

Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón
Milan, May 24, 2017

Reference text: L. Giussani, Why the Church? McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2001, pp. 163-169, and J. Carrón "Introduction" to My Heart is Glad Because You Live, Oh Christ, 2017 Fraternity Exercises of Communion and Liberation
http://english.clonline.org/default.asp?id=559&id_n=21600

- *Il desiderio [The desire]*
- *Il seme [The seed]*

Glory Be
Veni Sancte Spiritus

We start working on the Introduction of the 2017 Fraternity Exercises that we began by re-proposing a question inspired by Péguy: Is salvation still interesting? (cf. *My Heart is Glad Because You Live, Oh Christ*, pp. 4). What has made salvation remain interesting? What can make it remain interesting in the midst of all the burdens and challenges of living, with all the problems that arise and all our distractions? What has this, all of this, to do with *following* today? What prevails now? It is a matter of continuing this path that in other places, using Fr. Giussani's words, we have called the "personalization of faith." What does personalization of faith mean? It means that what I have encountered must become mine, and this cannot happen without me. This personalization cannot happen in me without my freedom. This already emerges from the first contributions that you sent me. I will begin to read one (because the person who wrote it could not be present this evening), "I came back from the Exercises feeling sad, because I measured myself against your lessons and I could not breathe. I didn't see much. I left feeling confused by the many things that were said that I wasn't able to translate into a concrete experience in the flesh. All this made me angry. It provoked me, but without giving an answer. At least, that is how I felt [it can happen to many of us in a moment that is so crucial, as we will see later. One can have this difficulty, but as we will see right after, the Mystery doesn't abandon us]. During these days, something happened that made me breathe [it may not happen according to the image one has: 'It must be in that place, at that hour, and in the way I have decided it'—no]. Two friends came to dinner and one of them recounted what the Exercises had meant to her: she had been moved during the entire Assembly, she had heard what she needed, she hadn't even gotten angry in hearing things that were not familiar to her, but she had rather felt a sense of regret. In listening to her I was taken aback and I understood two things. First, that she had gone to the Exercises with a need, while I had not. I actually went with no questions within me, waiting for something beautiful but nothing more, as if my life were fine with my own things. Only in front of her I became aware of how much I often don't see the meaning of what I do and don't desire to be the object of a special gaze. I don't desire an encounter, nor to be saved—that is, not to be reduced to a mechanism, to the things that need to be done. The second thing is that during dinner my skepticism was making me look with suspicion at the person who was talking to me [the Mystery can send us another who reawakens us, but we can be suspicious of the person that He sends us] as soon as she spoke of a correspondence. I was all intent to catch her saying something wrong [to see what was wrong] or

to understand whether what she was saying was true or they were just words. Thus, I risked paying more attention to whether everything would fit in with what I can accept and understand, rather than seeking something for myself. Fortunately, this attitude didn't prevail [what a struggle, almost minute by minute!] and I saw her joy. Today, I had this in mind from the morning, but I was still stuck in my routine and couldn't desire something new like had happened to her. But what a forgetfulness I saw! Keeping that position, maintaining the desire seems to require an enormous effort. I am sure that I will need to be reawakened more and more, and I want to ask for it. What kind of help can we have to do this? How can we avoid falling again into a nothingness of which we are not aware, perhaps even filled with good things, beautiful but without a taste for life? I am a pro at this, I am pretty good at it, but I don't want that." The question is what kind of help we can give each other. The first help we can give becomes clear by observing how the Mystery acts. Although our friend went to the Exercises with that closed position, then she met someone else, and even if initially she was still a little cynical, in the end she couldn't help but "desire something new, like had happened to them." She couldn't help but recognize that her need was becoming wide open again due to what she was glimpsing in that other person. The truth is communicated through envy! What is the first move that can help us? It follows that jolt, that reawakening of desire. Because the Mystery doesn't give you a lecture, He doesn't rebuke you, but simply sends you someone who reawakens in you a desire from the depths of your "I" because you are attracted by what you see. It is easy. It is enough to follow that glimmer of light, of attraction that lights up in us, that spark that gives us a shred of poverty of spirit. The second move, then, is to follow the witness of other people. If we accept these two things, we begin to see how the Mystery answers our questions. What kind of help can you receive to keep your desire alive? Look at how the Mystery is helping you. In fact, the Mystery is not blocked by the fact that you are stuck, but rather continues to take the initiative in what is the most unpredictable way for you: through your friends, raising in you a desire that not even your skepticism was able to block. A desire that you find within yourself and that you can follow.

