is why Jesus says, “To whom shall I compare this generation? What are they like? They are like those children shouting to each other in the square, ‘We played the flute and [as if nothing was happening] you didn’t dance; we sang a lament, but you didn’t weep!’” In other words, you don’t let yourselves be struck. And then he says, “John the Baptist came [an ascetic figure] not eating bread and not drinking wine and you said, ‘He has a devil [he’s an odd type, this one]; the Son of Man came [like all the others, not an ascetic, who goes to dine when invited] eating and drinking, and you say: ‘he’s a drunkard and a friend of tax-collectors and sinners [he has time for everyone].’” (*Lk 7:31-34*) There is nothing doing, it’s all the same, I am impenetrable.

The question is one’s relationship with reality. Jesus reproves the Pharisees who are impenetrable, who don’t let themselves be touched,

struck by what happens before their eyes. This is the point, this is what we have to ask for, because we were all created with open minds, with childlike curiosity. So why do we close ourselves up? This is a decision of our freedom. You can teach someone if he accepts it. Fr. Giussani said that freedom can be educated to let itself be struck, and to accept reality just as it is without putting your guard up in relationship with reality. You can educate if the problem is one of weakness, not if it is one of impenetrability, that is to say, if I have decided that whatever happens I will not be moved. This is hell. We have to ask Our Lady not to close ourselves up; not to remove our weakness, but to save us from being impenetrable to Christ's presence, to the beauty of His attraction, because the last word on our weakness is always mercy; the problem is if we are impenetrable even to His mercy .

Cesana. "If it is in experience that we perceive that our heart is infallible, what does it mean to have an experience?"

Carrón. You should read chapter 1 of *The Religious Sense*. To have an experience means to try something out; but not only to try something out: it is to make a judgment on what we try out, because otherwise it is useless.

Many times when I was teaching in the morning time, the kids would ask me a lot of questions. Then in the evening I would meet some adults. I remember one of them, who had traveled all over the world, yet he would ask me the same questions as the kids in the morning; he had tried out a lot of things but had learned nothing.

We cannot live like that. Why? Because it is not enough to try things out. Many times, if he does not judge things, the life of an adult becomes more confused, he doesn't know what to do and even justifies himself, "It's just that now I am more aware of life's complexities." No! We are not condemned to this – it is pure laziness. We must call things by their name. I could understand this if we had not met someone who has taught us a method, but we cannot say this. We have a method for living. There is nothing more intelligent than this in the charism.

Fr. Giussani's charism, as he always said, is a pedagogy, an educative method, not to take our place, but to help us to live, because everything becomes ours, more and more ours, and this can happen only if we use the method. And to try something out and judge it, we need a criterion for judging: the heart, the elementary experience; something that is inside us, but that we cannot manipulate: the elementary experience.

If you have a minimum of self-esteem, get someone to explain well to you what experience is, otherwise we shall go back to this because it is crucial as an instrument for living, because everything that happens in life builds life, if it makes us have an experience, that is, if you are able to judge everything that happens to you.

Cesana. “If Baptism is the factor that inserts us ontologically in the life of the risen Christ, what value has our personal encounter with the Movement of Communion and Liberation, and how does being able to say today, ‘Everything for me you were and are’ help those, like us, who have been on this road for years?”

I will begin to answer this question on the basis of experience.

I remember an affirmation Fr. Giussani made some years ago, when he said that the charism comes existentially before dogma. What does this mean? When I was seventeen, Christianity was dead for me; it was Fr. Giussani who brought it to life again. This is why we say – I say – that Fr. Giussani is a charism; he brought to life something that otherwise would not have been. It is the action of the Holy Spirit that resuscitates what would no longer be alive. This resuscitation comes before the definition. Existentially I must begin to live in order to understand what defines my life. On meeting the Movement, I understood my life, that is, I became aware of what my life meant, and what Baptism meant, which had been given me as a call to be, to be for ever. Baptism is the most revolutionary mutation, because it is what introduces us to eternal life, what introduces us to the fulfillment of the desires we have. I’ll quote an episode. After my wife died, I went to see Fr. Giussani. I was in a wheelchair and he came into the room in a wheelchair. At one point we began to speak about Abraham. Vittadini was there, too, as well as some others, and I asked him. “Look at the state of us, and look at Abraham; what a dramatic tormented life he had. So what difference does faith, or Baptism, make if we have to live like this?” He stopped to think a moment and exclaimed, “But there is the ‘I’.” Abraham is the origin of the “I,” in other words, the origin of a man who recognized that he is wanted by God. What happens to others happens to us, too. We are like everyone else but we were wanted, we have been called; our mothers and fathers brought us into this life forever. So we can look back over the whole of our life as a plan for us, something that is brought to fulfillment, whatever happens. There is a psalm that says, “I will make you like a wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they will not prevail,”

