

Notes from School of Community with Fr. Julian Carron

Milan, 5/26/2010

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

Song "Al mattino"

Song "Give me Jesus"

I want to tell a fact that happened to me. I will start with the premise that I lived the last years with great difficulty, due to a situation that developed at work which, after thirty years, made me decide to quit my job. Obviously now I am also in the predicament of having to find a new job, that in the current climate and with me getting close to fifty is not easy. However, my problem is not the circumstances, but how I lived them, because during all this time I sort of suffocated, and also lost some of my joy of living. In the Friday evening lesson at the Exercises, you said: "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". Last week there was a meeting with Fr. Aldo; when he spoke of a dramatic situation he experienced, I felt a similarity with what I was living: I had the scandal of this lack of joy of living; even if I belong to the Movement, surrounded by the grace of many people who love me, I could neither forgive myself this scandal, nor confess it openly, fully, even to my dearest friends. At one point Fr. Aldo said: " I changed when, after many years in which I was even asking to die, I started to look at myself not like I was looking at myself, but as God looks at me" I had already heard Fr. Aldo speaking other times, also this year, but I was always leaving the meeting saying: " He is a saint, and I am not"; instead, this time I left and thought: "If it is possible for him, why not for me?" In fact, he really touched the root of my being, and I made the experience of being freed because he had turned me up side down, without destroying me, but only my moralism and my being scandalized by my sin; this is so true that the next day getting up in the morning the first thing I said to my wife was: "Our relationship has to start all over and we have to learn to look at each other the way God is looking at us".

I think you all understood the import of what he is saying. This is an example – and I thank him – of the meaning of the word 'work' we often talk about; because we may have been here for years, like him, in a friendly belonging – no objections - , but without even considering as a hypothesis what is proposed to us each time: to look at ourselves the way God looks at us. This is why, often we complain that the root of the "I" is not changing, nothing is changing; we keep waiting for something to happen (each of us can imagine it according to his own sensibility: sentimental, with more or less power to strike us). Instead, here I am struck by the recognition that what truly kept him company was this judgment of Fr. Aldo's: it isn't that Fr. Aldo spoke directly to him or embraced him; very simply, by hearing what had changed Fr. Aldo, he started as well to look at himself as God was looking at him, he took into his own hands the hypothesis

we continue to offer to each other here: that ‘before’ that entered history with the Christian event. This is decisive. Why? Because many times we are struck by people – this is a decisive step! - , we see witnesses; but the difference is that he, in this occasion, perceived the path that needed to be taken, the path! Many times, instead, what do we say? What he used to say: “Fr. Aldo is a great witness, he is a saint and I am stupid; I am in front of an exceptional personality, he is great, and I am nothing”. And after having experienced the repercussion of his greatness I go home with my nothingness, without being able to imagine, without having even a smidgen of an intuition of the path to take to get where he is: he remains a giant and I remain a dwarf. Instead, what struck me immediately about the Movement was exactly this: I had already met great people, and they were giants and I was a dwarf and I did not know how to get where they were, while Fr. Giussani gives us a path to follow. Christianity proposes a path: start to look at yourself the way God is looking at you. As soon as I perceived this I felt free. Instead, one can stay here for years, arriving piously each Wednesday for SofC – God forbid - , the same way one can go to Rome as if on a moving sidewalk because the Movement is going, because we are all going, without even making a journey, without letting himself be challenged by reason, and this doesn’t let in any newness. This is decisive because, as we said at the Exercises, this becomes mine only through my freedom, when I start to take into my own hands that hypothesis, that proposal I receive while listening to someone like Fr. Aldo: to start looking at myself the way God is looking at me. Immediately I perceive that change, and I didn’t even know how it could happen to me. This is the challenge facing us, otherwise it is as if the Christian event didn’t touch – as he quoted – the root of the ‘I’; we can participate in many things, at times we are even struck by them emotionally, but they don’t touch the root of the ‘I’. This time the root of his ‘I’ was touched because he started the path, because he realized that the question wasn’t the impressive personality of the witness, but the fact that someone was giving him a glimpse of the path that needs to be taken; this is why we don’t penetrate the crust, and we may participate in many things, but then we go home looking at ourselves as before; and then, at one point, one gets bored. What does this tell us? A minute of following was enough to see the result. Who – whatever the situation, whatever the difficulty he is having, whatever the bad circumstance he is living, the psychological state he is in, when he is feeling down, down, down - , who among the people present here and the people who are listening to us, who can say that there isn’t a crumb of freedom left, enough to start to look at ourselves like God is looking at us? It is enough to give space – we were saying at the Exercises – to this gaze: we don’t need any particular ability, circumstance or energy; it is simply this decision of our freedom to let ourselves be looked at like this. This is the work. Is it complicated? Even children do it: to let themselves be looked at by their mother, to let that gaze enter when they are all closed up on themselves.

