

## Notes from School of Community with Fr. Julian Carron

Milan, 6/9/2010

*Text of reference: "Can a man be born again, once he is old?", Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation (Rimini 2010)*

*Song "Liberazione n.2"*

*Song "Mi sei scoppiato dentro il cuore"*

School of Community is a working hypothesis – Fr. Giussani always taught us – for entering into reality, and we are all called to verify it in our experience. So, we don't come here to make remarks, we come to tell and document an experience, particularly since few people, including us, believe that living reality according to this hypothesis is truly something else. To make remarks is useless, because they don't change our mind; we need to give proof, to witness that entering into reality according to what we told each other can make one breathe.

We have the first lesson of the Exercises in front of us: "The provocation of reality", that is, what happens when I let myself be provoked by reality, and what it means that reality lived as a sign is something else. If you don't have any witness to give about this, remain seated quietly; if you have something to say, come on. Brief, concise, otherwise I will have to intervene.

*About a year ago a friend wrote to me: "The only way not to lose what made my heart jump is to do SofC, which is the essential point to be faithful to, because it is the experience of Fr. Giussani's heart in front of Christ, whom we need in order to live". Starting from this provocation, every morning after the 7:20 Mass, I stay in church with a friend and we read the text of SofC for ten-fifteen minutes, and we start the day like that. What a grace! Because, in following the path you are describing and indicating to me, my life has changed. This change was made possible by some friendships and by doing SofC faithfully. The test of this change is that finally I understood what you mean when you say that circumstances either suffocate or provoke you. Before they were suffocating me because my attention was directed at solving the problems, until one day a friend told me: "But what do you consist of? Would the solution of the problems make you happy?", and yet I was stubborn since the problem was still there. The change came from gluing myself to Him, trying to follow Him through the face of some friends and studying SofC. An example of this attempt of mine that I want to tell you about, is that I read the book 'Barabbas'; at one point Barabbas and the slave are moved from the mining job to the fields (I am going to read a short piece): "And in climbing to the light of day, in seeing the rays of the sun on the slopes of the mountains perfumed with mirth and lavender, and the fields green with spring down in the valley, and the sea beyond them, Sahak fell to his knees, and enraptured cried out: "He has come, He has come, the kingdom is here". I was struck because I understood*

*the example Fr. Giussani gives in the tenth chapter of The Religious Sense: “Picture yourself being born, coming out of your mother’s womb at the age you are now at this very moment [...] I would be overpowered by the wonder and awe of things as a ‘presence’”. Fr, Carron, I feel as if I am living the same thing, it isn’t that I never noticed the sky, the sun, the sea and the flowers, but now I see them as a sign of His presence.*

In what experience did you recognize this?

*In the relationship with a friend and in SofC.*

Tell us about it, you all have to relate facts: don’t repeat the discourse, tell the facts. We have to help each other in this.

*In the same way in which staying in front of the Shroud of Turin is to recognize that the entire reality is the sign that He is making all things now. Also Pope Benedict in Rome said: “Opening for us the way to heaven, the Lord gives us a foretaste of the divine life already on earth”, and I can say that this happened to me and it happens to me every day as a gift of grace given to me through an exceptional friendship with which He makes my heart tremble and He glues me to Himself; the only decision I have to make is to be available to and let myself be embraced by the modality in which Christ is embracing me now. Thank you.*

Tell the facts. I don’t doubt anything of what we have heard, but if one tells a fact where this is visible and documented, it makes things easier. I beg you, if you don’t have facts to tell, please stay seated.

