

**Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón
Milan, May 20, 2015**

Reference text: J. Carrón, Introduction, in A Presence Within The Gaze, Fraternity Exercises 2015; L. Giussani, Why the Church?, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001, pp. 27-61.

- *The Dimming of the Day*
- *Liberazione n. 2*

Glory Be

We will start our work on the Introduction of the Fraternity Exercises, together with what was left of the chapter of *Why the Church?* that we were working on, and which, as we have noticed from many clues and signs, is closely linked to what we said in Rimini. I received a letter on the topic of the Resurrection, which was at the heart of the Introduction. “Dear Carrón, in view of the next School of Community, I will ask you a question that I asked my small group when we were going over the text in Rimini, but without finding an answer. It concerns the Resurrection. Despite my good intentions, the Resurrection remains a really abstract and vague concept for me. After the Exercises, what you said stuck in my mind – that is, that only thanks to the Resurrection can we answer the question: Is it truly worthwhile to be born? I often ask myself this question about meaning and, since I want to be able to answer it, I am interested in understanding what the Resurrection is; I don't want it to remain abstract. Thus, since I really don't understand the Resurrection, and I think that I live as if it never happened – so much so that I am afraid of dying – in order to understand, I ask you: What does the Resurrection change in your life? What would your life be like without the Resurrection? What does the Resurrection change in my life? In fact, I wonder: If Jesus hadn't risen, wouldn't I have my family anyway, wouldn't I work – like everyone does – wouldn't I look for satisfaction in what I do? And so? Risen or not risen, what changes? I ask the question in the negative, because if I ask it in the positive, all of the answers seem so incomprehensible... For example, in my School of Community, they told me that Christianity exists because of the Resurrection, because the disciples were lost just three days after Jesus' death. However, I say: many religions endure in time! Or, my group told me that things have a meaning because of the Resurrection. But I respond: I would have a husband anyway, children whom I love, friends, a job that I like, and the desire to live. I hope that these questions have an answer.” I am thankful that our friend asked this question, because it is addressed to everyone. What could any of us answer, starting from our own experience? Is the Resurrection concrete (and not just a vague and abstract concept)? Another person raises the same issue in another way: “In the face of the stubbornness of someone who is doing something evil, what can mercy do? What kind of victory is it, if ultimately it is not able to change anything?” Obviously, we cannot answer these questions theoretically, with some reflections, because the person asking the question would perceive the answers as conceptual and inadequate. The fact that such a question came up is good for everyone, because it forces each of us to see what experience of the Resurrection he has.

I started to work as a nurse two months ago. I wanted to go to the Exercises, but at a certain point, it became clear that it wouldn't be possible – not by changing my shift, nor in any other

way. As I spoke with a friend about it, he immediately told me, "It is clear that you have to stay home and go to work. Let's see what is there to be discovered already today, as you wait for those days." In front of his position, which was so reasonable and simple, I started to look at that fact much more freely: I desire everything already now; I desire to encounter You now. And the same thing happened again when I had dinner with some friends on the Thursday evening before the Exercises started. In front of those friends, it was impossible to say that Jesus was forgetting me. And yet I woke up at 5:30 the next morning, so tired that I didn't want to get up. But I had to, so I got up and ran to the hospital, where my coworkers were very unmotivated, they didn't want to work, and the ward was a nightmare. I started to prepare the treatments before going into the rooms. A thought was troubling me: How can I say that all of this is not "less" in comparison to what is about to happen in Rimini? Within that sorrow, the faces of those true friends whom I had seen the evening before came back to me, the longing for Christ, that is, for that gaze that alone defines me. Then I started to go into the rooms with that turmoil in my heart, and I found myself loving my patients, my coworkers, and that nightmare of a ward. However, what turned me around the most was facing a patient who was shouting at me because the doctor had changed his treatment without telling him in advance and, rightly so, he was asking for an explanation. I listened to him until he calmed down, and then we tried to understand why his treatment had been changed, also consulting his doctor when he arrived. When I left the room, another nurse looked at me and said, "Excuse me, I heard the scene that man was making from the hallway, and you have this face?! How is it possible? I expected to find you devastated, or in any case to see you leave the room after two minutes. He doesn't deserve your time. You know, sometimes I wonder why I do my job with such dedication if, in the end, you don't get anything back. Then you might as well do it without love." My coworker gave me a jolt, because her question was true. I asked myself: Why can everything suddenly become "for me"? Why can reality, even when it is not attractive, even when it is a far cry from being beautiful, become the dearest thing in the world? Why can one love? As I started to work on the Introduction of the Exercises, I was struck when you spoke of the Resurrection within the gaze. In fact, that tiny opening that silently made its way into my heart while I started to work, that longing for Jesus, missing my friends, is the victory of Jesus in my life. The truth of reality is the Risen Jesus. The truth of my crazy ward, my coworker, my patient, is that gaze that entered into my life and pierced my heart forever, to the point that I can even wake up listless and still miss it again. What defines reality is not its appearance, but my gaze where Jesus dwells. Reality is the place where this Mystery invites me to meet Him in every instant. In those days spent at work during the Fraternity Exercises, your message to the GS students at the end of the Easter Triduum kept coming back to me: "Reality, along with the heart, is our great ally." I would like to work my entire life like I did that weekend, despite being in the hospital, and now devouring the notes every morning. There is no regret in my heart, because everything that my heart needs was here. I am grateful that the sacrifice of staying home made the love for this journey and this companionship happen again, with a new freshness that I can no longer take away from my eyes.