After I came back from the Exercises, I realized much more clearly who I am and how I am living my life. In recent months, I distanced myself a bit from the Movement, and therefore from Christ, without ever going to the core of why it was happening. Sometimes I looked for a justification in some facts that happened to me, facts that are decisive in someone's life, but these attempts failed miserably before my awareness of the embrace that I have received in my life. Why this distancing, then? Why am I no longer interested in this salvation that I recognize and live? Sincerely, I haven't found an answer to those questions yet. However, by coming to the Exercises I was able to think of some possibilities, and to be honest, the fact of having attended the Exercises was a first sign, the first sign that, in spite of all my forgetfulness, I can't help but desire a full life. Yet, even if this desire moves me toward what my heart often unknowingly longs for, sometimes I would like to rip it out of me. At times, I realize that I wish I had never encountered Christ in the Movement—and this perhaps is my greatest sin—because if I hadn't, then my heart would be content with a little less. Instead, that is no longer possible. By now, I have seen the kind of happiness that the embrace of the Father offers, and I am no longer able to pretend that I haven't savored its full taste. I have never understood better than now the words of the Monologo di Giuda [Juda's Monologue]: "It wasn't for the thirty pieces of silver / but for the hope / that He awakened / in me that day," because once that hope and that infinite desire don't find an answer in reality (or you don't see the answer),

you wish that that desire had never emerged so powerfully. I tried, I tried with all my power to desire less, to see whether it was possible to live a life without Him, but emptiness took over everything. I tried to redirect my desire to my work, to my friends, and to many other things, but in time all these things lost the flavor they once had. My job, that once I used to love dearly, has become burdensome and sterile. It has never been so burdensome! I am not even able to tell my friends what is really happening to me. The same friends who were the instrument through which Christ showed Himself in my life, now seem distant and I am ashamed of my pettiness to the point of not talking about it. At the Exercises, all this came to the surface like never before, together with all the petty things I am capable of. All my desire for fulfillment, happiness, and beauty, which I tried to bury in every possible way, came to the surface, burning even more intensely than before, and together with that all my conceit also emerged, the presumption of having understood, of somehow being able to handle things on my own. It was clear when, to show us a path to follow, you referred to some of the gestures the Movement proposes, like the common fund and charitable work. When you mentioned these two gestures my immediate reaction was to push them away: “It is all good, but I work too much and I don’t have time to do charitable work.” I was scandalized by my reaction in part because, how can one, after all that I have seen, pull back even before trying? On the other hand, the proposal of these gestures shed a small light on how I am living reality, which could be described as the opposite of poverty. In fact, even if I glimpse a possibility of fullness for me, I always put my way of measuring things first. For me letting my measure go is extremely difficult. From the little that I was able to understand up to now of what you told us at the Exercises, this is one of the fundamental points that one must understand to be able to grow. Being an empty vase in front of a Presence who continues to fill it for me remains too often just a beautiful image. The truth is that I stand before reality full of what I think I have already understood and conquered. Thus, I take from reality only what helps me confirm and validate my already established ideas. In other words, I understand that my greatest difficulty is in dying in order to produce fruit. Sometimes it is hard to discover how low I can go, especially considering all that I have encountered, but perhaps this is the exact point from which I can restart.

We thank you for having been free to speak of things as they are, with all the difficulties that you recounted. In fact, each of us could say the same things. We are not speaking of an ideal world, but rather of the real world, where, despite having had a decisive encounter with Christ in the life of the Movement, one can distance himself and look for something else. The encounter doesn’t end the game. Like Pope Benedict XVI said in speaking of Saint Augustine (who was no stranger to misdeeds), life is not always a straight path. If it happened to Saint Augustine, it can happen also to us. Therefore, we shouldn’t be scandalized by anything, but rather look at how our attempts at reducing what has happened to us and at being content with something else are not enough. They are pointless. All of this gives us hope that, even if we can have periods like those that have been described, we have tasted something that so strongly corresponds—as for the prodigal son, having a home, having a father, having a certain experience of life—that the more we distance ourselves, the more the difference becomes clear to us. Then, one begins to realize that what he needs is a poverty, the simple recognition of what has happened to him, so that we don’t become the measure of what responds to our desire, but rather, as an empty vase, we welcome everything He gives to us. Then, little by little, as you said at the end, one begins to see how one is living reality. Little by little, something becomes our own that we may have even repeated in words, but that only the struggle of living (which we are not spared) lets enter our measure, opening it wide.