*First of all, I wanted to tell you what happened at home recently, because especially my father’s job has met with some big challenges. For many reasons related to his industry, politics, etc., he had very important meetings on which the decision of closing the business depended. This went on for about a month, and I was struck very much by the fact that at home (I am an only child) we were forced to decide if we wanted to let this preoccupation dominate us –in this period I am looking for a job as well – or if we wanted to look at this circumstance as something given to us by Jesus. I was struck very much by the negativity we experienced when one of us gave in to tiredness, versus the opening up, also in the quality of the evening, when it was clear to all three of us that it was an occasion for us. Simply, I never risked with my parents as I did in this period a judgment on what was happening to us, so I saw this experience as a gain for me. At this point, though, I have a question, because recently my father’s problem is reaching a solution, thank God, but in the last week I have been very agitated; I discovered in me a great restlessness, and this is something that “very intelligently” I set aside thinking: “I must be tired, it has been a difficult period”. Instead, obviously, this has only been increasing.*

Do you see? We can set it aside, but does it solve anything? It gets stronger.

*So much so that, at a certain point, Saturday evening, due to some things that happened, I thought: "Now you have to accept the fact that you are restless even if things are going well". The next day I drove to see a friend and we had an hour-long discussion that I hoped would put the issue to rest; instead: nothing; actually it was worse, until I became aware of this dynamic that often happens in me, and this is what I want to ask you about. It is as if, in front of a provocation presented to me by the circumstances – my father's job – I were forced to make a judgment, and this is a complete gain for me. Afterwards, though, without even being aware of it, my position is reduced to saying: "Now that I made a judgment, it is as if I am immune to the impact that reality provokes". That is: by now I understood it, so I can go on. Obviously, this doesn't hold, and so – without even realizing it – I start to suffocate and I fall back to square one. The point is that I am fed up with this dynamic, because in reading what you said at the Exercises I thought: "What Carron proposes to me is not interrupted, it is a work that one does everyday and the gain should be there everyday". So, I would like to understand what gets blocked in me.*

What gets blocked? Observe what gets blocked in you. You are the one who has to tell me this.

*It is as if, all excited by the fact that I have glimpsed at something, then I stop doing the work.*

Then, what does it mean if you don't do the work anymore? What is your experience? The 'I' did not grow. We have read for the entire year that the experience is a real, true, experience when the 'I' grows. One learns math, then he rests, and the next time, when he has to solve a problem it is as if nothing happened? I am not able to face it better? What was our gain? Nothing. As long as one doesn't gain a growth of the 'I', it always goes back to square one, is it clear? What does tell you that you have gained it? That I catch myself entering into reality with this gain, I start to enter into reality in this new way, as you said referring to your father's job, etc., but then it is as if you forget it.....In the end, what do we expect everything from? From the fact that the problem gets solved. We consider the circumstance as a step that needs to be overcome, not as the occasion for our relationship with the Mystery. What is our ideal, not expressed, but always hidden? The absence of the drama; that I may face problems that I can solve; and as soon as we cannot solve them, we crumble or we give up. We don't introduce ourselves to the true drama of living and to the relationship with the Only One capable of providing resolution. But then what is the difference between the way everybody is living and the Christian way? None! Also the others are happy when they succeed and they are fed up when they don't. Are we starting to see that all this introduces us to a sense of the Mystery, or not? And that the question then is not about becoming immune, because the day I become immune it means that I become brain-dead and I am not involved with reality any longer? We sang that the 'you' is bursting into our hearts; this is the truth: it bursts into our hearts. Imagine if we were to become immune and we couldn't care less for the other (this is the best!!): it would be a total disaster; thank God that life doesn't play out this way, because if something bursts into my heart it means that it makes my desire for it grow, it makes me perceive the full strength of my desire; is it clear?

*I hope to document a growth of my 'I' and the usefulness of the work by doing SofC.*

I wish it to you myself.

*I see that doing the work of SofC is convenient to me because it reminds me of who I am, and so it allows me to recognize Who is sustaining my life; this is something real because it changes me, so much so that a month ago I wouldn't have been able to say this; moreover, I can't get away from the fact that I cannot function in any situation for less than totality.*

Thank you.

