

Notes from School of Community with Fr. Julian Carron
Milan, 12/16/09

Text of reference: L. Giussani, "Is it possible to live this way?", vol 2: Hope, p. 110-123.

Song: "I wonder"

Song: "Aria di neve"

I am a nurse and this week I was upset with a patient in my ward because he had not been honest with me, but besides my anger, as I was facing him I realized that I was disgusted by him (I didn't even want to touch him) because he was a drug addict, because he was an alcoholic. Afterwards, I had the opportunity to meet Fr. Aldo, and I was immediately struck by him when he talked about his work, because referring to his patients he said: "For me when I do something to one of my patients I do something to Christ". This affected me deeply because looking at this man I realized that he lived of Christ. Afterwards, I felt very bitter, thinking: "Look at how I treated my patient, as someone he was not, that is, as someone who disgusted me". I was struck by the piece of School of Community that says "It isn't necessary to cultivate plans of perfection, but to look Christ in the face", and I became aware of this because when I went back to my patient he did not disgust me anymore, and instead I was starting to really look at him.

And why? What changed?

What changed is that looking at Fr. Aldo I realized who my patient really was, that he was not what I had in my mind, that the truth of that man was Another.

But why? Why did you discover the truth of that man? What made you discover this truth?

The experience of Fr. Aldo made me discover it.

And why? Because Fr. Aldo is different, he is a better person? Is this a matter of doing things better? Are we bringing everything back to ethics? Is this a matter of doing things better? Fr. Aldo is so good that he is able to do all the things I can not do: is this the matter?

No.

Why not?

Because Fr. Aldo's life is totally rooted in the relationship with Christ, so that it isn't any longer a matter of goodness in treating the other, but that all his life is this relationship.

This is what we have to try to understand: what makes you able to look at and embrace a man that previously disgusted you? Many times we reduce our ability to do something like that exactly to our goodness: Fr. Aldo is a genius, he is a saint, he is more consistent than all of us and we are all stupid. But, is this the matter? Because, this is the essence of the School of Community that we are looking at. Let's leave this question open: what makes this possible?

I have two handicapped sons who are almost thirty years old, and one of the things I always carried in my heart is: "What is going to happen to them when I will not be around any longer? Who will take care of them, what kind of destiny will they have?" It is a question I always had in my heart, and it was the source of a great concern, also psychological, that has accompanied my life. While doing the work of School of Community this question became even more intense, so I had to take it seriously and try to

understand going to the bottom of it: there has to be a possibility for an answer to my question, otherwise my life would only be a matter of bad luck. I understood that I had to turn the situation around, it seems like a paradox, but I started to think at myself, asking “What is my destiny? What is the foundation of my life, of my experience? And it was as if I was forced to judge with reason all that has happened in my life. And I discovered something that seems like a paradox: each time I followed Him, I entrusted myself to Him, I was never cheated, but instead I gained something. Then I intuited that the origin of my trust for my sons could be in this entrusting myself to Another, because what fulfills me has to be also the source of their fulfillment. There is also another thing: I recognized that the One who changes me changes also many people around me, friends who started to produce works starting from their encounter with Christ, and this made me see right away that in the world there are people who will embrace my sons’ destiny.

Thank you, because I think that what you are saying contains some very important passages. Because the first shift you had to make was in facing the question: “What will happen to my sons?” (and with this question you were not eliminating all the preoccupation, all the anxiety; on the contrary this question made them stronger), in facing the question: “What is the foundation of my life?” And what made it possible for him to look at his predicament without anxiety? The recognition that to entrust himself to Another is the only possibility that answers to his problem: it is not a matter of being good, but, using the words of School of Community, it is that one “is not suspended over a void, is suspended over a fullness” We can look at the future in a different way not because we are better (because, even when we are better this does not give us more peacefulness, because, even when you are good what prevents you from having an accident tomorrow?) What is the foundation of our trust? And what is needed for this trust to really become an experience? A person who takes the urgency seriously needs to travel the path, and for this reason he cannot stop at himself: “The One who was changing me, was changing also the others, who produced works, that is who built concrete realities that could answer to the need of my sons even if I were not around any longer”.