Like another person writes to me, “It is incredible how after many years He reads perfectly the dullness of my life and this distance and estrangement that I feel more and more [she is talking about Christ’s distance from the heart]. If you knew how arid is my loving, how much the source of goodness is missing in me, and how much I miss it [like you said before, in the end what you like best, such as your job or your friends, and even loving someone, becomes arid]. I know that Jesus is the source of my living in a true way, but [here comes the “but”] my life is constantly blocked. Each time you mention it, I feel the disproportion. I only want to resume a journey that doesn’t spare me anything.” Do you understand, then, why Péguy re-proposes to us the theme of freedom? Because it isn’t that nothing happened to us. As we can see, we all started from something that happened to us in our life, but that will not become ours except through freedom.

I want to ask you a couple of questions that arose from the Exercises, but that I also had before. The main question is: what kind of freedom are you asking of us, almost begging for? Why am I asking you this? I take a step back. What I found very beautiful in your interview with Jot Down (“Others do not create problems for us; others make us aware of the problems we have,” Traces, 2/2017) wasn’t only the content of the answers, but above all to see a whole man, that is, a man who expresses a directness full of certainty. Similarly, I noticed that all your amazement for the Pope’s visit to Milan, for me deep-down had the same origin: the beauty and attraction of seeing a unified “I,” without any energy and time lost in preambles. Not first and foremost due to its own strength, but rather because it was attracted by Christ. I was also very impressed by hearing you quote from an interview in which Cardinal Scola, in speaking of the Pope and of us Westerners, described us Europeans as the heirs of certain intellectualist and doctrinalist views. By the way, I can definitely not say that I am an intellectual, because I am an agronomist, but nevertheless I realize how true this observation is, a bit as if we were running a 100-meter sprint carrying a heavy backpack. In seeing you and the Pope I realize that often I am really like that. Most of my struggles (the distance from Christ that I perceive at times) and my time being fruitful or not (because not using one’s time well makes one perceive Christ as distant) come from the fact that instinctively I often think it’s faster and more effective to demonstrate something through reasoning rather than by simply recognizing it. Sometimes I feel that I live slowed down by a mindset that trained me to analyze things before embracing them, to oppose the two approaches. The second question is whether that happens to you as well, and what in your opinion is the origin of this problem. I will tell you about a fact that a friend who teaches art in middle school told me that got stuck in my head—by the way, this is a good sign, because it means that facts are starting to keep me company. This friend organized an afternoon drawing class for her best students, those who wanted to improve, and among those who attended was a student who wasn’t very good at drawing. She felt quite uneasy and didn’t know whether she should tell him that or not. She decided to wait for the parent conference and speak to his mother at that time. When the mother arrived, the teacher asked her what she should do and the mother answered, “Yes, I spoke about it with him and he said, ‘I wanted to attend because that is the teacher who loves me!’” This makes me understand what the freedom that I need so dramatically is: a simplicity like the Pope and that kid have, who let themselves be attracted by the prevailing affection. Recognizing this isn’t a weakness in my thinking process, but rather is evidence of an irreducible experience. What I find clear also in looking at my experience is that if I recognize and let myself be attracted by the prevailing affection I will be able to understand and breathe as I live through all the details. Instead, if I put

the details or my reasoning about it first, I suffocate and I see Christ becoming ever more distant, which inevitably breaks my heart. For me the Exercises were the occasion when this prevailing affection toward me became flesh again, and I beg to stay before it with the freedom and the simplicity of that student in the drawing class.