because of this awareness I have of myself, that I am wanted by Someone greater than me.

The encounter with Communion and Liberation is crucial, because without this encounter, without this arousal of the "I", without awareness of life, there is nothing.

Carrón. The encounter makes us recognize, makes us realize what really happened in Baptism. Baptism is the overpowering action of Christ in which He tells me "You are mine." And from that time, as Fr. Giussani said years ago, Christ begins the fight to conquer the "I", in which the whole history of our life is the attempt to awaken that affection for Christ in such a way that what has already happened in Baptism becomes existential.

This is crucial. We often reduce what happened in Baptism to just a feeling (since we don't feel it, it seems to be equal to nothing). When life puts me with my back to the wall, when I have done something very bad, so bad that I am scandalized at myself, what defines me in that moment? Christ's embrace of me in Baptism, that not even my wrong can undo, whatever wrong I have done. Nothing I can do can change Christ's attitude towards me.

This is why Baptism is not repeated, even if I were to say something heretical. When some early Christians renounced their faith under persecution, because they were so weak, they were not re-baptized. I can be as weak as I like, to the point of being scandalized by myself, but the power of Christ in Baptism is greater, not even my evil can overcome it. Mothers understand this very well. What can your children do that can change your attitude to them? We are not speaking of strange things, we are speaking of Christ's love that takes hold of me in Baptism, so strong that it wins over everything. When I am reduced to nothing, to the point that I am ashamed to look at myself, in that moment I can say, "What defines me? This embrace of Christ, this being taken hold of by Christ, which remains after this wrong I have done, this stupid thing I have done," and I can start off again.

The problem is not that we don't do all the stupid things everyone else does, but that when we have done them all, we can start off again from our ashes, because we have been wanted, and the expression of this our being wanted is the sign of Baptism. This is why the Pope did not reduce Baptism to something minor, or a kind of ecclesial socialization, or a simple washing or purification, it is something much

greater; it is being taken hold of by Christ forever. This defines everything, whatever our feelings: “It means nothing to me!” ... What does it matter what it means to you? The question is, is this a fact or not? This has happened in Baptism forever. The character of the sacrament remains forever, as the unique sign of Christ. This is our certainty in life. Who can set the certainty of his life in what he does? We are always a prey to our fears. The certainty of our life is precisely this gesture of Christ that took hold of me forever, and so I can set off again. And where am I introduced to this awareness of what Baptism is? In the charism, in the Church.

Cesana. “What does it mean to love Christ, to be in love with Christ? It is as if the object were not clear (unity, the Church). I know what passion for my husband or child is, I don’t know what passion for Christ is. If I had to choose between the survival of my son and the fact that Christ is really risen, I would choose the first.” ... Then you are dead, and you son and husband, too!

Carrón. Sometimes we are not aware of what we are saying. Who gave you and who gives you your son? Who can keep him alive? Who can bring him to fulfillment? This is one of the most upsetting things, and it really strikes me. A father who holds a newborn child in his arms can be unconcerned for his own life as an adult, or for his destiny of happiness, but he cannot fail to tremble when he thinks of what will become of his child. Before this trembling do you have something to offer that can satisfy your child’s destiny? What will become of your child if he doesn’t find a reason for living? He would blame you for having brought him into the world.

Christ is not in opposition to your child. He died and rose for your child and for you, so that your child might have a reason for living.

Cesana. “You said that the risen Christ is a judgment. What does this mean in daily life?”