A dramatic event happened in my life when I was eleven, the violent death of my father. For strange reasons this fact made me encounter the Movement, and this made it possible for me not to live this fact with despair, but as a good and positive circumstance for my life, due to all that came after and is still continuing to happen. At the beginning of September my father-in-law, who has been like a second father to me, was diagnosed with cancer. He could not have surgery and he died few weeks ago. My father-in-law was a carpenter, he belonged to the Fraternity, he was part of a small fraternity, he did charitable work, he went to the Meeting, he was an artisan who created things with his manual work. Also his life had been hard: his workshop burned down, he was forced to emigrate to Switzerland, some of his fingers were cut off. In the past two months I spent a lot of time with him and I accompanied him to say good-bye to his friends. Facing death, with the poverty of spirit that was typical of him and his simplicity, he was comforting his own doctor, he wanted to be taken to see his old relatives who lived in the mountains in order to say good-bye to each of them personally, he died saying: “I am ready, I do not regret anything”, and he was really ready. I am from Cesena, and when a Catholic funeral happens, people from the countryside can tell how important the person was based on how many priests come to celebrate the funeral. There were eight priests and in the past days a great number of people were close to us. The light of this goodness that has remained has become for us an increasingly concrete proof of how he had let faith mould his life. And so, now for us the need to thank the Lord for having given him to us - and not anywhere, but in this particular company - is stronger than the sorrow for the loss of a person we loved.

Thank you. A person who lets faith mould his life can face even the last step like this, comforting his own doctor.

I wanted to tell briefly my experience over the past two months, which became more clear doing the work of School of Community on poverty and trust, and also working on what you said at the assembly of the Company of Works. Since ten months ago I became an entrepreneur, I had to decide if I wanted to continue a beautiful project I has started with some friends and colleagues, or if I wanted to start alone somewhere else as manager, and I decided to give it a try. From the very beginning the situation became very complicated with thousands of daily problems. However, the more the problems became complex, the more serene I was, and this continues to today. So, while doing School of Community during this time, I recognized the reason for this serenity: it is not due to my lack of awareness of what is happening or what may happen in the future, but it is trust, entrusting myself to Another, not being suspended over a void but resting on a fullness, that is, on something in which I consist. In fact, literally in every moment one could give up, but it is true that “I am capable of all things together with Him in whom lies my strength”.

And why are you sure that you are leaning on a fullness and not on a void? Forgive me, but I have to challenge all of you a little.

Because, even when it seems that everything is crashing down, and all I think should happen goes the opposite way, everything is recomposed in the recognition that ultimately I am entrusting myself to Another, there is Another who constitutes my life, and even if everything were to go wrong as it happens often, this fact makes my chance for happiness untouchable.

That is, the only thing one cannot invent while facing all his problems, is to be at peace, to be serene. And this is a surprise, because usually when we are confused the opposite happens. In the midst of all our problems (not for lack of awareness, because one is very well aware of all the factors of reality), we are surprised by this serenity we find in us, a serenity we could not give to ourselves. So, what is the source of this serenity? Because, it is from the inside of the experience that one can understand if, in speaking of trust, of being suspended over a fullness instead of over a void, he is talking about something real that provokes serenity. This is the experience we need to have, and not because we can generate it by ourselves, but because this is the value of certain situations that the Mystery does not spare us, to make us understand Who He is. If in these situations I surprise myself with this serenity, this tells us the nature of the One to Whom I am entrusting myself, and what kind of consistency this can give to life.

I am going to describe one of my typical days. In the morning I arrive at the office at 8 o'clock with optimism and positivity for the present and for the future; at noon I look at everything that happened, at my misery and at the misery of others, and I say : “We cannot make it”. Then, I think: “But, Lord, we made it to this point, why can't it continue like this? So, please Lord, helps us to lift our gaze”, and one goes on. Then, it happens that at 8:00 in the evening, when I leave the office and I look back at all that happened, I am surprised by how everything was recomposed; and often even extraordinary things happen that at first I hadn't noticed, caught up in the thousands problems I had to take care of. And so, looking back at the day I regain the optimism and positivity I had at the beginning, and I think of how great the Divine Providence is: because I was working ten hours then and I work ten hours now, I was dirtying my hands then and even more at work now, but the Lord is at my side and makes it possible for everything to be recomposed and not destroyed. When one enters the reception hall of Fr. Aldo's in Paraguay, there is the organization chart with Christ as “chief executive” and Fr. Aldo as the vicar. Since I saw that chart, I thought that to place Christ as “chief executive” of your company is what takes away the burden....

Takes away the anxiety.

The anxiety that what you are doing is your own thing. At this time I also gained many new colleagues, and I have started to ask them more for a friendship that may support me (that is my 'I') towards my destiny, which in any case remains mysterious, because ultimately, what you were saying as well is completely true, that my destiny remains mysterious, today I am here doing this, and tomorrow I do not know.