You raise a fundamental question by saying that sometimes it seems faster and more effective to demonstrate something through reasoning rather than by simply recognizing it. Why do we give in to this temptation? What is behind it? As I have been saying for a while, we are modern people and—as Cardinal Scola, whom you mentioned, says about us Europeans—“heirs of intellectualist and doctrinalist views” (A. Torielli, “The Pope in Milan Between the Hinterland and the Prison,” www.lastampa.it/vaticaninsider/eng, November 17, 2016). We think that to give a good speech it is enough to make the content become ours. I was always struck by Kant’s famous text that states the point very concisely: “One can safely assume that if the Gospel hadn’t taught first the universal moral laws [the fundamental truths about living] in their whole purity, reason wouldn’t have known them in their fullness...” The most decisive things we have for living, what makes life *life*, was given to us by the Gospel. It is Kant who is saying this. What is the issue? One can understand it from what he says right after, “...even if today, *since now they* [the universal moral laws] *exist*, each person can be convinced based on reason alone that they are right and sound.” (I. Kant, *Questioni di confine [Questions at the boundaries]*, Marietti 1820, Genoa 1990, p. 105). According to this view, once Christ brought us to discover in its purity and fullness what we need for living, and we became aware of it, after that it appears that reason is enough, thinking is enough to recognize what we need, that we no longer need Christ, that we don’t need to follow the jolt of something in front of us. Freedom is simply reduced to this use of reason. Then, we think that reasoning is enough for those things to become ours. History has proved and proves us wrong. What is it missing in the end? The simplest thing that helps us understand is to read the rest of the text about the Unnamed that we quoted at the Fraternity Exercises, where we see how the freedom of the Unnamed is in play. Cardinal Federigo turns to him saying, “Don’t think [...] that I can be content just with today’s visit [he cannot be content with having seen him just that time; he wants to see him again and adds:] You will come back, won’t you?” [...] “Will I come back?” answered the Unnamed, “Should you refuse me, I would obstinately remain outside your door, like the beggar. I need to speak to you! I need to hear you, to see you! I need you!” (A. Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, BUR, Milan 2012, p. 486). Because Christianity is this. Freedom is reawakened in front of a presence that attracts us, that attracts our whole being. Freedom, like you said, is this simplicity that makes me perceive that someone is so decisive for my life that I have the unstoppable need to go back. But it is mutual. It is not only the need of the Unnamed for the Cardinal, but it is also the need of the Cardinal for the Unnamed, due to that “dusting of truth that is present in the pockets of every man” (*Certi di alcune grandi cose [Certain of Some Great Things]*, BUR, Milan 2007, p. 156), as Fr. Giussani said. Freedom consists in following again the appeal, the attraction that a presence elicits in us, so that we don’t lose it. It is the complete opposite of voluntarism, the opposite of moralism, the complete opposite of a titanic effort of will. No. It is the need: “I need to hear you, to see you! I need you!” Forget creating things in our minds! They are useless, because, as Kant said, if those fundamental truths about living hadn’t been given to us, we wouldn’t have imagined them. What is our mistake? It is to think that once something has been given to us, we no longer need to return to the one who gave it to us. We can think this also about the Movement. It is true—someone may think—that without Fr. Giussani we wouldn’t have