Several years ago I had an accident and I lost four fingers of one hand: I was twenty-three with a lot of dreams and projects for the future, and many weren’t realized because of this fact. I got upset with Jesus, maybe because He was the only one who could listen to me and give me a

reason for what had happened; every day I was asking myself why, why this thing specifically to me. I stopped going to Church and I started to distance myself from anything that was related to the Church. I withdrew from everything. I was convinced that Jesus had reserved for me a second rate life. I used to say: "Probably Jesus chose for me an inferior life". Then, one day I met a friend who invited me to one of the vacations; I said yes because I was sure I could go and show to him that he was wrong, that not everybody is destined to be happy.

Thank goodness that one comes to the vacation like this, with this hypothesis of work, and not with the moving sidewalk attitude: one who goes to try showing others that they are wrong. What happened then?

I stayed only for three days. When I went back I realized that I had started to look for some of the people I had met, I started to call them, I could not be without them, and so I started School of Community, which I had no idea of what it was. I simply started to follow and to look at the signs; they were telling me: "Follow and look at the signs". However, a while ago something happened; it happened that the signs changed, because for me the signs are people, and people sometimes change, they may be more or less fragile since I am that way myself, and when they change I get confused and I don't know anymore what to look at. So a dark period started, and I started to think and desire to get back to my second rate life: maybe it wasn't so bad. But, this time the difference.....

Why don't you do it?

I can't.

Why?

I can't because even if I can doubt other people and myself, I cannot doubt what I saw, because what I saw is true.

And so?

And so I move, I try to do the only thing I can do: ask; and so one evening I asked to meet with a friend to talk; my intention was to go and tell him, explain to him, clarify things to him, tell him..... Instead, when I got there I couldn't say anything because I felt embraced: not a physical embrace, but an embrace that for me is a judgment: that I am loved. In the end that was the only thing I was interested in, that someone would look at me the way I am, with all my wretchedness and with all my mistakes. So, I decided also to participate in the Exercises to which before I didn't want to go. There, the first evening of the Exercises, I found myself not looking at all the people around me, but just thinking: "I desire only that we may all be here for the same thing". I will give an example of what happened next. I work for a maintenance co-op; we were called for a maintenance job at the house of an elderly gentleman; we arrived and found the house very dirty, the man dirty and with a long beard, and the workers couldn't do the job and I couldn't do

anything. At that point, though, I stopped for a few minutes to talk to him and he told me a bit about himself. I told him: "Look, the only idea I have is that tomorrow or the next day we stop by and clean your house, so that afterwards, maybe, we can do the maintenance job". I went back after a few days and everything was the same, but there was a detail that moved me enormously: this gentleman had shaved his beard, and this moved me a lot, because I saw it as a gesture of tenderness that I desire for myself. My question is this: when it happens that there are signs that change you, what can I do in order not to go back to my second rate life?

Why are you concerned about this? Was it you who generated this man with the beard? It is Jesus who thinks about this, why are you concerned? We worry about things we shouldn't worry about: was it you who found those people who struck you at the beginning of the vacation?

No.

Was it you who generated what you met at the Exercises? You have to start looking at what you said: "What I saw is true". The signs may change, but what I saw is true, and this is decisive. Why? Because it is exactly what remains, even when the signs change. Why? Because it is an event that happened, and you are already different since you saw it, and you have seen it forever. Afterwards anything can happen, but you are already constituted by what you saw. Truth is not something that you affirm, but something that happened in you. In fact, even if the others leave, when I ask you: "Why aren't you leaving? Why didn't you leave?", you answer me with conviction: "Because what I saw is true". True, that is, real. This is what interests us, the Lord takes care of the rest; at times, we are concerned about the things we shouldn't be concerned about. It is the Lord's concern to remain contemporaneous with us according to a modality that we cannot foresee, but that you can recognize as witnessed by the different faces that make you see again what you saw originally. Thank you.