Thank you. Notice that he described, even going through his day, the work he is forced to do in order to stand strong and not to give up. It isn't that problems distract us, on the contrary they make the memory more urgent, because without it one gives up. In order to continue the struggle until the end of the day without giving up, we need a work inside the work: when we are tempted to reduce everything to appearance, we have to lift again our gaze - he was saying - in order not to be stuck there; and so, everything is recomposed, and when you look back your eyes are filled even more by what He has done. So, it isn't that on one side there is life and on the other faith, but everything that happens in a life lived like this is part of the journey of faith, of the consistency/nature of faith, of the possibility to be certain: not in my thoughts, but in reality and in history, where faith is documented and so it grows.

I am struck by the correspondence between this chapter on Trust and my life; it seems to have happened on purpose, while I was reading it during these days I kept repeating to myself: "It is for me, it is for me!" At this time, for my husband and I, both self-employed, work has become burdensome, and the stress occasionally spills over into our personal relationship, making us tense and at times not very merciful towards each other; if you also take into consideration the abyss of difference between us - I am Sicilian and he is from Belgium - I let you imagine the consequences.....

Not irrelevant details.

This year, due to the economic crisis and to health problems, my career has taken a downward turn that is a far cry from the realization of desire; I have the impression that more than the fulfillment of desire it is the mortification of desire, or at least I live it like this. As for the chapter on Trust it threw me off even more: "It isn't necessary to cultivate plans of perfection, but to look Christ in the face. [...] Happiness is to follow Another". I am asking for your help exactly about this point. To explain better I am going to tell you about a discussion I had with my husband few evenings ago, precisely on the topic of work. At a certain point I lost my patience, and I said to him: "For heaven's sake, what are we lacking? What is our CV missing in order to be competitive in this market? We have a long experience, we have accumulated a lot of titles, you have an endless list of certifications, you speak four languages, I speak two plus the Sicilian dialect, for heaven's sake, what are we lacking?!" And he really threw me off, because he answered to me: "Maybe we are not lacking anything, maybe this is exactly our wealth, this unease, maybe this unease is exactly the opportunity that is given to us" This for me was, as we often say, a repercussion, and in fact it brought tears to my eyes. So, at this point, I am asking if facing this unease, facing Christ inside this unease, is the meaning of asking, the meaning of begging, or if it is something else. Because at this point, I am praying every day, I go to Mass every day, I ask my friends, I am a nuisance to all, but is this enough? I wonder if my position is correct.

And what do you answer? Is it correct or not? You are the one who has to judge. We are walking this path together, don't worry: is it correct or not?

The question is definitely reasonable; the question is trustful and certain, but.....Because, in certain moments I do not have the certainty that Christ fulfills the desire.

Let's start from here: does He fulfill or doesn't He? I am challenging you: also in the situation you are telling me about, is Christ fulfilling the desire or not?

Actually, yes.

Why?

First, because He is giving to me and to my husband the possibility of looking at each other in the face with this level of depth.

So, could you have thought of a relationship like this outside of this situation? And, who is sustaining this journey? What you are saying is very important, because we always start saying: “God says that He fulfills”, but, in reality we are thinking that it is a mortification of desire. And I am challenging you exactly there, because many times the fulfillment of desire is an image we have of how it should be fulfilled. When I ask you this question, you stop and you start to look more deeply at what is really happening and is sustaining your desire, so that you reach a level of depth in your relationship you couldn’t even have dreamed about before. Isn’t this an opportunity?

Yes.

I don’t want to lose this. Notice that many times we think of the fulfillment of desire not dramatically, as if it were something mechanic, automatic – I put in the Euro and the drink comes out -, in a setting where you are not a protagonist, where you and your husband are not protagonists, and this does not generate you as human beings; and if it doesn’t generate you, there isn’t any longer an intense relationship. Christ did not come to spare us the journey, but to make it possible, to sustain us in this journey: in this way He is fulfilling our desire much more than the idea of fulfillment we had in mind with a mechanical reduction; because, if in this journey you do not become more yourselves, there is no growth of the “I”. Fortunately God does not take our nonsense seriously, because if He were to answer to it seriously, many times it would be like what we think about our children; but this sparing them the journey of learning is not the true way in which the desire is fulfilled, it is a misfortune. So, how is the Mystery fulfilling our desire? How is He fulfilling this desire? Sustaining a journey, making you protagonists of this journey, making you grow along this journey, and –as you say at the end – giving your relationship a depth you did not dream of before. And this is making your “I” grow, that is, it is fulfilling the desire, making you become ever more your true selves. This is the fulfillment of desire, or isn’t it? And it is very different from a mechanical image of this fulfillment. This is work, the help we have to give to each other. You did all this and now you can understand more clearly what is the journey in which the Mystery is leading you, and the same happens in relationships, it happens the same with your job, because everything is relationship with the real, with people, with circumstances, with your job, with everything: this is what exalts the “I”, not what diminishes it. In this way He makes us become ever more ourselves, because now you are more capable to face reality, to live in the circumstances, because you have grown, because you have a consistency you did not have before. And this gives you a capacity to face the real that before you did not even dream about.