been able to understand some things that he proposed to us, but now, now that we have the books, we can recognize those things with our reason, and we no longer need to follow. Then, one can do what one wants with the books. However, one will need to see whether that is enough to respond to the need to live. John and Andrew, the first who met Jesus, didn't waste a second going after their own mental speculations, but rather went to see Him the next day. Anyone who meets Him and experiences Him as the answer to his need, like the Unnamed, "I would obstinately remain outside your door, like the beggar." It is this poverty, it is the awareness of our poverty that makes our need unmistakable. It isn't enough to simply adhere to a discourse, intellectually reduced, but we need to return to that Presence! Because, "if I recognize and let myself be attracted by the prevailing affection I will be able to understand and breathe within all the details. If, instead, I put the details of my reasoning about it first, I suffocate." Yet, it is necessary that everyone experiences this, that is, what makes it possible "to breathe within all the details," so that one's desire to return may remain vibrant and alive. This problem re-proposes itself constantly. One of you wrote to me, "I can feel oppressed, but what is the way of living reality that takes into account all the factors, myself included, so that I don't withdraw from reality?" Once again, help comes from experience, as many of you witness to: "I want to let you know my joy and the amazement that filled me to the point of moving me to tears. I am relatively new [this is the gift that the Mystery gives us with new people, this simplicity that you mentioned earlier], but at the same time still wide open and thirsty and ever more striving. That is why I want to offer you my humble gratitude. It was really a gift of grace [she is speaking of the Exercises]. I can't tell you how many objections I raised: too many people in the same hotel, the confusion, long lines for lunch, too cold, too hot, too much time spent sitting, getting up too early, it is still too expensive for me. I arrived full of those objections, but at the same time disarmed, knowing that I don't know [this may seem like nothing, but it is a lot: knowing that I don't know]. Then, the crowd, all that was an objection before it was transformed. The faces of many friends, a great huge family, faces that were glad even in sorrow, in sickness, in the struggle of living, everything was speaking to my heart [everything that before was an objection] and everything was *for* me, everything was speaking *about* me. How much I now desire to communicate that my heart is overflowing with joy, and to share all of this with the people who are dear to me! I can't say it better than this. It was like contemplating a masterpiece, the beauty of creation, of nature. Only a few times has my breath been taken away, like holding my breath, dazzled and with my eyes half-closed, hoping that it didn't end and at the same time so overwhelmed that I couldn't utter a word. It was like a taste of Paradise." What makes everything become "for me," what allows everything to speak to my heart and not become a burden, is this being disarmed in front of reality. It is this "knowing that you don't know" that makes it possible for everything to speak to you. With this we can also face the difficulties that keep surfacing. Like another letter says, "After the first weeks full of enthusiasm, here I am, plunging again into the boredom of the usual things, in loneliness and apathy. It is as if I saw happening again in myself what you said at the Exercises: there are moments in which one is reawakened, moves, arises, but then everything becomes burdensome and suffocating again. It is as if these two moments are never connected unless the connection comes from the outside. I am at this point. What does it mean to live now, concretely, the memory of Christ? How does this moment become a step of awareness, a step in the journey of knowledge?"

If I think of what has been prevailing in my days since a few months ago, instinctively I would say that my time and my thoughts are cluttered with problems of various kinds. However, in School of Community I have learned that to face problems is the first form of charity, that is, the discovery of God's love. I ask your help to go deeper into this. I understand that not only reaching the goal—which in any case is often set by me—is beautiful, but also the road itself when one makes a journey. I realize that the journey becomes beautiful when what happens is a dialogue with the One who makes me through what happens.

This is the possibility: that everything that seems to be an objection becomes a dialogue with the One who makes us. It is very easy; your children do it. In fact, it isn't that the problems are on one side and memory on the other. As I always say, when your children wake up in the morning and have the problem of feeling lonely, what do they do? They cry, they scream, they look for you, they don't have anything else. Not from the outside, but from their very core the desire to find the face of their mom arises. It is easy! The question is whether we realize that everything that happens to us, as it happens with children, is to rekindle the memory of His presence, to rekindle the memory of their mom. When the child is hungry, when he is fearful, when he is afraid, when he misses something, when he needs to ask something, everything—everything, everything!—becomes for the child the opportunity for a relationship. This builds up his life, gives him the possibility of an ever-greater familiarity with his mother, a familiarity that generates in him the certainty that with his mother life is more beautiful, it is more *life*. However, this is not only true for children. In children we see a dynamic that is present in the nature of man: life, through everything that happens, is to enter into dialogue, into a relationship with the One who is Father to me. This doesn't happen from the outside, moralistically, but rather from within a relationship. Your child doesn't have problems with moralism, he doesn't even know what they are! He doesn't relate to you because he must do it, but because he feels the urgent need to do it, doing it coincides with his cry! He doesn't split himself in two, no, he coincides so much with himself that he can't help but desire from the depths of his "I", as soon as he opens his eyes, to be in relationship with the one who makes him, which for him in that moment are his parents. If we don't do that, everything becomes an objection. Imagine if with regards to you, his parents, the child said, "No, now I am not going to look for them." What would life be for him, what would his day be like? At a certain point, we lose this awareness of the true nature of our "I," of true poverty. When one recovers it as an adult, like the Unnamed of Manzoni, no one will tear him away from the door of the Cardinal, where he obstinately remains "like the beggar," because he needs to see him. This is the problem of living. The longer it takes us to discover this, the more burdensome our life is. When one begins to discover this, everything speaks to him, everything becomes more his. However, the Mystery who made us doesn't want to impose this on us, He wants to leave it to our freedom, He wants it to become ours. He wants this salvation to be mine, yours.