Thank you. Sometimes the others realize more than we do what the newness of the Resurrection introduces into life – like her coworker who, in front of how she treated her patient, said, "How is it possible? I expected to find you devastated, or in any case to see you leave the room after two minutes." Instead, she is still standing, and she is happy. How many instances like these do we see, how many facts like this do we hear, as soon as we start talking during a lunch

together or with a group of friends! I will read you one of these facts, which you can see in *Traces*, and which has to do with our persecuted friends. “A man from Mosul told me,” says Fr. Douglas from Iraq, “that when ISIS arrived in the city, his Muslim neighbor knocked on his door and told him, ‘You have to leave, and I will take your house. If I don’t do it, someone else will. If I see you again tomorrow, I’ll kill you.’ The man prepared to leave, packed his bags, and loaded his family in the car. But before leaving he knocked on his neighbor’s door. ‘Didn’t I tell you that I would kill you if I saw you again?’ And the Christian answered, ‘We have been neighbors for 30 years. I didn’t want to leave without saying goodbye.’ The Muslim broke into tears. ‘No, stay. I’ll protect you myself.’ And the other: ‘No, we *were* neighbors. We are no longer so. The trust has been broken’ (“We Belong Only to Jesus,” interview of Fr. Douglas Bazi by Luca Fiore, *Traces*, May 2015, p. 9). Before leaving, he stops to say goodbye to the person who promised to kill him. Is this a concrete fact or a vague concept? The *Acts of the Apostles* are full of these episodes. Our own history is full of them: in the way we stay together, in the way people often face an illness, in the way one lives when he loses his job, in the way one faces daily life, in the way he gets up in the morning – the facts are numerous, really numerous. This deluge of facts is not lacking, so why don’t we connect them to the Resurrection? It’s as if we found ourselves in the predicament that I described in the Introduction. On the day of Pentecost, did the disciples act that way because they were drunk? Was that the reason for their “newness”? What do we need, in order to be able to recognize the Resurrection in concrete facts, and not just as the repetition of a concept that is ultimately empty? This tells us what sort of work each of us has to do. It’s not that there aren’t many things that happen, but we often take them for granted, as if they were obvious – until one is touched by an illness, or loses his job, or experiences loneliness, or his family falls apart. Then perhaps he starts to realize that many things weren’t that obvious, and he starts to understand what the Resurrection consists of. However, as Fr. Giussani used to say (I quoted it during the Assembly), it’s not so much a theoretical reflection that will help us, but starting to recognize that it is necessary to do the work that we talked about at the Exercises. A question like the one about the Resurrection shows us the significance of the work that needs to be done. As you can see, not even the clearest proclamation of the Christian faith – Christ’s Resurrection – simply asserts itself on its own, and repeating it formally is not enough to make it become crucial for our life. That is why Fr. Giussani, who knew our historical situation well, said that we no longer understand the meaning of Christian words – and the Resurrection is one of faith’s key words. We no longer understand it, we who continue to have a relationship with the Christian fact – so just imagine how it is for other people, for example the Chinese. For a Chinese person, the word “resurrection” is something totally beyond verification. Fr. Giussani says, “Faith cannot cheat [faith cannot cheat!], it cannot tell you ‘It’s like this,’ and win your approval just like that. No! Faith cannot cheat because in some way it is tied to your experience. In the end it’s as if it were to appear in court with you as the judge, using the criterion of your experience” (L. Giussani, *L’io rinasce in un incontro.1986-1987 [The “I” is Reborn in an Encounter]*, Bur, Milan 2010, p. 300). I insist – it’s not that we haven’t heard people’s witnesses a million times or that we haven’t seen anything, but this is not enough. If one does not have a personal experience, then not even being together is enough, because one can participate in a companionship and say that it is vague. If the fact of being together does not prompt us to do the work that Fr. Giussani indicates to us, if it is not a constant invitation to verify, then we will not find an answer to our questions. It has “to appear in court with you as the judge, using the