Carrón. That I cannot reduce reality to what appears to me in a given moment, but that reality is made of Christ, that “all things consist in Him.” The disciples reached this certainty precisely because Christ conquered death.

Cesana. If there were no Christ, reality would melt away.

Carrón. Exactly. What experience did the disciples have of Christ (because they had not studied philosophy)? What experience did they have of relationship with Christ, that brought them to say that everything is made by Christ and in view of Christ? Only in a relationship.

Cesana. I quote a phrase by Spinoza that I read in the newspaper, *Il Foglio*, yesterday. He said that anything at all, independently of what it is, tends to go on being, in other words, there is a desire for immortality, for eternal value. Because if reality does not have this value, if I don't have this value, then appearances triumph, because I am appearance: now you see me and after a while you won't see me any more; let's hope you see me for a good while yet!

Carrón. Again, this can be seen in the crucial moments of life. When my father died, I didn't want to look away and console myself. I wanted to look him in the face and wanted to know if this was all or not. Otherwise we have to look away and distract ourselves. But if I can look at my father's body and say, "Reality is Christ," then I can look at everything, absolutely everything. Otherwise, what normally happens is that we are gripped by fear and there are so many things we have to live through that we are afraid to look at. Do you understand why we are not in reality, why the present is never now?

This is the value of day-to-day life, not for meditating now and again, but for living the day-to-day things. The question is that for us it is abstract, because we lack familiarity with Christ, so many times He does not come to our mind; whereas, as I said before, Fr. Giussani saw Him in everything. "I, Christ, am the Mystery that is lacking in everything that you enjoy." He experienced this in everything. Not because Fr. Giussani was a mystic, but, even you, if you love someone, you cannot fail to see a sunset, the sun, a flower, or the spring, without thinking of the one you love. The question is if there is something real, a real You! If you don't have this real You, then it cannot come to your mind. We are not visionaries! An Other can come to your mind only if something has happened to you, a relationship you need in order to live.

Cesana. "Can I say that the same emotion and the same veneration I feel for Christ is reflected in my attitude to the precise faces in the companionship given to me?"

I remember something that Fr. Giussani told me once, shortly before his death, as he was commenting on a certain impenetrability

that is there among us. He told me, “You cannot love God if you don’t love men, but you cannot love men unless you love God.”

Carrón. “One receives the likeness of what he fixes his eyes on.” (Gregory of Nyssa). It is the same veneration that I have for Christ that moves me when I look deeply at what is there in the faces in the companionship. St. Gregory of Nyssa said so, and so does the Pope in his encyclical: after the resurrection Christ accompanies us “in the men and women who reflect His presence.” This is the companionship, our companionship: a companionship of men and women taken hold of by Christ in Baptism, who live His memory, and in whom His presence can be seen reflected. “I am no longer myself, I am You who live in me.” This is our companionship: it is not simply a companionship, but Christ present in the companionship. The fact is that when we reduce the companionship, like reality, to appearances, then we are together, but no one thinks of Christ. This is the problem.

Have you been forced to think of Christ during these days? It is a true companionship, if it is a place where it is easier to speak His name, not as something additional for visionaries, but because the superabundance of His presence strikes us so hard that I cannot avoid being moved to say, “Who are You, Christ?”

Cesana. Being able to call destiny by name.

Carrón. Yes.

HOLY MASS

HOMILY BY FR. FRANCESCO VENTORINO

The only serious question in life is the recognition of the risen Christ. The very insistence on the heart as the objective criterion of truth culminates in the possibility for this recognition to be reasonable, for faith to be reasonable, because the risen Christ is the only fact that makes human life acceptable to the reason and to the heart. Otherwise everything is nothing, everything would be nothing, destined to nothingness. Only this fact gives eternal consistence to everything. This is why Christ insists with his disciples, “Touch me, look at me; I am not a ghost, that is to say, the projection of your desires and your fears. It is I, a real fact.” Yesterday we heard that He enters into the physical experience of the disciples as a historical fact.