*I wanted to ask you for some help. It is a difficult time at work. I work with my father and, in part due to the crisis, in part due to the fact that the generational transition is becoming more and more important and makes some aspects of the job acquire an importance they didn't have before, I am called to do things I didn't do till recently. The ongoing crisis doesn't help, and I find myself running after some opportunities and the work becomes difficult, because it is really unmanageable and very disorganized. Two years ago at the Exercises you said: "Someone recently asked me: 'How can I remember Christ in my work?' and I answered: 'How can you work without the memory Christ? How can you live at work, in the circumstance, without the memory of Christ? Without the new breath that comes from offering?', and further on: "If a man, while studying or working, says: 'I offer my work or my studying to you' and in a moment of difficulty says: 'I offer to you the difficulty and the uncertainty of the predicament I find myself in' it means that I recognize that the consistency and the substance, that is, the breath, the material the instant I am living is made of, is You, Christ". Probably I am not able to offer, it is clear that in the specific case of my job we will need somebody who can help my father, this is evident; however, the challenge I perceive at this time is really to reach a newness also in my relationship with my father, and with my wife and my son as well, because when I go back home after a suffocating day I try to avoid them. I wanted to ask for your help on this.*

You have a problem at work; you have to look at the way you moved, and compare it with what we said here. You cannot speak about the offering as if nothing happened, ignoring the proposal we make to each other. Otherwise we can all go home. How did you use reason in front of this provocation of reality? What path did you follow? Because if you don't use reason, what is the meaning of offering? Is it clear? What urgency do you have of staying in front of reality in such a way that you can make this provocation something that grabs you and carries you forward? Otherwise we paste things together: work, problem, offering. What happens? Nothing! You can see the situation clearly. This doesn't help us. If you don't make a comparison between the way you moved in front of this and what the Exercises say, an abyss remains between the intention of following and following, and we never bridge the gap. This work is what, little by little, brings

you to realize, concretely, what life is, who you are and what memory means. It is a question and a direction to a method, do you understand?

*My move was to try to share with my dearest friends, asking for help.*

Perfect. This is great, but if your dearest friends don't refer you to this work, they distract you.

*I am sorry, but what if the circumstance wins?*

What was your experience? Does the circumstance win or not? For the time being the circumstance wins in you. Is there anybody in whom the circumstance didn't win? This is the question: if we don't do this work of verifying, in a while we will toss away everything because we become skeptical, saying: 'you continue to tell us that it is a working hypothesis to enter into reality, but in truth it doesn't happen'. Then we get fed up. This is how we lose the faith, because the intelligence of faith doesn't become intelligence of reality.

*I wanted to give an example of how the circumstance didn't win. I am starting from p.16 of the Exercises: "Facts that used to be taken for granted and now begin to surprise us: and life is an entirely new thing, with the same factors". What have these factors been for me in the past few days? They have been a great party we had at school, a party that lasted four days, and which demanded a lot of energy and physical effort from me and the friends who helped. I was in charge of organizing the clean-up, the last thing one would like to do: go and pick-up the garbage, sweep the floor, etc. I started with two things in mind: SofC and the provocation you made to us in Rome, because it was clear to me that even this gesture could be an educational experience for me. So, what did I do? I said: "I am going to do the most intelligent thing", and I hung up a sign in the area in which my friends and I were working, that was saying: "First of all that this gesture may be for you", as to guarantee the good outcome of it, for me and for the party. What happened then? Immediately, the instant after, the organization of the entire party was 'winning', and that evening I went home with a heavy heart thinking: "Look, I did everything in my power, but it is as if I did it with my head in a bucket"; it is as if He in the end remained in the back ground and was not incisive. The next morning I was home alone and the only thing that came to mind, in relation to the provocation of the previous evening, was to go and read the Exercises; so I re-read the Exercises with what had happened the previous evening in front of my eyes. What happened? The next day I was struck by the fact that at the end of the party a friend approached me and told me: "Look at this: I have never seen somebody doing the last job one would like to do as happily as you are doing it, as if you were at home". I am telling you this and comparing it with what another friend – whom I thanked a lot for his provocation – told me at the end of the party: "Things are not working here; I was alone in making the gesture". In front of his reaction, I could only tell him what had happened to me; so I told him: "This happened to me, and for four days I collected the garbage happily". This circumstance made it clear how taking seriously the work you are asking us to do, the work of the Exercises, is*