criterion of your experience,” says Fr. Giussani. However, “neither can you cheat, because in order to judge it you have to use it [you cannot repeat it as empty words – no, you have to make a judgement, you have to use it], in order to see whether it transforms your life you have to live it seriously; not faith according to your interpretation, but faith as it was handed down to you, authentic faith. This is why our conception of faith is directly connected with the hour of the day, with day-to-day life as we live it [if we don’t see what the Resurrection is *there*, then no one will be able to convince us. He gives an example]. If you fall in love with a girl [at a certain point, you cannot see how], [...] faith changes that relationship [let’s think of the list of things mentioned in the first letter that I read to you this evening: the relationship with a husband, work, children; if you don’t see how faith changes life, making it better] [...], if you have never been able to say, ‘How faith makes my living more human!’ if you have never been able to say this, then faith will never become conviction, [...] and will never generate anything because it has not touched the depth of your ‘I’” (*ibid.*, pp. 300-301). Then, we need to answer these questions by verifying what is proposed to us. However, in order to verify it, I must first open myself to this possibility. If I open myself to the possibility of taking seriously the fact that Christ is risen, then in the face of an illness, or my job situation, or loneliness, or the anxiety that I feel, I start to see that some people live these challenges in one way, while I live them in another. Recognizing this difference is a matter of attention; the fact that I realize it is a matter of having an inner compass, a detector, because otherwise – as you can see – everything becomes the same. However, if everything is the same – pay attention to how important this is for our life – the reason that brought Fr. Giussani to create the Movement – that is, to show how faith is relevant to life’s needs – collapses. If we don’t see this relevance, then how can faith be interesting for us? This is precisely why we start working on the Exercises.

I received another question about the Resurrection: “How can you say that what demonstrates the truth of what we celebrated at Easter – that is, the fact that it is real – is the event of a people?” In fact, at the Exercises, in order to show that what we celebrated at Easter is not just a rite, not just a devout remembrance, but has the real consistency of a fact, I stressed that its clearest demonstration is the event of a people. The letter goes on, “As soon as I read this phrase, I was startled. If I think of my infinite need, I would never think that a people could be the answer.” We didn’t say that a people is the answer! Do you see how we change the interpretation? We said that a people is the sign of the fact that many encountered the answer in the Risen Christ, and that that people would not be possible without His resurrection. “Thomas, come here, put your finger here,” “Peter, do you love me?” “Mary Magdalene!” “Mary, wake up!” One by one. It’s not that, since they were alone and bewildered, they decided to get together, and this gave rise to a people as the answer to the need that they had. No! That people found the answer in the encounter with the Risen Christ, and then started to live in a certain way. The people that finds the answer in Christ demonstrates the truth of that event, which we cannot grasp except through the effects that it produces. Because no one witnessed the resurrection of Christ when it happened. The disciples laid Him in the tomb, and when they came back, the tomb was empty. Nobody saw Him at the moment of the resurrection. That is why Christ’s resurrection is a very special, unique event. It’s not the ‘resurrection’ of Lazarus, that is, the resuscitation of a corpse so that afterwards you can meet him on the street. Christ’s resurrection is a unique event in history: a Man who was in the tomb entered the world permanently. He rose from the dead and lives forever, unlike Lazarus, who came back to life, but in any case had to die again – it would be a small consolation, prolonging your life for a