Christ is telling us, too, “It is I. Touch me, look at me!” Where can we touch Him and look at Him? We are put in place in which these signs of the presence of Christ are not lacking. And these signs, as Fr. Giussani said, consist in the fact that our experience is in some way taken away from its naturalness. Something else breaks in, and explodes inside us. Think of virginity, martyrdom, but even of marital fidelity to the point of sacrifice, fertility in children, the free acceptance of other people’s children in the home. Here is a possession of things that has a detachment in it. This miracle makes the miracle of faith reasonable, that miracle in which our intellect is as it were pushed beyond itself to recognize that the foundation of all this is Christ present.

In order to recognize Christ, though, we have to overcome the scandal of the form of His humiliation, that form of humiliation necessary for Him to become and show Himself as Lord of all things. “The Christ had to suffer;” Jesus reminds His disciples. This “had to” is important, this scandal of the form of humiliation up to death, necessary for Him to become Lord and for Him to reveal Himself to all as Lord. But this is the beauty of the Crucified, so truly divine and so wholly human, the only thing that snatches us from nothingness.

We still have before our eyes the beauty that Fr. Giussani’s humanity reached with his death. How? He snatched us from nothingness! And from that death we have received the grace – as Fr. Carrón has told us many times – of such a glad, harmonious, certain transition in the leadership of our Movement that it was truly a miracle. From that

death we have had the grace of a new paternity, the paternity of Fr. Carrón.

It is true that Christ must suffer so as to become Lord; it is true that this is the destiny of each one of us: our fecundity, our resurrection passes through our identifying with the obedience of His death.

MESSAGES RECEIVED

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

Reverend Sir:

With your letter of April 6th, and enclosure, you, in the name of this Fraternity, informed the Holy Father of the Spiritual Exercises that will take place in Rimini, April 29-30, 2006, in which you will preach on the theme, “You live for love of something happening now.”

Grateful for your kind thought and sentiments expressed, His Holiness augurs that these days of reflection and prayer may kindle renewed commitment to Christ and faithfulness to the Church, and, while he entrusts to the most holy Virgin the good outcome of the encounter, he imparts with affection to you, to those who will take part in this important spiritual initiative, and to the entire Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, the Apostolic Blessing you requested.

I take this opportunity to greet you and express my esteem.

Most devotedly in the Lord,
Angelo Cardinal Sodano,
Secretary of State

“Dear friends, ‘*You live for love of something happening now.*’” This profound affirmation of our ever dearer Monsignor Luigi Giussani opens our hearts and minds to change. For what is happening now in the companionship of the followers of Him who died and rose for us, is His objective presence that assures us fulfillment. Love thus becomes a commandment because, as the Holy Father reminded us in *Deus Caritas Est*, Jesus gives himself to us as living, personal Mercy.

In the faith and the sacraments of the Church is renewed, again this year, on the occasion of the Exercises, the miracle of the resurrection of our “I” for the good of all our brother men.

May the Blessed Virgin accompany the freedom of each one in that humble Yes to her Son Jesus from whom flows, continuously renewed, the fascination of the Christian adventure.

In the Lord I greet you and bless you,

*Angelo Cardinal Scola.
Patriarch of Venice*

Dear Fr. Julian,

I am close to you and all the friends of the Movement participating in the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation during these days.

I pray that this gesture be a great moment of Truth and of growth in the experience of Fr. Giussani's charism and in missionary passion for the life of the Church, in this wounded and confused world of ours.

Animated by the paternity and magisterium of Benedict XVI, may we be, in every nation where we are present, the sign of the human fascination of Jesus.

In fraternal communion,

*Filippo Santoro
Bishop of Petropolis, Brazil*

TELEGRAMS SENT

*His Holiness
Benedict XVI*

“You live for love of something happening now.” Your Holiness, these words of Fr. Giussani have marked the meditations of the 27,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, gathered in Rimini for the annual spiritual exercises, and all the friends linked to us in 60 countries in five continents.

Guided by your words, “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction,” we have deepened our awareness of the encounter with Fr. Giussani’s charism, through which the presence of Christ reached us, as it did the disciples of Emmaus, stopped on the road by the risen Jesus in the flesh, snatched from the nothingness that threatens all of us, and, like them, become “his” through the energy of the Spirit. This is our strength: belonging to Him in the secure riverbed of the Church.