*what opens wide all circumstances in a radical way. Exactly what you say: "Life is an entirely new thing, with the same factors".*

One cleans up one day with the sentence right there: "That it may be a gesture for you", but it doesn't affect the way he is doing the cleaning, and he goes home with a terribly heavy heart: He is not incisive. He goes home, and what isn't he able to shake off? That he participated in a gesture like the Exercises, and he cannot avoid picking up the text as a working hypothesis to start again the next day. The working hypothesis the Movement gives to us is the modality with which I can enter into reality after I made my attempt and I haven't been able to do anything except going home with a heavy heart. Then one thinks: "Maybe if I start from this hypothesis, it will happen". Then one starts to see, to experience first hand, the novelty it introduces, so much so that that another person notices the joy, the gladness. Also this other person has participated in the Exercises, has the booklet, but the last thing that came to his mind was to face that circumstance with this hypothesis. Can you see? Both belong, are in the same place, in the same friendship; what makes a difference? It is necessary to take the proposal into your own hands, and then one starts to experience the truth of the fact that, if I enter a circumstance in this way I can have a different experience of the same job that yesterday made my heart heavy. The job didn't change; simply I entered the circumstance (the same as yesterday!) with the hypothesis that yesterday I had forgotten. If we don't make this verification, we cannot experience first hand the fact that it is possible for the circumstance not to win. A person is telling me: "Reality is provoking me to search for something beyond what appears at first. It is a moment in which I am impassive [one can resist, remain impassive to this]. As you know, after losing a child, unexpectedly now I am pregnant again.

I am not well. For two months now I've been throwing up every day, all day long. I can't work; I stay at home and I'm exhausted. Reality is crushing me. I can't not obey, since circumstances force me, but I obey like a slave, like the damned. It's like humanity is missing. My motion has stopped [it's being stopped]: stopped by the vomit, stopped by two months in bed. I keep on telling myself that it's a sign of something beautiful [It's not enough to repeat it], that it's not a disease. In the morning, when I'm not too mad, I offer everything, but I don't put myself into anything [Do you see? "I offer" is something that seems tacked on, but I don't put myself into anything. This is not a new awareness of reality], I'm not discovering anything, I'm just fed up. How can I escape from this prison?" Is this person, living life in this way, being freed from the situation she is in? No. What happens when a person blocks the entirety of his need? The assassination of what is human: the result is that he is fed up, and can no longer endure the prison. But the Lord is giving us examples, witnesses: the inmates in Padua are in a worse situation, but they don't let this feeling invade them. Something else takes over, and they are shaped by something else. We can't just stop there, crushed, because if I stop the motion, as we see, I discover nothing; everything is blocked. If we do not submit ourselves to reality's provocation, which throws us wide open and opens up the horizon, we suffocate.

*At the last School of Community, you were saying, "This work is freedom's decision to let ourselves be embraced and to recognize Him." What's filling me with joy is that this is happening in normal circumstances and in mundane things, as you say on page 15: "The more we live our faith in the presence of Christ in the Church, the more the signs of God will strike wonder in us, even in the most veiled circumstance, even when we are thinking our inmost thoughts. So ... an instant's normality is enough... What would life be like, my friends, if every moment, down to the most hidden, were filled with this intensity?!" On Monday I was at a boring meeting, which I judged to be more or less useless. At a certain point, I realized that I was thinking, "How boring! I could be at home doing two hundred other useful chores" – the ordinary stuff of family life. First of all, it struck me that I realized I was in that position, whereas before I wouldn't have realized that life is passing by. The second surprise was wondering why, if reality is always a sign, with no distinctions, I was not living that moment as a sign that throws me open. And so the boredom, that feeling of heaviness, was the opportunity for letting the question explode, "Let me be here now," and this truly changes things, because it makes the burden of life light.*

Thank you.

