

Czestochowa Pilgrimage 2013 Julián Carrón's Message

Dear friends, you make a pilgrimage to ask for faith, because this is the most urgent thing right now. The very nature of the gesture makes it easier for you to grasp this urgency, because—since it is long and demanding—you pass through moments (as you do in daily life) in which the awareness of all of our need, of the need that we all have, emerges more easily. And this will not come to the surface because we make a speech or give an explanation, but through the road, the circumstances: tiredness, difficulties, loneliness (in the true sense of the word: to feel one's own powerlessness, which, Fr. Giussani says, is a sign of every true human experience). The awareness of your need and the question, "What do we perceive to be most necessary, if not the need for a presence to accompany us on the road of life?" will arise precisely from the experience that you will have along this journey. This is what you must ask, that His presence manifest itself in a way that is so powerful that you can recognize it, because faith—as Fr. Giussani always taught us—is the recognition of a present Presence.

As Pope Francis told us on May 18th in Rome, "what is important is Jesus and letting ourselves be led by Him." You are fortunate, because from morning to night you will be able to abandon yourselves to the One who will indicate the steps to follow. If you were to return from Czestochowa, having experienced faith as something present, as the recognition of His present presence, then this would be the greatest gift for continuing to live. I don't see a more decisive urgency for each of you than this, because I experience it first of all in myself.

Of course, before setting off, one would like to have some certainties. And, though he has prepared everything well, he is still not sure of what awaits him, so he lets himself be gripped by fears. How can we educate ourselves to overcome these fears that, many times, are groundless?

Remember that you are not going to Czestochowa by yourselves, but together. This is already an initial response, but—as you will see with the passing days—this will not spare you from the challenges or the difficulties; in fact, it will be precisely through the challenges and the difficulties that you will be able to experience the surprise of Christ present, as companionship to your life, and see that there is no circumstance in which Christ cannot manifest Himself. This is decisive for overcoming fear, because we do not get past it by staying in our rooms, without risking ourselves in reality. As Fr. Giussani always told us, life as vocation is a journey to destiny through circumstances, which are part of the modality through which the Mystery reveals itself. The people of Israel acquired this certainty in the midst of all of their fears and vicissitudes, through circumstances—like the disciples, like the Church, like each one of us.

Fears are not overcome by staying out of the fray, but by going through it. You will not be able to put the pilgrimage off until tomorrow because you are tired and there are still 20 miles to go; you are not allowed to distract yourself by doing something else, because you have to keep walking, you can't sit down. This is "going through!" Therefore, you have to constantly give yourselves the reasons why you go forward. This is the pedagogical value of a gesture like a pilgrimage, which you make freely—it's not imposed or undergone (like an illness or exams). A pilgrimage is made in order to learn what life is and who Christ is, He who accompanies us on this adventure. I wish for you that this will emerge in the experience that you will have, otherwise Christ could remain like "the portrait of a beautiful woman sculpted in her sepulchral monument" (G. Leopardi). You have to return more certain of what caused you to set off, and give witness to it.

Life is a journey toward the goal; in fact, the Bible speaks of the *homo viator*, the man who goes along the way. But the point is to become always more conscious, because, as Fr. Giussani says, "Life, then, expresses itself, first of all, as consciousness of the relationship with He who made it,"—you are relationship with He who makes you now; this is part of the dimension of your living—"and prayer is the realization that in 'this' very moment, life is 'made.' [...] Therefore, prayer is not a separate act. Rather, it realizes the primary dimension of every action." *Every action!* While you

walk, in the hours of your days, “the act of praying will be necessary to train ourselves to such a consciousness of every action. For this reason, the height of prayer is not ecstasy, that is, such a profound consciousness of the depths that one loses the sense of the ordinary. Rather, it is seeing the depths as if they were everyday things” (*At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, p. 90).

Man is a *viator* by nature, and we are always in the *status viatoris*, we are always “walkers;” it is a dimension of living. But we can live as distracted walkers or as conscious walkers—conscious not merely because we are walkers, not because you and I constantly receive life, but because we are conscious that we receive it! It is this awareness that makes us give space to prayer, to this act that facilitates our becoming conscious, not in order to check it off our list (as if to say, “Now I did my good act of praying and I can go on to something else, forgetting it”), but so that this becomes, more and more, the dimension of every action.

Among the intentions that you will bring to the Black Madonna, I ask you to include one for the Movement, because it is the place that Christ has given us in order to accompany us, and since we are always interested in finding companions on the journey who help us to this, because this is the Movement. And “bring” me with you, too, of whom Fr. Giussani asked this responsibility: that I may help the Movement to be the place of a present experience.