Waiting to meet your Holiness in St. Peter’s Square on June 3rd, we entrust our whole selves to your paternity, aware of our limitations and frailty, we want to witness to the beauty of being Christians. We renew every day our prayer to Our Lady and Fr. Giussani that they watch over your person, chosen by God to lead the Church and thus make present the glory of His Son in history.

Fr. Julián Carrón

*His Eminence Camillo Cardinal Ruini
President, Italian Bishops’ Conference*

Your Eminence,

27,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, gathered in Rimini for the Annual Spiritual Exercises, along with others in over sixty countries in five continents, have been meditating on the theme “You live for love of something happening now,” a phrase of Fr. Giussani.

We are grateful for your continual witness to the presence of Christ, living here and now in the reality of the Christian people in Italy on their journey, and we are filled with admiration for your unity with Benedict XVI, lived to the point of identification.

We confirm our commitment to show, in all the ambits of life and work, the correspondence of the Christ event with the fundamental needs of each one's heart, and the new culture born of it.

Fr Julián Carrón

*His Excellency Bishop Giuseppe Betori
Secretary, Italian Bishops' Conference*

Your Excellency,

27,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, gathered in Rimini for the Annual Spiritual Exercises, along with others in over sixty countries in five continents, have been meditating on the theme "You live for love of something happening now," a phrase of Fr. Giussani.

We renew our commitment to witness in the various ambits of Italian society the event of the risen Christ, the only answer to the desire for happiness in everyone's heart, following Benedict XVI and the Bishops in communion with him, that the Church live as hope of the people.

Fr Julián Carrón

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

Your Excellency,

27,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, gathered in Rimini for the Annual Spiritual Exercises, along with others in over sixty countries in five continents, have been meditating on the theme "You live for love of something happening now," a phrase of Fr. Giussani.

Grateful to Bishop Ryłko for having celebrated the Eucharist with us, sign of the communion of the whole Church, we confirm our commitment to follow Benedict XVI to be witnesses, as lay people in the world, of the beauty of being Christians. As we wait for the meeting with the Holy Father on the Vigil of Pentecost, we ask your prayers for the holiness of the whole Movement.

Fr Julián Carrón

*His Excellency Bishop Paolo Romeo
Apostolic Nuncio in Italy*

Your Excellency,

27,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, gathered in Rimini for the Annual Spiritual Exercises, along with others in over sixty countries in five continents, have been meditating on the theme “You live for love of something happening now,” a phrase of Fr. Giussani.

In the filial sequela of Benedict XVI, in love with the living Christ, we return home more certain of the beauty of being Christians and more ready to be witnesses to this in Italy.

Fr Julián Carrón

*His Eminence Angelo Cardinal Scola
Patriarch of Venice*

Your Eminence,

Gathered in Rimini for the Exercises of the Fraternity, and along with the other friends throughout the world, we find ourselves more fascinated by Christ, who attracts us with the energy of his risen Body, and more ready to be His instruments of witness in the world, in fidelity to the charism given to our common father, Fr. Giussani, who goes on challenging our freedom.

Thankful for your message testifying true fraternity, we ask your prayers to the Father that He make our journey towards holiness less unworthy and more secure, certain that Christ is what is most dear to us in the world.

Fr Julián Carrón

*His Excellency Bishop Filippo Santoro
of Petropolis (Brazil)*

Your Excellency,

Grateful for your message through which the Church in Latin America was present at the Exercises in Rimini, more thankful and certain of the charism we have encountered which makes more attractive for all of us the presence of Christ, which rescues us from nothingness, we assure you of our prayers to Our Lady for the missionary activity in Brazil in which we go on collaborating for the life of the Church, hope for the world.

Fr. Julián Carrón

Appendix

ART IN OUR COMPANY

Prepared by Sandro Chierici

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

Man, forgetful of the Covenant God made with him, is destined to lose his face and finds himself unable to face reality. The memory of God made, a presence that can be encountered thanks to Mary's *yes*, reawakens man's taste for life, his capacity to experience happiness in a companionship and in a visible place, and his passion for the glory of Christ to be acknowledged.