*Two examples and a confirmation. On page 17 you say, "If Christianity does not affect this depth of the subject's life, it means that it is not an event in man's life; if it is an event, it establishes a difference at the source of the 'I,' which shows itself first of all in the way of looking at, of relating to reality." This year I am on the school board for my first-grade daughter's class. We have had several problems with a teacher who has been sporadically absent, and every time she came back, we lost the substitute teachers, which is very upsetting for the children. They've been all over the place in their classes; no one knew when to leave; parents have been very combative. We asked for a meeting with the principal, who is even more combative with this teacher, and the final decision on how to put this trouble into words and get her to leave was postponed till the board meeting last Monday. All weekend long I thought, "How can I, on the one hand, hold on to the judgment that this situation has certainly harmed the children and upset their growth (because the teacher really strategically planned her absences to her own advantage; she wasn't really sick), and on the other hand, not ignore this person?" Two groups of parents of the children in that grade had formed sides, those who were saying, "Poor thing, how to go about it?" (being nice), and others who were insisting on the sense of duty. For the first time, being deeply worried about how to approach the situation, but especially concerned about saving my own reason and judgment, I drew from the Exercises. I read the booklet all weekend, because I wanted to save this person, save the circumstances, and save my reason. On Monday, as I was riding the subway to the meeting, these words kept coming back into my mind: "The things of heaven have become the things of earth," and there in front of me on the subway was a lady who at one point closed her eyes, apparently tired from the heat, and I tenderness for this stranger arose in me that I had never felt before, which, as I accepted this working hypothesis, began to trigger a series of otherwise impossible facts in me. I went to the meeting and at the end, this*

*teacher actually stopped to talk with a group of moms. I realized that my contribution to the solution had its origin in the text of the Exercises, not in me. I was able to look at her as on a face that I loved, and certainly with esteem for her existence, despite my judgment on the situation. This is something impossible for me.*

In between being nice and the sense of duty, what new understanding of reality did you discover?

*Holding that situation in unity, being able to judge while taking account of everything, that she is a person who is part of reality just like I am, loved by Jesus as I am loved, who made these mistakes, and none of this is a balance arrived at by strategies or dialectical skill...*

Do you have a question?

*No, a confirmation of what you had said the other time. About Rome, you had said that it was an educational gesture that both those who went and those who didn't go had understood. I didn't go, for a bunch of good reasons, but from what others told me, especially from what you said and from the hardship I've experienced as a reaction these past weeks, I realized what I missed.*

This is the value of a gesture: that it helps all of us.

*I am a nurse in pediatric hematology. I wanted to tell you about something that happened in the ward. There was an eighteen year old boy with us who was terminally ill, and I had really come to like him very much, because he was with us for months, and so I always kept track of him. He died Saturday, and aside from the fact that it shook me up somewhat, I decided with my coworkers to go to the funeral to be with his parents and to stay with him to the very end. When I went to the funeral I was very shaken by how his parents were doing: they were shattered; the funeral was a tragedy, pure despair. The dad was screaming; the mom seemed like she couldn't recognize anyone, with a lost look in her face, and there I was taking part in all this, including the cemetery, but I was not so upset by their behavior (because I think that a lot of people behave like this in similar circumstances, unless they've had an encounter and put their hope in Christ), but I was really struck by the novelty that we were bringing, by the novelty that we are. I remembered my sister's funeral, who died in January, and I remembered my parents' faces: they were not hopeless; even with the sorrow and hardship they had, there was no despair, because they had put their certainty in Christ. They had said yes to that circumstance, for the very reason that they are certain that death is not the end of everything, but that there is the promise of eternal life. My dad struck me when, as they were putting her in the tomb, he asked his friends to sing Povera Voce. I asked him, "Why do you want to sing at a time like this?" When I was at the cemetery for that boy, I really found myself grateful to be able to belong to a history like this, and I wanted those parents to also be able to have an encounter.*

Thank you.