It is so very true.

It is so very true. So, He is fulfilling the desire in a totally different way. Thank goodness, I say. Then, how can we sustain ourselves in this positivity? With this work we are doing together: an active friendship that sustains us challenging us constantly, proposing a journey that we each have to take personally – because nobody is spared this! -, where one can see what happens in life when one follows the proposal of another who has taken the path first hand.

I was struck in the School of Community where it says that one is either suspended over a void or over a fullness. Last week some of us went to see the parents of a friend of mine who died 20 years ago and whose illness represented the way he recognized Christ in his life. What has happened in these years, however, is that in becoming friends with them we have learned to look at these parents and ask ourselves what it means to be parents. I want to tell you quickly what has happened: I asked a friend to bring his guitar and we went to the cemetery where we sang two or three songs and then our friend's mother asked us for another; we said two prayers and his mother asked us for another; we were on the way to her house for a snack and she asked, "can we go to the church, or have I already asked for too much?" I told her, "No, would you like to go? Then, let's go and we can say a prayer there." The entire day went on like that; there was a desire that didn't stop, but was "suspended", without any claim; she asked in front of what she had in front of her, which was us, some young men. At a certain point she said this: "You know, when I got married I was afraid that I would not be able to live up to my vocation." Our first silly question was: "Why do you say that, you are great", and she responded: "You know, to dedicate your entire life to your husband and your children, I was really afraid...fortunately there is Jesus who helped me do it." I thought of myself and how maybe intuitively, when I got married in front of the priest, I too had this desire clear in my heart. But then? Returning home it was as if I had seen a method which corresponded to me.

What was it?

First: don't ever give up on your desire (your desire must ask, suspended, trembling, but it's impossible not to ask; if you want another song you have to ask, if your heart desires that, you cannot be content with less, not even a beautiful thing, you are there to ask for everything). Second: to ask for the awareness of your own poverty, because it is Another who fulfills you.

Thank you.

The most frequently asked question I got via email, refers to something that came up earlier, but I want to repeat it. "I was struck when I read in the School of Community that Fr. Giussani said: 'It isn't necessary to cultivate plans of perfection, but to look Christ in the face.'" I was suddenly aware that for years I have tried to avoid looking at the reality that was wounding me, and have sought refuge in Jesus who was always somewhere else outside reality. So, very often I chased after my project of perfection, fixating on some particulars with which I was trying to resolve the drama, but I was never looking Him in the face; and each time the particular I fixed myself upon would vanish: love would dissolve, my friend would betray me, the teacher dies and the house tumbles down. And for this reason reality has always scared me, it doesn't stand up on its own, —it is like living in a shaky building. However, since I started to really take the journey of faith I realized that reality does not stand on its own, but rests on a fullness, and I can look at it without fear; better, I must look at it, because it is the only way I can look Christ in the face [the path of faith helped her recognize that reality, what seems obvious but we often think is falling apart, does not hold up on its own]. Reality is suspended on a fullness and I don't have to hold it up myself; I can relax because it rests on a fullness, and thus I can look at it without being afraid, and this is the only way to look Christ in the face. The question I want to ask you is this: how do you look Christ in the face?" Another person from New York wrote, "This evening you have School of Community, and if I were there I would like to ask you a question that I have been carrying around for weeks, 'what does it really mean to hold one's gaze fixed on Christ?' Or better yet, if it isn't too intrusive, I would ask you, 'What does it mean for you to keep your gaze fixed on Christ'". To answer I want to start by remembering what was said already at the last School of Community, which in this chapter becomes very evident. As you can see, we all have the temptation to think, "This poverty is a big trap! We remain as if suspended over an abyss, over a void [...], instead, trust is the opposite of