I

1. Marc Chagall, *The rainbow, sign of the covenant between heaven and earth*. Nice, Musée National Message Biblique Marc Chagall
2. Marc Chagall, *The creation of man*, detail. Nice, Musée National Message Biblique Marc Chagall
3. René Magritte, *Evening falls*. Houston, Menil Collection
4. René Magritte, *The Man in the Bowler Hat*. New York, A. Carter Pottash Collection
5. René Magritte, *The Great War*. Private collection
6. René Magritte, *The Lovers*. New York, Richard S. Zeisler Collection
7. Giorgio de Chirico, *The Spouses*. Grenoble, Musée de peinture et de sculpture
8. Balthus (Balthazar Klossowski de Rola), *Passage du Commerce Saint-André*. Private Collection
9. Balthus, *The Street*. New York, The Museum of Modern Art
10. Balthus, *The Blanchard Children*. Paris, Musée National Picasso
11. Balthus, *The Three Sisters*. Caracas, Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection
12. Balthus, *The Window*. Private Collection
13. Caspar David Friedrich, *Woman at the Window*. Berlin, Nationalgalerie

II

14. Lorenzo Lotto, *Annunciation*. Recanati, Pinacoteca civica
15. *Nativity*. Miniature of the beginning of John's Gospel. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Urb. Lat. 2, Bible of Federico da Montefeltro, vol. II, f. 239 recto.
16. Beato Angelico, *The Presentation in the Temple, detail*. Florence, Convento di san Marco, cell 10
17. Duccio da Boninsegna, *The meeting with the Samaritan Woman. Maestà, Predella*. Madrid, Collezione Thyssen-Bornemisza
18. Beato Angelico, *The Sermon on the Mount*. Florence, Convento di san Marco, cell 32
19. Beato Angelico, *The Apostles' Communion*. Florence, Convento di san Marco, cell 35
20. Beato Angelico, *The Descent into Hell*. Florence, Convento di san Marco, cell 31
21. Beato Angelico, *Noli me tangere*. Florence, Convento di san Marco, cell 1
22. Beato Angelico, *The Holy Women at the Sepulchre*. Florence, Convento di san Marco, cell 8
23. Duccio da Boninsegna, *The Meeting with the Disciples of Emmaus. Maestà, Predella*. Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo
24. Duccio da Boninsegna, *Apparition on the Lake of Tiberias. Maestà, Predella*. Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo
25. Duccio da Boninsegna, *Doubting St. Thomas. Maestà (Back, crowning panel)*. Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo
26. Duccio da Boninsegna, *Apparition behind Closed Doors, Maestà, detail*. Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo
27. Duccio da Boninsegna, *Apparition to the Apostles during Supper. Maestà crowning panel*. Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo
28. Duccio da Boninsegna, *Apparition on the Mount in Galilee, detail. Maestà, crowning panel*. Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo
29. Duccio da Boninsegna, *Pentecost. Maestà, crowning panel*. Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo
30. Duccio da Boninsegna, *Virgin Parting from St. John. Maestà, crowning panel*. Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo
31. Maestro di San Martino, *Madonna with Child and Angels, detail*. Pisa, Museo nazionale di San Matteo
32. Jacopo Torriti, *Coronation of Our Lady, mosaic*. Rome, Santa Maria Maggiore

III

33. Marc Chagall, *Bella and Ida at the Window*. Private collection
34. Jean-François Millet, *Woman sewing beside her child*. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
35. Jean-François Millet, *The reading lesson*. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
36. Jean-François Millet, *The knitting lesson (I)*. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
37. Jean-François Millet, *The knitting lesson (II)*. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
38. Jean-François Millet, *Shearing Sheep*. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
39. Telemaco Signorini, *Resting at Riomaggiore*. Private collection
40. Telemaco Signorini, *Procession at Settignano*. Private collection
41. Telemaco Signorini, *Country road with woodpiles*. Private collection
42. José Clemente Orozco, *The Family*. Mexico City, Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso
43. Nicolò Cannicci, *Girotondo*, detail. Private collection
44. Henri Matisse, *Still Life with 'La Danse'*. Moscow, Puskin Museum
45. Marc Chagall, *Marie dancing*. Nice, Nice, Musée National Message Biblique Marc Chagall
46. David Hockney, *Garrowby Hill*. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
47. David Hockney, *Going up Garrowby Hill*. Private collection