while, as medicine can do now, postponing the end for a few months, or a year. Christ's resurrection is a totally different event, which is not immediately and directly witnessed. We recognize it because He appeared to the Apostles, and also by the signs that the Risen Christ gave them, and that they witnessed to the world. How do we know that the Apostles aren't messing with us, making up the fact of Jesus' resurrection? Like the objection that we read in the Gospels: Did someone steal Jesus' body? Everything that originated after His crucifixion would be impossible if Christ hadn't risen. Thus, for the next School of Community, we will go over the first chapter [Chapter 4] of the second part of *Why the Church?*, in which Fr. Giussani responds to this question. How can it be explained that, from the very beginning, the Church presents itself in history as the continuity of Christ, and what is the relationship between the Resurrection and this continuity in history? The answer is not the people, because the only answer that the Christian faith offers to each member of the people is the Risen Christ. It's not the "utopia of the companionship;" the companionship is not the answer to man's need, because we all have to die. The companionship, the Church, is the place where the fact that Christ is risen is testified, otherwise we wouldn't be here. It is crucial that we understand this. Another person writes, "What can demonstrate the truth, that is, the reality of what we celebrated at Easter? Only a fact. The event of a people, like the one that we saw in Saint Peter's Square." [He is quoting the Exercises.] No! I don't agree. Ten people or a million do not confirm or deny anything." I completely agree. What conclusion do we draw, then? This is a way of reasoning that doesn't make any sense! The point is what kind of people gathered in Rome and what they demonstrate. Certainly, if we don't do what Fr. Giussani told us many times – that is, work "on the instrument of thought," on the way in which we reason, on how we face reality – then not even the clearest things will be able to convince us of anything. Then we say, "No!" Listen to what Fr. Giussani says: "Primarily, the Church presents itself in history as a relationship with the living Christ. [...] But a devout remembrance [he gives a list of some of the possible interpretations of that original group of people that is called "Church"] of an individual would not have been enough to keep that group together under such difficult, hostile circumstances, even if it had been supported by the desire to spread the Master's teaching [as if the Church were some sort of Platonic circle]. In the eyes of those men, the only teaching that could not be doubted was the presence of their Master, Jesus alive. And this is exactly what they transmitted: the testimony of a Man, present and alive. [We can think that they are messing with us or that they are telling the truth, but what is certain is that all of the New Testament's documents from the first century, written in Greek, are the witness of a group of people who say that a Man, a friend of theirs who had been laid in the tomb, is now alive, and they know perfectly how to distinguish what it means to say "Lazarus is alive" and "the Risen Jesus is alive." They aren't confused about it!] The birth of the Church is none other than this company of disciples, this small group of friends who stayed together even after Christ's death. Why?" (L. Giussani, *Why the Church?*, McGill-Queen's, 2001, pp.66-67). Each person has to find an answer to this. Let's think of the example that Fr. Giussani gives in *The Religious Sense*: if one of you gets home tonight and finds a beautiful bouquet of flowers on her nightstand, then she has to explain its presence. She goes and asks someone else who is home, "Who brought me these flowers?" Why do you ask, if what you see is just the flowers? Why are you sure that there is a "who," if you don't see him? You can give a thousand interpretations, but until you find an adequate explanation for the presence of those flowers, you will have no peace. The same happens with the Resurrection. Those people start to live a certain life, and the bouquet