being suspended over a void: it is being *suspended over a fullness*.” Now the question is: what is it that allows us to be suspended over a fullness? “The object discovered by faith sustains all of life’s weight”; that is, it isn’t a goodness due to ethics, we cannot become trustful like one who trains himself in the morning and takes heart, relying on his own strength. No, what sustains the weight is the object discovered by faith. Look how important this is from the point of view of method: in order to speak of trust, in order to make us aware of what it rests on he refers us back to faith, and again he says: “It is that man Jesus [he says on p. 113] they heard speak, that John and Andrew looked in the face, it is that Jesus there who carried the entire weight of their future.” It isn’t that they were better than us or more capable. Just as when some people commented to Fr. Giussani: “What courage you have, what a good guy you are”, and he used to get upset and respond: “I have this “yes”, and that is all.” All his strength was not in a skill, and this is decisive for us, because many times we start to defend ourselves from Christ based on this: “Because I am not as good as Fr. Aldo, as Giussani, this is not for me.” No, find another excuse, because this doesn’t cut it! Because they rely on something else, on that “yes”. “That man [pay attention: Jesus, not us] created a trust in them that Peter voiced in the sixth chapter of John’s gospel when he said, “Master, but if we go away from you, where shall we go?” It was He who generated this trust in Peter, and this is not something in the past (“how lucky the disciples were!”).

I want to read one of the last letters that the university students sent me after the CLU Exercises: “After these Exercises there is no turning back. Working on this situation [which I won’t go into now] it was as if sadness hovered over the work; as if everything we did in the end was not what we needed. But I was my usual know-it-all and thought that all of this was pure sentiment. Instead, it was not true, because it was me who was making things become sentimental, who was eliminating them. But after a while one can’t take it any more, it becomes a question by necessity, a cry that breaks you open. These Exercises have confirmed all this, because I have never felt so free in front of what happens to me and in front of what I have to do, as I have in these days; it has become a point of no return: I have truly seen the gaze you have talked about, it was Christ. It’s always hard for me to say His name because I am afraid of forcing things, but now my reason is truly opening to faith as a possibility for explaining what I have seen [he was resting everything on that Presence he had in front of himself]. Now I’m going back to the university, to my studies, but I am not going back the same; it really has been a point of no return because I am certain of what I have seen, which is none other than what I need who embraces and sees in a new way all of what I am. How is it possible to go back to the way I was before? What is clearer now is that if I have seen this kind of gaze, this has to be true forever, in every instant, now, while I am writing, because I am beginning to intuit that everything has to do with this gaze. He is the only one who is able to carry all the weight of my limits, limits which used to stop me.” It’s a Presence that has allowed him to look, because there is Another who carries the weight of it all. So, what is our strength? To be like this, like John and Andrew who abandoned themselves as a baby to his mother, with certainty. Fr. Giussani said this: “John and Andrew, while they were there listening to Him speak [look what expression he uses] could not have a fear of life [not because they couldn’t, but there was a Presence that took away the fear of life; that took it away!]. The impulse they felt towards life when that man spoke was naturally full of optimism [the impulse to enter into reality, to work, to look at circumstances, at whatever we have to deal with], an optimism that rested on Him [not on us, not on our ability, our skill; an optimism that rested totally on Him], and John and Andrew abandoned themselves to that man [...], they were different [not morally or ethically correct], they were different because they completely relied on what they had seen; and the next day they went back to see Him, then they went back to see Him again, then they went back to see Him again, then they followed Him”. The real question, the real decision is whether we want to go to see Him again and follow Him, not the preoccupation if we are ok or not. Until this shift doesn’t happen in us we cannot rest on Him, and this we see not because we are not good, but because we are not serene, because we have the impression of being suspended over a void. This shift is what is decisive. “Don’t loose yourself in complicated thoughts or cultivate plans for perfection, but look at Christ in the face [like John and Andrew]: if one looks Christ in the face, if one looks someone one loves in the face, everything is straightened out, everything falls into place, and the hair is placed in a certain way, and the button is buttoned, and he is