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 expressed awareness of being on a journey, of having a destiny, and therefore a help in deepening our knowledge and awareness.” (Luigi Giussani, *La Fraternità di Comunione e Liberazione* [*The Fraternity of Communion and Liberation*], San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo, 2002, p. 105). It is a proximity of persons which one accepts precisely as a school, a school for learning to love the other” (*op. cit.*, p. 168).

“It must become a place that sets us in motion, that 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 the faith and to engage oneself with the faith,” (Giussani, “Letter to the new Members of the Fraternity,” in *op. cit.*, p. 249) 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 “must be born according to natural convergence and the choice of the persons, without pre-established schemes (the ‘environment’ is interpersonal relationships rather 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.

"Therefore, when communion becomes explicit, it involves the whole of life, in such a way that what happens to the other cannot fail to affect and involve one's own life" ("Letter to the new members of the Fraternity," *op. cit.*, pp. 251-252).

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 discussion of 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. "If it is lived properly, in the case of adults, the School of Community should become Fraternity. Therefore, a School of Community is a 'failed' Fraternity; in other words, it is not yet Fraternity because it is more on the surface of our commitment: it is more an exercise than a life." (*op. cit.*, p. 167). 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 Fr. Giussani's message to the participants in the XXV pilgrimage walk from Macerata to Loreto, in *Traces* July-August 2003.
- ² *Lk* 24:21.
- ³ *Lk* 24:32.
- ⁴ Jacopone da Todi, *Stabat Mater*, vv. 28-30.
- ⁵ Cf. V. Solov'ëv, *The Short Story of the Antichrist*.
- ⁶ Luigi Giussani, *The Risk of Education*, Crossroad, New York 1995, pp. 11-12.
- ⁷ Benedict XVI, Encyclical letter *Deus caritas est*, 2005, 1.
- ⁸ The Comet is an association in Como, Italy, that cares for young people in family communities.
- ⁹ Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair*.
- ¹⁰ C. Péguy, *Descartes et Bergson*.
- ¹¹ B. Pascal, *Pensées*.
- ¹² C. Pavese, *Dialoghi con Leucò*, Einaudi, Torino 1947, pp.165-166.
- ¹³ Cf. H. Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*, act V.
- ¹⁴ From the preface of the 2001 Italian Edition (*All'origine della pretesa cristiana*, p. 3.)
- ¹⁵ L. Giussani, *Una presenza che cambia*, BUR, Milano 2004, p. 369.
- ¹⁶ Luigi Giussani, *In Search of the Human Face*. Unpublished translation by E. Mörlin & J. P. Stevenson.
- ¹⁷ Luigi Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, Mc Gill-Queens U.P., Montreal 1997, p. 10.
- ¹⁸ L. Giussani, *L'io, il potere e le opere*, Marietti, Genova 2000, p. 53.
- ¹⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Archivio Arendt – 2. 1950-1954*, Feltrinelli, Milan 2003, p. 26.
- ²⁰ A. Finkielkraut, *La sconfitta del pensiero*, Lucarini, Rome 1989, p. 108.
- ²¹ R. Guardini, *Ritratto della malinconia*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1952, pp. 29-30.
- ²² R. Guardini, *Ibidem*, pp. 46-47, 53, 55.
- ²³ F. Kafka, quoted in L. Giussani, *Il senso di Dio e l'uomo moderno*, BUR, Milan 1998, p. 107.
- ²⁴ F. Kafka *Zürkau's Aphorisms*.
- ²⁵ Luigi Giussani, *In Search of the Human Face*, op. cit.
- ²⁶ Presentation of the new Catechism, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Jan 20, 1993.
- ²⁷ Werfel, *Verdi. Roman der Oper* (1924), Fisher, Frankfurt 1992.
- ²⁸ E. Levinas, *Humanism and the Other*, translated by Nidra Poller, University of Illinois Press, Champaign 2003.
- ²⁹ St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, 6.
- ³⁰ Benedict XVI *Deus Caritas est*, op. cit., pp. 12, 13.
- ³¹ Luigi Giussani, *Christmas: the Mystery of God's tenderness*, in *Traces*, Dec. 2005.