of flowers is nothing in comparison to the newness of life that they demonstrate. “Why? Because the Risen Christ made Himself present in their midst” (*ibid.*, p. 67). Even if someone dislikes this interpretation because it is Christian, the question remains. It would be as if someone asked, “Who put those flowers there?” and was answered, “Why do you wonder about it? They are there because they are there.” He wouldn’t feel that this answer was adequate to his question. Not just any answer is enough. Even if you don’t agree that the Risen Christ makes Himself present in their midst, the question remains, 2,000 years ago as well as now. Because those who live in Christ and recognize Christ risen live a certain life and stay together in a certain way. Why? Fr. Giussani continues, “Christ remains in history [...] with the historical, living face of the Christian community, of the Church. Through their lives and their testimony, those first disciples, that small group of friends, communicate to us that God did not come down to earth just one instant [...] [but that] He came [...] to stay in the world.” All of the stories in the *Acts of the Apostles* are “simply testifying to a familiar presence still with them” (*ibid.*, pp. 67-68). Many have written about what happened to them at the Exercises: they can’t explain why, but they went home as different people, they resumed their life in a different way, and they can face life’s circumstances in a different way. This fact, the presence in history of individuals who have changed, and of the people to whom they belong, this reality that is not in the past but in the present, will be what constantly challenges the reason and freedom of whoever encounters it. If one comes upon people for whom Christ’s resurrection is a fact, then the question that arose at the beginning of the *Acts of the Apostles* – 2,000 years ago as well as today – will present itself again, as we saw in the DVD *La strada bella* [*The Beautiful Road*]. So, what do we need in order to understand this?

I need to tell you, thanking you, what I brought home from the Fraternity Exercises. Even if I was affected by the exhortation of our local leader, who stressed how we needed to ask everything of this gesture, for many weeks I had been experiencing the position that you have often emphasized: we will not understand anything unless we are striving to understand. I had faced the gesture without this tension – despite the joyful and friendly embrace of my group – accepting deep down the idea that, in the end, I would bring home something good, but surely nothing definitive. Now listen to what happened to me. I must say, first of all, that I am 54 years old and I have been in the Movement forever (I participated in the CLU in Pisa), I am married and I have one son, and I still carry within me all of the wounds that I have accumulated over the course of a lifetime. However, there is one wound that haunts me, and it was reopened precisely on that Saturday evening, causing me to be deeply distressed and discouraged, not so much for my inconsistency, but for the abysmal, unbridgeable disproportion between the journey of conversion to which I am called and how I live. So much so that, the next morning, the wound was so evident that at breakfast, not one, but two people noticed and asked me if I was feeling well, to which I mumbled “yes,” but without the courage to look them in the eyes. I listened to the Sunday morning assembly with the attention of an amoeba. During the return trip, I was asleep, like in Guccini’s song. Even if, back home, I recounted the beauty of the gesture, my wife, who knows me, understood right away that things hadn’t gone fantastically. However, precisely because she knows me, she made the quick judgement that my problem is always the same nonsense and, saddened, she let it go. With this heavy heart, I went to the office on Monday, and I couldn’t help judging the entire situation pragmatically. On the one hand, there is the suggestion, deformed if you will, of my evil. And on the other hand? What do

I put there? The suggestion of a beautiful gesture, perhaps magnified? Does this mean that, in the end, my human structure is the sum of two suggestions? But His presence, living and able to be experienced, is something else. It is something else, and this is what I need. Then, I don't know how to explain it – like now – but I was moved to tears, and I felt extremely grateful for our history, for the truth of that dynamism that the Holy Father recalled, through which the Mystery takes hold of me precisely where I thought it was impossible. It is the same thing that Fr. Giussani said in the 2013 Fraternity Exercises: “The Lord allows our mistakes and our sins as the strangest, but most dramatically operative, the most pedagogically effective way of deepening the sense of our relationship with Him. We are so tenacious in our self-love that without the experience of our limits, we would not say with authenticity, ‘God, You are everything,’ and ‘I am nothing’” (L. Giussani, in J. Carrón, “Who Will Separate Us from the Love of Christ?”, Fraternity Exercises 2013, p. 51). It's as if, until I made that judgement, my flesh had been missing in the beauty and solemnity of that gesture. Then I lived the whole day with attention, with tension, happy for the people whom I had around me. The first consequence was that, when I went home and my wife asked how I was doing, I couldn't help answering, “Very well,” looking her in the eyes, and loving her even more. This and little else was enough to convince her to register for the Exercises for Workers. Now this dynamic is not mine, is not my own work. I can only learn it, ask for it. And this is the only place, the only one that I have encountered, that makes it possible, where my humanity is regenerated when it lets itself be embraced by the presence of the One who makes everything. A place like this has to be sustained. I don't see any other plausible reason for settling my contributions to the Common Fund, which, until yesterday, was as empty as a bottomless well. I have already done this. I am sorry, but only now have I understood more clearly the importance of this matter.