There is a piece of the introduction to the Exercises that struck me a lot: "Each one of us can judge this year's work and verify how far this novelty has entered at the root of our own "I." [...] It's not an idea we have, or a matter of opinion, of interpretation: if Christ has entered as something new at the root of our "I" and if He shapes everything in a new way, we carry Him with us in our way of living in reality". You ascribed this to people who are committed to the work of following the proposal we made to each other. I want to tell you how I was surprised by something related to the event of Rome. When the pilgrimage to Rome was proposed I adhered to it immediately, happily: "What a nice thing, the Movement goes, my friends".....However, last time you said that we were going not because the Pope needed us, but because we need that witness. Those words sunk into me and changed completely, day by day, as the moment was getting closer, the modality of my yes: I had already decided to go with my friends, but suddenly I sort of recognized that that gesture was the opportunity for me, for my heart, to experience once again Christ Risen, really. Then it became truly a waiting to be there with his people -the

sign of Christ Risen – in front of the Pope, to be able to taste the correspondence of this event. I was struck because it is really true that this has changed the way I live reality, since I went with my family, something I wouldn't have ever done in the past (we went even with our newborn baby which is an enormous complication), it was extremely tiring, and yet it was all determined by an awaiting and so by a gladness, a new gaze, it was about enjoying the beauty..... At a certain point a change happened, and the desire that Christ may come once again to gladden the heart changed completely the way I lived those days. The last thing I want to say is that I was surprised by how Pope Benedict was moved, and his being moved became my being moved in front of Christ.

Thank you. The pilgrimage to Rome was one of the most important educational gestures we have made, because together we made a journey that allowed us to deepen reason and arrive to this judgment; as the various difficulties emerged, I was forced as well to answer to myself, and this gave me the opportunity to deepen, first-hand, the whole import of all we were doing to help everybody. I want to say another thing: why is a gesture like this educational? Many times we ask ourselves: is this an intention to follow or am I really following? Each of us has in front of himself what he did about Rome, obviously always keeping in mind the inevitable circumstances that the Lord gives us. Keeping in mind what Fr. Giussani says, a fact carries with it something unavoidable: to put in front of everybody a fact, a proposal like this with the reasons we gave, brought all of us to make a decision; there was no ambiguity. Either we went or we stayed (now I am keeping out the people who stayed for good reasons, I am not going to define this), each of us saw himself in action, and this is decisive. I don't want to reproach anybody, but to help us to understand that through these gestures the Movement offers to everybody the possibility of verifying what Christianity is. Otherwise, we would remain constantly either at the level of interpreting, or doubting whether or not we were following. Here, each of us, exactly for the nature of the proposal, could verify faith: what he did, how he used this occasion, and see how he played the game. This is how we help each other in order to get rid of the ambiguity and make the path clearer.

I continue to be amazed by the consonance between SofC and my life, particularly for my recent experience, in Northern Europe, of the illness and death of a person very dear to me. What saddened me the most was to see this person I loved suffer and die without the comfort of the Sacraments, due to the secular mentality that rules in these countries; a mentality that has really alienated Christ from life. I let Peguy, whom you quoted in the introduction to the Exercises, tell the story of what I saw with my own eyes: "For the first time since Jesus, we have seen, under our very eyes, we have just seen a new world arise, if not a city; a new society formed, if not a city; modern society, the modern world; a world, a society, constituted, or at any rate assembled, (born) and grow, after Jesus and without Jesus. And what is more, my friend, and it cannot be denied, it has succeeded... That is what puts you in a uniquely tragic position." This circumstance was a great opportunity to verify my faith: in fact, I became aware that the Mystery

was calling me through this reality, that I had in my hands a unique opportunity to risk myself in front of reality, to witness what my hope rests on. I am choosing to tell you only a small, but very revealing episode in which I was a protagonist, that is, a beggar. For the Funeral Mass of this friend of mine, I was asked to prepare the General Intercessions; exactly at the moment in which the attack on the Pope – due to the pedophile priests' scandal - was raging in Italy and Europe, one of the prayer I proposed was for the Pope, the Bishops and the Priests. This prayer was crossed with a black marker, I was told I could not say it, that it wasn't the time for it; but I said it anyway, and I also added "for the Movement of Communion and Liberation and for Fr. Carron (sorry if I took the liberty!). I could give other examples, but I stop here not to be too long. The hostility of this circumstance sharpened my desire and my asking, making me understand better how faith is relevant to life's needs, its reasonableness, and its existential necessity: I need Christ. The most terrible thing that may happen to us is not an illness, and not even death, but His absence. This is why the gesture of the Regina Coeli with the Pope has been completely reasonable for me, I was full of reasons, it was a gesture that corresponded to my need; my adhesion to that gesture was totally conscious because it was supported by the experience I had just had. My question is: is this the cultural dignity of faith?