*I had to go back to the beginning of the Exercises because, on account of what happened to me at this time, it seemed to me that I hadn't understood a damn thing. At the beginning, you say, "Event and work seem to us to be at odds." Well, why? I sensed that it's like we weren't aware*

*what we're talking about, and this is why we sense the contrast. I'll give an example. The other day at school I see a dad moving around in the hall and he can't get in; I ask him, "What's wrong?" and he says, "I didn't sign my daughter's homework and I don't know how I can do it now; her class has already begun." "Come in," I say, "if there's a serious reason, they'll let you in." He looks at me and goes, "Will you come with me?" "Sure," I tell him, "I'll go with you." We go in, no big deal, we sign the thing, he goes out and then he tells me, "You know, I separated from my wife; I didn't think at the beginning that it would be so hard. You know, living alone is really difficult." It's just an example, but it shows that it's like we don't believe it's possible to even cross that threshold, because we don't give credit to the event that happened to us; it's only on account of the presence of a friendship – this entirely describes what's happening to me now – that life can change. If we don't put this into the...*

But in your opinion, why don't we give credit to this? Is it simply because we are stupid, because we are bad? Why, in your opinion?

*Because we don't think it's possible...*

And why don't we think it's possible?

*We identify the correspondence of the event as something "beautiful," and we don't believe the fullness of the power of the event to be possible.*

And why not? I agree with you on this, but in your opinion, why does this happen?

*Because we have to have someone in front of us to look at. Otherwise we fail to go inside. We have to...*

But we have all these witnesses to look at. Why is that not enough? Because until we see that it's possible in our experience, we don't even take it into consideration. As you are saying, we don't give credit to this because it's not enough to read the text so that I give credit to the text and can enter reality... Only when someone has seen this being fulfilled one time and another time and another time, then he believes in it.

*Julián, excuse me, correct me later: but we have seen that in an experience of hardship, when someone went along with us in that circumstance, we were led home.*

I agree; we can go along with one another toward this, but the issue is that until it becomes our experience – one time, and again another – it's like we don't have the certainty in our experience to give credit to this.

*If we try to look at that circumstance and we fail to truly cross over it, we can ask on our knees...*

Look, you can do whatever you like, but here he's not saying you have to ask on your knees – it's fine to ask for it – here he's saying that you can follow a path; do you see how we don't even take this the least bit into consideration? Let's all go home, because we don't need to come here to say this! So you don't give credit to Christ because, since the understanding of faith has not brought you a new understanding of reality, you think it can't change anything. And what happens then? You put yourself in front of new circumstances without this certainty and you don't really believe in it, but not because you are bad or skeptical; no, because you don't have in every fiber of your being the experience of what happened, and it does not increase with every new experience that it allows you to have in reality. And since this doesn't happen, we are