We can participate in the gesture, as you said, without being there. What was missing from the beauty of the gesture was your flesh. When the flesh begins to be present, then one starts to become aware. And when one lets Him in, when one lets himself be embraced by the presence of the One who makes everything – as Fr. Giussani says – then the person who accepts this will not have to adhere to faith without reasons, but instead will be able to see what it originates in life, and then he can decide whether or not it is reasonable to recognize Him, to adhere. That is why Fr. Giussani never promised that this would be automatic, just as Christ never did, because then it wouldn't be worthy of man. It is only a presence that asks to be embraced with the simplicity of a child that Fr. Giussani mentions in speaking of the Resurrection. It is “a childlike intelligence” that must be recovered in order to look at things in a true way. “[It] is called ‘faith’” (J. Carrón, *A Presence within the Gaze*, Fraternity Exercises 2015).

At one of the recent Schools of Community, in talking about Rome, you used the expression, Roma locuta, causa finita est, that is, Rome has spoken, therefore there is nothing more to discuss. This expression, this judgement, slammed into me, and started to work within me a great deal, both with regard to the fact of Rome and to the things that kept happening, and it has become my way of looking at things precisely as a hypothesis. What struck me the most was how...how much this hypothesis was able to affect me after it entered into me.

Pay attention! As soon as she agreed to let this hypothesis in... Fr. Giussani proposed faith to us as a hypothesis. What for him is a certainty, certainty in the totality of the Church to the point that it is called “dogma,” he proposed to us as a working hypothesis that we need to

verify, so that it can make the truth clear to our eyes. If we don't use this hypothesis, then it cannot become clear, that is, the hypothesis cannot find confirmation if not in verification.

In fact, it was confirmed in me, because from the moment in which it entered into me, as I said, it affected me very deeply. I will give an example of how I perceived, how I noticed, that this Roma locuta has been able to affect me. I noticed that, in me, the collapse that we have been working on starts... I become aware of this collapse when I realize that I have distorted the reality that I have in front of me. For example, it happens with people, when I realize that I distort the other into what I would like to see in that person, or into how the relationship with him should happen. Instead, when I stay in front of things with the Roma locuta position, that is, for what I am, then I experience that reality is my ally, and it is as if the possibility of a totally new engagement and discovery opens up for me. There are several facts that I have recorded that were introduced by this gaze of Roma locuta. I will recount only the two main ones. The first is that this gaze opens up an unstoppable new self-awareness in me, also as a possibility to know myself. For example, it happened that I found myself in a predicament where I felt exposed in ways that are intolerable to me – and yet, facing it with this position made me remember who I am, and therefore I could know myself. The second fact that I noticed is that, when I have this position, when this judgement enters, it is as if a common thread forms between the various things, and I become aware of real things, of the objects around me, of the nuances in the words of the person who is speaking. It is as if things were not just something secondary, but take on their own life, by becoming part of a unified horizon. Let's say that these facts, judged "in court" by my experience, convince me.

Why?

They powerfully convince me, because no other way of looking, or other interpretation, has this power.

We can assume the affirmation of the Resurrection, or the Pope's speech in Rome (and after he spoke, all of the discussions were unnecessary), as a working hypothesis, and this will make the truth of experience emerge before our eyes – or we can use it as we please. In this case, though, we will never verify what we are told, but only our thoughts, and the result will be what we often see! The beginning of this work has already helped us to identify the way in which we can verify. So, if we aren't entirely intent on seeing in which situations, in which facts, it is demonstrated before our eyes – in my experience or in other people's experience – that Christ is risen, and what made me become aware of it, then even if we have talked about the Resurrection, nothing will remain. Faith in the Resurrection doesn't grow by repeating a discourse about it. Faith grows like the faith of the disciples grew, by seeing the signs, by seeing the facts, so that the question that they couldn't – and we can't – help asking burst and bursts forth: "Who is this man?" This opened them to recognize that not just any answer was able to give an adequate explanation for that fact – yesterday as well as today. This requires that we seriously engage in the process of verification in our experience. No formal repetition – as we can see – not even that of the Resurrection, can be enough, because it can become something vague.