Sure, this is the cultural dignity of faith. Only someone who becomes aware of the situation (as Peguy described) can understand the reason why we went to Rome; it wasn't somebody's pet project.

Because I intuit that for me it is essential to go to the bottom of the cultural dignity of faith in order to answer fully to what I have been called to.

If we don't understand the situation we don't see the reasonableness of such a gesture, and we don't understand that we go in order to remain attached to the only rock that holds us tied to Christ, the only hope. In regards to Rome, one of our friends was telling me of a conversation that Fr. Giussani seemingly had with John Paul II who told him: "Fr. Giussani, the problem is truth", and Fr. Giussani answered: "Your Holiness, allow me, the problem is Peter", because the truth without the link with its historical roots fades, vanishes, fragmented in a thousand opinions. We have to have at least this awareness, whether we did or didn't go to Rome; the entire Movement has gained an awareness: the day in which we lose this connection we are in quicksand. As someone was telling me this morning, this relationship with Peter is tied to the charisma that taught us to look at the value of Peter in this way, because without it we too would be like many others.

I want to make a brief statement and ask a question. My simple statement refers to what you said Friday evening at the Exercises: "When the encounter happens again something happens and you start to do the work". My job takes me around the world, and I have done this more or less for the past fifteen years. Until a few months ago I always took with me the book of SofC,

whatever it was, but I never read it and never did the work: on the way there I was too busy preparing the meetings, on the way back I was too tired, I needed to rest. Now there is something new that moved me to work, and it is coming here to this SofC, and – by grace – having so many decisive encounters, especially last year. For example, this in particular is making SofC so interesting that on the way there there is no meeting more interesting than the ten minutes of SofC, and on the way back I am never so tired that I miss it. Also, this has made me discover that SofC is truly a companion in my daily life and I recognize the Mystery present in the concreteness of my day. This was the statement. The question, instead, is on the Saturday morning lesson, and it is about the provocation of reality and the sign. Fr. Giussani says that for the Christian totally pervaded by the awareness of the presence of Christ everything is a sign. Now, the experience I have is that at times circumstances are contradictory or misleading, maybe contradictory and misleading at the same time - or at least they look like that to me –and so I do this: I detach myself, I think of where what I saw wasn't like this, and where the presence of the Mystery showed itself to me. The question is that I can't perceive the Mystery in certain circumstances, and this happens very frequently. The question is: is this an unavoidable condition of my relationship with reality or is it an error of perspective, of gaze?

It is unavoidable to find yourself in front of these circumstances. The problem is that we divide circumstances: those which contain the Mystery and those which do not, we distinguish those that are sign and those that are not. But this is a distinction I did not make in the lesson; I said: "Everything is a sign". This is the challenge! I throw the question back to all of you. Let's start looking at everything like this, because I ask you: is it true or not that in front of a contradictory circumstance or an illness the question that refers you farther emerges in you more powerfully? In order to deny this we have to detach from experience; the more reality is contradictory in our eyes, the more we ask ourselves: "But why was I treated so unjustly? Why?". Isn't it true? Only if the Christian event exists, if I look at everything like this, I can stay in front of reality without making distinctions. The only thing I really have to ask myself is: "How will Jesus manage in this circumstance to bring me to the happiness He promised me? How will He reveal Himself here?" If I have this certainty, also that circumstance will reveal itself according to a design that is not ours, and in a time and a way that we don't know Christ will reveal Himself gloriously. How many times has this already happened in our life?

I would like to ask for some help on the last passage at the end of the first point, when you answer the question: "Why does the encounter have this hold on the 'I'?" At the Exercises I didn't notice it, but when I re-read the booklet I recognized that you had already made this passage at the Asssembly for the Responsibles last summer, and at the time I had read it and re-read it many times, but it had remained unclear. You were saying, quoting Fr. Giussani, that "this exceptional reality seizes the 'I' so powerfully [.....] due to the awareness of the correspondence between the meaning of the Fact we are bumping into and the meaning of our own existence". This time, to understand it, I asked myself what happened to me the last time I