I have two questions. The first is related to p.3: "Once one has felt what it means to be loved freely, any kind of submission is no longer appealing. / Once one has been loved as a free man, the prostrations of slaves no longer mean anything to you. [...] / Nothing else has the same significance, has the same value." This sentence surprises me a lot and at the same time it annoys me a little, because I realize that I am a limited poor wretch and I often say "no." Yet, at the same time, I was created free and I desire to be looked at like that, and to learn to look at others in the

same way. Therefore, my question is: if freedom doesn't prevent, but rather allows me to often say "no"—which impoverishes my life—how can I learn to use freedom to say "yes" and not to lose anything? The second question instead, refers to a point on p. 2, when you return to a contribution that you received: "I discovered, struggling, within the great grace of the journey that you call us to make, that life is beautiful not because it is fine or goes exactly like I imagined it. Life is beautiful because every day there is an opportunity for a relationship with the Mystery, and everything can become a challenge to discover this and receive something more for oneself. What frees me from anxiety and fear [...] is to have experienced that, in what is unexpected, something is concealed that was prepared for me, an opportunity to deepen this relationship with the Mystery." Therefore, I ask you: Is it really true that reality, all reality, is positive, that reality is good not because there aren't burdensome moments, but because each person, within the difficulties and the wounds one has to face, can also discover something greater? Is it true that every single thing, every fact, every circumstance that is given to you, is the possibility for a relationship with the Mystery and everything can become a challenge to discover this and receive "something more" for oneself, even what only seems like a rip off? Because what you are telling us is revolutionary, since the world says the opposite.

It is revolutionary! Yet, you can see that despite all that has happened to us, the suspicion remains: "Is it really true that reality, all reality, is positive? Is it [really] true that every single thing, every fact, every circumstance that is given to you, is the possibility for a relationship with the Mystery and everything can become a challenge to discover this and receive "something more" for oneself [...]?" I can assure you that it is true, but it isn't very helpful to you unless you discover it in your experience. You hear that reality is positive, but repeating a correct phrase isn't enough to make it become yours. Here the question of freedom comes back. That is why what is given to us will never be mine, it will never be yours, friend, unless you verify it, that is, unless each time, as you receive these things, you begin to risk them and affirm them in order to verify them. In *The Religious Sense*, Fr. Giussani says, "A real search always implies a positive answer as an ultimate hypothesis: otherwise one would not search. Thus, if reality provokes us, then an education to freedom [it is the education that we must give to each other] must teach one to respond to provocation" (*The Religious Sense*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal 1998, p. 126). You will be able to discover whether reality is positive only if you engage with it. Look at what Fr. Giussani says: What is this education to freedom? If I asked: What would each of us connect in this instance with the word education? This is doing the work of School of Community: to compare what we think with what Fr. Giussani says. What does he say? "It is an education in 'hungering' and 'thirsting' which makes us attentive to the many solicitations emerging from our confrontation with the totality of the real [hunger and thirst make us attentive to the provocations that reality presents us], ready to accept any valuable aspect [to be engaged with it, as we said before], that is [...] [to accept each] serious promise [...] [made to our] poverty [to our original existential need]" (*Ibid*). This is where our freedom is at play. Jesus states, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst," because then, everything, as we said before, everything is for us, everything becomes mine, every single thing speaks to me and everything is multiplied. That is why one is blessed. Everything