ashamed of his dirty shoes and says, “excuse me for being so sloppy”. The source of being moral is loving someone, not fulfilling laws”. This shift is what causes us the biggest difficulty; all of the rest is a consequence of wanting to rest everything on ourselves, and this is so true that we are scandalized when we make a mistake; it is as if our total certainty rested on our ability, on our coherence, on our energy. Instead, “everything is possible in He who is my strength”. This, as you will understand, is possible only if faith is an experience for us, an experience so real that our entire life can be based on that Presence. “Pardon me, but can we imagine the origin of morality conceived of in a simpler way? Not projects of perfection, but looking Christ in the face, looking someone in the face! Extremely simple, extremely easy...but extremely uncomfortable, extremely uncomfortable because you can’t follow yourself anymore”. This is the question: whether or not we are willing to make this shift. This is why what we are saying is fundamental. The person who accepts this shift is the person who has all this desire, who is aware of his own poverty and realizes that to shift on the object of faith is the only salvation. Then one has the perception of losing nothing; on the contrary, the sign of this abandon is that one has the experience that everything becomes his, if nothing is his. “Happiness is following Another. Sure, to look Christ in the face and not make all sorts of plans to be perfect means that you look Christ in the face truly desiring the good, truly desiring to be true, truly desiring to love: ‘desiring you truly, O Lord’[...] It is You that dominates, not things to respect.” This was the disciples’ experience (and they were like us, with the same limitedness, with the same frailness): little by little Jesus, through His presence, shifted their affections to Himself. This is what Jesus is trying to do with us, and this is different than just reading the Gospels. I will tell you of my experience: many times I would read these things and I would be moved, but now I see that they are happening in the present: I see them happening before me in the CLU students, I see them happening when in Africa I see a woman who can not have children (which is a huge social stigma in that culture), but whose husband does not leave her because he is struck by what he sees happening in her. On what does this husband base his strength for not leaving his wife, regardless of the pressure he receives from his entire family? On a fullness, or on a void? And I see so many things that the Lord allows me to see, the witness that so many of you give to me, which is the contemporaneousness of Christ. I’ve seen it in couples who are breaking up and who begin to accept to follow, and then rebuild what had begun to dissolve as husband and wife; or in one who does not quit a work situation that became very complicated, giving witness to an energy that is not his. Everything shifts itself towards Him, and when one makes a mistake one has to go back to: “Do you love me? [like Peter]”. And one has the experience that he is the One who carries all the weight, and I can rest on Him, whatever the situation, whatever the circumstance, because we see Him at work now, not just in the past. This makes you read the Gospels with a marvelous intensity - which some of you have told me is happening to you- starting with what is happening now; the Gospels are beginning to speak to you in a new way, more powerful, paying more attention to the details. Like someone who wrote to me today said, referring to the piece where Jesus tells them to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s: “The Gospels tell us that everyone, especially the Pharisees, were amazed and went away in silence. They were amazed: it wasn’t that those who went away, those who didn’t follow Jesus, were not amazed. But amazement isn’t enough; you have to want to stay and follow; it isn’t automatic; and when you see Him at work, how is it possible to fix your eyes on what is missing rather than on what is in front of you? How can one not shift his gaze, more and more, in any situation, to Him? ‘And His Presence fills me with silence’”. This is what changes our lives, and then nothing can get in the way, not even evil; because it is a feast, always a feast, as the School of Community says: “So that, if one is sad and degraded, trust is the optimism of every reawakening, and every reawakening becomes a feast”. And I was so taken just reading these things, that I was filled with immense gratitude for Fr. Giussani, because the Lord gifted us with one who was taken in such a way, and who continues to affect us in the same way. This is the greatness, the usefulness of this work that fills life with gladness, that generates a people in order to witness to Him. This is what I wish to all of you this Christmas, as it says in this sentence: May it be a You who dominates in these days.

For your personal work during the Christmas Season, each one is to read the Assembly on Trust, pp. 134-153 in the book. Today some were also referring to the General Assembly of the Company of Works, which is published in *Traces* this month. You can read it, as it is a witness of charity in regards to work; in regards to getting involved. And because it is published in *Traces* we can begin to read it during these days so that it might accompany us.

The campaign for the subscriptions to *Traces* for the year 2010 has begun. I suggest that you think of using it as a Christmas present. Those who read *Traces* have in front of them positive examples for facing reality with a gaze that we can learn, a gaze we may be surprised to see in us as we look at reality. Considering the cultural context we are living in, this is no small thing (as we have recently seen). Moreover, it's the best way to give someone an idea of what the movement really is, beyond what is said and written about us. It's also a great missionary opportunity (to say who we are) and a personal opportunity (to learn to see ourselves for what we are, not for what the others say we are). But, to read and to have this awareness is first of all for ourselves, it is a defense against stupidity. And since we are on the topic, I would like to remind you that the internet is great way to communicate, but it should be used with the awareness that it is a tool open to everyone. Don't resort to saying things that others can use against the truth. Let's avoid this.

Now, to end and to prepare us for Christmas, let's pray the Angelus. Merry Christmas to everyone.

- Angelus