bumped into this exceptional presence; it was inevitable to think of Rome when we met the Pope. What kind of correspondence did I experience? I was under the portico and I couldn't hear very well; I heard only two sentences of what the Pope said, but I will never forget them, and then that 'Thank you' repeated several times and those arms open in a true embrace, a true embrace for all of us, an embrace for me. This is the point: for me the correspondence was that the only two sentences I heard - that thank you, that embrace - were for me; before I couldn't know that those things would have happened, but they were for me, they were what I needed, so much so that I asked myself: "Who are You Who knows better than myself what I need?" I came back from Rome glad, and as soon as I had the chance I told to those who were there and to those who weren't how beautiful it was. One evening I was grumbling with my children about all the things they don't do, when the embrace of the Pope came to my mind and I stopped. I would like to understand if that awareness of correspondence between the meaning of the Fact in which we bump into and the meaning of our own existence, that Giussani speaks about, is the recognition that what is happening is so much for me that it speaks to me of the Mystery.

Certainly. It is this. Let's read this great paragraph of *The Risk of Education*: "*The encounter with an objective fact which has an origin independent of the person [...] enhances a person's potential for knowledge, raising him up to the exceptional reality to which God attracts him. We call this the grace of faith*" This encounter is something independent, that I don't create: I bump into this reality independently from myself. But this sign is so exceptional that it contains all of the Mystery. Let's look at an episode from the Gospel that is so clarifying. They tried to fish all night, they caught nothing. Jesus arrives and says: "Toss the nets in the water"; the fish are so many that they can't pull the nets back. They are in front of a superabundance so real, made possible by the presence of that Man, that Peter falls to his knees in front of Jesus: "Lord, go away from me because I am a sinner!" The Mystery was there in front of their eyes with a superabundance that was requesting them to widen their gaze to be able to grasp all that was implied. This correspondence is what man is waiting for: an embrace like this – we were saying earlier – , a gaze like this, totally greater than what I am capable of. So much so, that one starts to see the difference between looking at himself the way I look at myself and looking at myself the way God looks at me. What does it mean to look at myself the way God looks at me? To look with this 'more', with this intensity, with this capacity to embrace everything: this exceptionality is what happens in the Christian event, that passes through the flesh and the gaze of somebody, but is so superabundant that it enhances a person's potential for knowledge up to level of the reality he has in front of him. This is fundamental in order to look at reality in a different way. While talking to the Pontifical Council for the Laity last week, the Pope said that "the contribution of Christians to politics and to culture is decisive only if the intelligence of faith becomes intelligence of reality" (May 21, 2010). That is, if what happens enhances so much my ability to understand reality, to penetrate into reality, that I become able to understand reality to its core. If this doesn't become habitual and stable, our contribution is worthless! We see reality like everybody else, we work like everybody else, we do charitable works like everybody else; then, we put the stamp on it, but this doesn't change the mentality, it doesn't change the gaze, it

doesn't change anything. The work of the Exercises is for this, so that the event of faith may become a new way of understanding reality; otherwise we don't have any cultural difference.

Few days ago I went back to work in my ward, and there was a patient who was dying. When I started my shift I asked some questions to my colleagues from the previous shift, and from their vague responses I understood that they hadn't gone into the room of this patient for a few hours (also because his wife was in the room and, had he died, his wife would have called). As I took over, and my colleagues from the night shift went home, the bell of that room rang. In that moment everybody disappeared - a stampede -, meaning that everybody seemed to have something to do.

Pay attention: a stampede. This is the test. They were all there together, all of them professionals, all in the same team, but when the bell rings because one is dying there is a stampede. This is the verification of what accompanies us; a fact like this speaks more than a thousand words, telling what truly accompanies us when the bell rings because one is dying.

In that moment I understood my colleagues, because when there is a man who is dying there has to be something that allows you to stay in front of him. I was struck because in that instant I was able to go into that room because I knew where that man was going, that Christ is Risen. This for me was a repercussion of something that has happened, something I couldn't define, but that was defining me: a judgment. Afterwards a few hours went by; at a certain point, at mid-morning, a colleague came to me and said: "That patient is calling you". There, on the spot, I was a bit irritated and I thought: "His wife is there; what does he want from me? His wife is the woman who has been with him for forty years, what can he want more than that?" When I went in - it was a few hours before he died - he was still a bit conscious and he told me: "Don't go away". I was sincerely taken aback, because in that instant, for that man I was inseparable from his ultimate destiny. I told myself: "Christ, do You possess me to this point?" The most real thing in that instant was this possession.