- ³² Luigi Giussani *Eucharist: A Present, Familiar Reality*, in *Traces*, Oct. 2005.
- ³³ *Mk* 10:46-52.
- ³⁴ J. Ratzinger, *La Bellezza. La Chiesa*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana-Itaca, Rome-Castel Bolognese 2005, p. 16.
- ³⁵ N. Kabasilas, quoted, *ibidem*, pp. 15-16.
- ³⁶ J. Ratzinger, *La Bellezza. La Chiesa*, op. cit., p. 19.
- ³⁷ J. Leclercq, *Meditazioni di vita cristiana*, Ed. Paoline, Rome 1956, pp. 21-22.
- ³⁸ Song by R. Grotti, "Il nostro cuore" in *Canti*, Cooperativa Editoriale Nuovo Mondo, Milan 2002, p. 208.
- ³⁹ *1 Cor* 15:14.
- ⁴⁰ *Mt* 28:20.
- ⁴¹ Benedict XVI, Homily at Easter Vigil 2006.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ *Mt* 26:56.
- ⁴⁴ Cf. *Jn* 20:19.
- ⁴⁵ *Mk* 16:8.
- ⁴⁶ *Lk* 24:38.
- ⁴⁷ *Lk* 24:21.
- ⁴⁸ *Jn* 20:27.
- ⁴⁹ *Jn* 20:16.
- ⁵⁰ *Jn* 21:15.
- ⁵¹ *Jn* 21:7.
- ⁵² *Jn* 21:12.
- ⁵³ L. Giussani *The Risen Christ: the Defeat of Nothingness* in *Traces*, April 2006.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵ Cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 643-644.
- ⁵⁶ Ambrosian Missal, 5th Sunday of Ordinary Time.
- ⁵⁷ Benedict XVI, Easter Vigil, 2006, op. cit.
- ⁵⁸ *Gal* 2:20.
- ⁵⁹ Benedict XVI, Easter Vigil, 2006, op. cit.
- ⁶⁰ L. Giussani *The Risen Christ: the Defeat of Nothingness* in *Traces*, April 2006.
- ⁶¹ L. Giussani, *Why the Church?*, McGill-Queens, Montreal 2001, p. 180.
- ⁶² Benedict XVI, Easter Vigil, 2006, op. cit.
- ⁶³ Cyprian, *De Ecclesiae Catholicae unitate*, chap. 23.
- ⁶⁴ Benedict XVI, Holy Thursday, Chrism Mass 2006.
- ⁶⁵ C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*.
- ⁶⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermon on the Song of Songs*, 8, PG 44, 947-950.
- ⁶⁷ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 17.
- ⁶⁸ L. Giussani *Il Santo Rosario (The Holy Rosary)* Edizioni San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (Mi) 2003, p. 36.

- ⁶⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermon on the Song of Songs*, IV, PG 44.
- ⁷⁰ M. Luzi, “*Libro di Ipazia*”, in *Teatro*, Garzanti, Milan 1993, p. 76.
- ⁷¹ F. Werfel, *In the Twilight of the World*.
- ⁷² Cf. *Jn* 21:17.
- ⁷³ L. Giussani, *The Miracle of a Change. Exercises of the Fraternity 1998*, p. 20.
- ⁷⁴ Julien Green, *The Light Remaining, Diaries (1966-1972)*.
- ⁷⁵ L. Giussani, *Easter...*, *op. cit.*
- ⁷⁶ Cf. Jacopone da Todì, “*Como l’anima se lamenta con Dio de la carità superardente in lei infusa*”, *Lauda XC*, in *Le Laude*, Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, Florence 1989, p. 318.
- ⁷⁷ Cf. *Col* 1:17.
- ⁷⁸ A. Negri, “*Atto d’amore*” in *Mia giovinezza*, BUR, Milan 1995, p. 70.

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