surprised if we say later on, “We don’t give credit...” but no one wonders, “But why don’t I give credit to this?”! I need an experience that allows me to enter into the details of reality in such a way that I see that it changes the circumstances. We keep on saying things that we have in our heads, but no one takes the hypothesis of doing some work seriously! I’ll give an example of this work. There’s a certain person who doesn’t like her work, and at the same time, she has a desire to go on mission, and this desire makes her open to going, but without verifying deep down the work being offered. Then she gets there and the work is not what she imagined, so she gets mad at the other person who made her go (according to her) and everything gets complicated (for both the one and the other). And there’s someone who says, “In my view, all the problems start when we don’t follow what Carrón tells us even as an attempt or a hypothesis, that is, when faith does not become a way of knowing reality. It seems to me that this happened at the beginning of the deal (the work proposal) and later on in the attitude in front of the unfolding of the thing, in particular in the way everyone was moved. This happened at the beginning of the deal: how often have we heard it said to Carrón that the Mystery knows what it’s doing and meets us in what it allows to happen, not in our thoughts and in our interpretations? Look, it seems to me that perhaps this sane realism [because I, since I don’t have a direct line to the Mystery, have to rely on signs; I need this realism. Since I don’t think about having visions, I have to see the signs, but we often lack this sane realism] is somewhat missing, and instead of staying with the simplicity of evaluating reality (is there work or isn’t there work?), the proposal was a bit forced, going on with other criteria. And this, not only on the part of the one who made the proposal, who was perhaps a bit hasty in evaluating if another person was really necessary, but also on the part of the person in question who accepted her. She herself recognized that a certain enthusiasm for mission [a very good thing] allowed her to decide, even if the thing wasn’t very clear. [She skipped all the steps!] When what the Mystery allows to happen isn’t obeyed, we pay the consequences. This is for starters. Then María Zambrano says, ‘Man will not turn to reality in order to know it, well or poorly, unless first, and as a starting point, he senses it as a promise, like a homeland from which in principle he expects everything, where he believes he can find everything.’ This is a very beautiful and meaning thing [you see right away who’s doing a work and who isn’t]: if we don’t try to take as a hypothesis that reality is a promise – reality is a sign, you insist in the first lesson – it can’t be known [because we suffocate in reality, because we think we already know reality]. So it seems to me that by not starting from this, the one person is condemned to not knowing what she had in front of her and the other is condemned to not knowing the other, the desire for mission that she had until coming to an entirely misleading judgment that she maintains as knowledge of the other, but which is instead a cold and merciless analysis of the appearances, which may also exist, but which is never the definition of the other. It is significant from this point of view that they do not talk, that the impulse comes to neither one of them to ask the other, ‘Why are you doing this? Why is your freedom moving in this way?’ It is clear that when the starting point is not the one pointed out, there is no esteem and interest in the other’s attempt, which is thus never seen as freedom in front of destiny, but as a possible obstacle; as a consequence, the judgment is to dump the responsibility. So, I really believe these things; I hold them very important for both of them, especially so that they do not remain trapped in the story; in fact, in the introduction to the Exercises, it says, ‘In my opinion, this is the greatest challenge

that Christianity is facing now: whether, in the way it has persuasively reached us, namely, the Movement, it is able to pierce the crust of the way everyone stays within reality [this is often what doesn't move], or whether it is condemned to remain outside, in the end just something added on. If there is no change in the way of perceiving, of judging reality, it means that the root of the "I" has not been impacted by anything new, that the event of Christianity has remained outside the "I." Can faith be a new awareness of what happened and is happening to us? Does it give us a greater understanding of reality or not? Or will we be condemned to saying, 'Oh well, at least there's Christ!' as an addition made later on? And the circumstances stay just as they are, and no one grows, nothing changes, no one learns anything about what the Mystery thus wanted us to understand, and we keep on judging like everyone else." Let's start to take this close comparison seriously, between the way everyone acts and what Giussani is saying, so we can verify if what is being said to us is truly changing us! Because so often we verify all the hypotheses that cross our minds, all of them, except the hypothesis of the victory of Christ. Then nothing changes and we become skeptical, because the victory of Christ does not spare me from reality, but in fact it makes me capable of entering reality and not giving in. We are here to help one another verify this, not to make comments on the text, because making comments on the text is good for nothing. I don't know when we will finally do it, but I don't care: I will not stop trying.

It is part of the nature of our experience to recommend some books to be read this summer. Every time that it happens that we "encounter" a book, like a person, our freedom is put to the test: we can decide to be closed or open to the encounter. We can accept the provocation that is made to us to read it, or we can drop it. The books that we propose for this summer are *L'io rinasce in un incontro* [*The "I" Is Reborn in an Encounter*] by Luigi Giussani, *God's Battalions* by Rodney Stark, *Kristin Lavransdatter* by Sigrid Undset, and *Choruses from "The Rock"* by T.S. Eliot (which is already the book of the month for June).

These past years, besides the great willingness of the university students, the willingness of the adults has also grown. This is a simple sign of how much the Meeting has been felt by everyone as the opportunity to witness what we are to the world. Thus, I remind you of the opportunity to work for the Meeting for free: it's something we all have to learn from.

•Gloria