One who is dying really knows who is accompanying him and he calls him. It may not be the wife with whom he has shared everything, but he calls the one who can really accompany him to the other shore. And why can this person accompany him? What had he intuited in her that made him call her among the many faces present in the hospital? What had he intuited? What was she carrying? What are we carrying? The other understands it immediately, he calls specifically her to be able to cross the darkness of death. And why can she do it? Here we really understand what our contribution to the world is; on one side one who calls her, and on the other she who enters the room. In these moments it comes to the surface what is the value of our 'yes' to Christ; when we say 'yes' to Christ we don't realize what is the value of our 'yes' for the world. In these moments it becomes clear that what men need is exactly this, and then this 'yes' gains all its significance; without saying 'yes' to Christ in the way she did, she wouldn't have been able to

get inside the dark, she too would have run away. In that moment we understand who Christ is for each person: if Christ has taken possession of me – not because I am more clever or because I have more energy or I am more capable, it's not this – this allows me to enter. What everybody is waiting for from us is to be able to find someone like this, in whom what Jesus introduced into history continues to happen. The Pope said it in a spectacular way in Turin in front of the Shroud: “Holy Saturday is ‘no-man’s land’ between the death and the Resurrection, but One – the only One - entered this ‘no-man’s land’ and crossed it with the signs of His Passion for man’s sake: “*Passio Christi. Passio hominis*”. And the Shroud speaks to us exactly about this moment, testifying exactly to that unique and unrepeatable interval in the history of humanity and the universe, in which God, in Jesus Christ, not only shared our dying, but also our remaining in death: the most radical solidarity. In this ‘time-beyond-time’ Jesus Christ “descended to the dead’. What does this mean? It means that God, having made himself man, reached the point of entering man’s most extreme and absolute loneliness, where not a ray of love enters, where total abandonment reigns without any word of comfort: ‘hell’. Jesus Christ, by remaining in death, passed the threshold of this ultimate loneliness to lead us to cross it with Him. We all have, at some point, experienced the terrible feeling of being abandoned, and what we fear the most about death is precisely this, like when we are children we are afraid to be alone in the dark, and only the presence of a person who loves us can reassure us. This is exactly what happened on Holy Saturday: the voice of God resounded in the realm of death. The unthinkable happened: Love penetrated into ‘hell’: even in the extreme darkness of the most absolute human loneliness we can listen to a voice that calls us, and we can find a hand that takes hold of us and leads us out. The human being lives because he is loved and can love; if love has penetrated even into the realm of death, life has arrived even there. In the hour of the extreme loneliness we will never be alone: “*Passio Christi. Passio hominis*”. This is the mystery of Holy Saturday! Exactly from there, from the darkness of the death of the Son of God, the light of a new hope gleamed: the light of the Resurrection” (May 2nd, 2010). Because of this we can enter into any darkness. We can make a journey that ties us so much to Him, that makes us become so much one with Him, that we can cross any darkness without fear. This is the purpose of the work we have in front of us.

Going to Rome on May 16th was an educational gesture for all; the fact that it happened in the midst of many events already set or expected, forced us to look for the adequate reason to decide if we were going or not, so it forced us to use reason and freedom. This made us grow in the awareness of the reasons proposed by the Movement and brought us to St. Peter’s Square with a clearer awareness of ourselves, as you all have witnessed. The difference from the last SofC is evident. This is the kind of awareness that makes our presence a presence, because we were all there having clear the reason for this presence in front of the world; and when we are aware of the reasons that make us truly a presence, the Movement has an absolutely unique power and the

climate around us has no hold over us. The very modality with which we participated in this gesture was to serve the Church, and this shows the path, first of all, to us.

Procession of the Corpus Domini. As I briefly said last year, the participation of all of us in the procession of the Corpus Domini – a simple gesture, a presence in front of everybody with the Eucharist -, in our dioceses and led by the Bishop, has an educational value; it is a proposal that helps us to reach a greater awareness that we belong to Christ and to the whole Church. In the Diocese of Milan the procession will take place on Thursday June 3rd at 8:00 pm; there will be Mass at the Church of St. Charles in St. Charles Square, and at the end the Eucharistic procession from St. Charles to the Duomo.

Macerata-Loreto Pilgrimage. It is a simple gesture of entreaty. It will take place on Saturday June 12. We all know this gesture: we go to express through prayer our need, the urgency, the entreaty, the cry; to ask that Christ may accompany us in any circumstance of life. Christian prayer for us is not a 'devotion'; it is memory, entreaty and memory, the recognition of a Presence whose unmistakable traits I know because it is at work.

Glory be.