I will conclude with a letter that introduces the flier *Ripartire dal basso. Implicarsi per il bene comune* [*Beginning Again from the Ground Up: Getting Involved for the Common Good*], which we prepared for the administrative elections. Some people have already started to use it, and this letter is from a friend of ours who has held political office. It can help us in the work

that awaits us. “I take the liberty of writing to you because I feel the need to thank you for the flier on the administrative elections that the Movement released. After the bitterness with which I lived the conclusion of my experience as administrator for the Region of Lombardy – which, despite the limits and the mistakes, I continue to consider the most concrete attempt made in our country to manage a complex institutional reality by starting from the principle of subsidiarity, not just affirmed in theory, but concretely outlined – this appeal to the value of good politics made me relive the profound motives of the beginning of my commitment as a local administrator 40 years ago, in the administrative elections of 1975. At the time, my ‘yes’ to the proposal from the Movement, which was in answer to a clear request from the Bishops, was a natural development, in a different setting, of what I had lived for years in the experience of charitable work: life has meaning as sharing in the needs of those whom the Lord causes you to meet. After many years in politics (I no longer have a political role, but I continue to work in the field of public institutions), I can witness with certainty that politics is either the expression of charity, or it becomes like a cancer that eats away at your humanity. I hope that this judgement that you offered for our reflection may contribute to giving birth to a new generation that is willing to commit their lives to the service of the people through politics and public institutions. It would be terrible if, out of a mistaken sense of purity, we left these areas to those who, with greater or lesser ability to conceal and deceive, in the end seek only their own power and personal advantage. Cordially...” As you have seen, the text by Pope Francis contained in the flier is really an invitation to this commitment. We often ask what we can do. Starting from the administrative elections, we can begin to live a possibility of dialogue with anyone.

The next School of Community will be on Wednesday, June 17th at 9:30 pm. We will continue to work on the Introduction of the Fraternity Exercises, as well as on the beginning of the second part of the book *Why the Church?*, the chapter entitled “The Continuity of Jesus Christ: Root of the Church’s Self-Awareness” (pp. 65-71), which contains the answer to the question that emerged today.

Pentecost Vigil. As you know, the Movement has adhered to the Italian Episcopal Conference’s proposal to participate in the Pentecost Vigil on Saturday, May 23rd, to pray for our martyrs of today and for the Christians who are persecuted. You can follow the news and witnesses through social networks by using the hashtag #free2pray; it is useful both to get information about the vigil and the meetings that are being organized, and to make people aware of the initiatives and witnesses of a living faith that come from the most wounded areas of the world. In the May issue of *Traces* there is a *Close Up* (from which I read a witness earlier) dedicated precisely to Christians who are persecuted, with stories, witnesses, and contributions that help us to understand the concern of which Pope Francis continues to remind us. For this reason, we exhort everyone to make an extraordinary effort to circulate the magazine during the upcoming weekend. With regard to the vigils, each person should find out what proposal the Church is making in his diocese, or should promote this initiative if nothing has been organized.

Ripartire dal basso. Implicarsi per il bene comune [Beginning Again from the Ground Up: Getting Involved for the Common Good]. Even if the elections will take place only in some regions, the CL flier is a tool for dialogue about issues that we consider crucial for everyone,

and not only for those who will go to the polls. With the document that we have prepared, *Ripartire dal basso. Implicarsi per il bene comune*, we want to offer a tool for dialogue to help an ideal new beginning for the common good, which we often see requested and desired by many people. The document is available on the CL website. We propose that you bring it to the attention of friends and acquaintances in various environments, and that you consider using it for public meetings.

Vacations. With regard to the community vacations, let's not take them for granted, as if they were a yearly ritual. Let's ask ourselves: Why do we go on vacation? What do we want to communicate? What do we want to live together? Let's take advantage of this moment, to communicate something of the beauty and gladness that we have met, so that people may understand what the Resurrection means. What would we want to show to a friend who is coming with us for the first time? What experience would we want him to have? Then the hikes, a moment of witness, the presentation of a book, a conversation about something we are interested in, Mass, Morning Prayer, the *Angelus*, all become an opportunity to see what a vacation is, using the entire time as a paradigm of what it means to live – vacation as a way to be in reality with the awareness, with the gaze toward reality, that is born of faith.

Veni Sancte Spiritus