becomes ours with the same ingredients. They are not “blessed” because life treats them differently. No. They are blessed because by having this hunger and thirst everything speaks to them. Saint Augustine said, “Reality speaks to some while for others it is silent, mute.” Then, he corrects himself and says: no, reality speaks to everyone, but only those who compare it with the heart, with their hunger and thirst, understand it (cfr. *Confessions*, X, 6, 10). Thus, “Blessed [are] those who hunger and thirst. Cursed are those who don’t hunger and thirst, who already know, who expect nothing. Cursed are the satisfied for whom reality, at best, is a pure pretext for making a commotion and who don’t expect anything really new from it.” (*The Religious Sense*, pp. 126-127). If I start from a positive hypothesis, if there is something to discover, I will discover it. If I start from a negative hypothesis, even if it exists, I will not be able to discover it. It is crucial that from within the experience we have we can truly discover the truth of what we are saying to each other. Otherwise, in the end we lose it completely. To discover one needs a positive openness. Therefore, the struggle, like another friend says, is between these two positions: “When I have this position, everything, even getting angry, is transformed into something that moves me deeply. Exactly like the Unnamed before the Cardinal, I realized that ultimately what I really need is the relationship with Christ to be present in my days. In those days [of the Exercises], I lived not only a great gratitude, but above all a strong desire to begin again that work and that deepening of my faith that you have been constantly proposing to us, and that I hadn’t taken seriously in a quite a while.” This is our problem: we can avoid taking seriously what we tell each other. What we are told becomes a pretext for getting all worked up, but we don’t take it seriously. Then, we get bored to hear it, thinking that we have already verified it, while most of the time we haven’t even started yet. We keep swinging between two positions: “On the one hand I turn to myself, to my mistakes, to my forgetfulness. On the other, the more certain and serene position of beginning again precisely from that forgetfulness.” It doesn’t matter. The prodigal son began again from a deep emptiness. “Ultimately, nothing becomes an objection to my beginning again because doing so makes me aware of my true need.” But we must verify it.

Now, like then, when a young woman looked at me with gratuitousness after a Way of the Cross—it was a way of looking at me that told me “you are a good for me,” and that made other things that interested me recede, perhaps unconsciously, and the next day made me begin to go back to those people, in the place where I had seen that gaze—now, like then, I see clearly that, with all my sometimes indescribable limits, I have met what saves me and what saves the world. Now I better understand that this must be communicated and can be communicated to anyone just by living it. As I followed your last contributions, the conversation in Jot Down, the meeting with Pilar Rahola, the interview in El Mundo, the meeting with L. Violante in Milan, something like a fire exploded in my heart, the urgent need to verify this possibility that I have seen again in action in your last contributions. Therefore, there is no one with whom I don’t try to verify this. Everything is clearly linked to the journey of the School of Community and to the Fraternity Exercises. It is amazing how what saves me and what can save the world coincide: for me it means to widen the possibility of sharing the questions that arise in everyone as we face our daily circumstances, and

to see how these questions are ultimately the most precious thing for building a successful human position for myself and for everyone. In the end, the question is ours, it is our work. The answer, instead, is Jesus who happens (Who doesn't happen due to our efforts). Yet, only if one has this need can he recognize Him. I understand that Fr. Giussani gave the world his charism within the historical context in which the experience of the Movement arose (full churches, but lack of faith). Now you provoke us to make a judgment that is pertinent to our historical moment, showing that Fr. Giussani's intuition is true because it applies also today with empty churches, nonexistent faith, and the disappearance of what is human. In the past two years, I have had great difficulties with my work, but this hasn't put out that fire. On the contrary, I am grateful for all the toil and suffering that this has been causing—I don't think I am crazy—because it is also thanks to this suffering that I have become conscious of my poverty, that my need hasn't disappeared, and that Jesus is the reason I get up in the morning. This is never enough, but He is constantly present telling me that I am a good for Him. This is the miracle, even greater than the solutions of my problems, toward which I apply all my energy.

Why is Christ more important than the solution of all our problems? We often think that it is the opposite. Why did the tenth leper come back even if his problem had already been solved? Because our need isn't that someone solves the problem of our leprosy. Our need is much deeper. Even if only one person recognizes it, that single person witnesses to us our true need, which is the need for Him. Then, all that happens in life, the things that make us suffer or the miracles—like curing leprosy—serve to verify what happened to us. One understands that this is for everyone. The more one is certain of a relationship with Christ present, the more one desires to live reality in order to verify for himself that what is true in his daily life is true in front of everyone and everything, even when one speaks to a journalist. Verification brings us to an unparalleled certainty. Everything is an opportunity to verify and therefore to continue the journey, to savor the beauty of the journey.

2017 Administrative Elections. We posted on the CL website and on social media two useful contributions for the upcoming administrative elections in various Italian cities.

The first contains passages from a conversation, held in May, between Fr. Carrón and some leaders of the Movement in Lombardy, in which a friend of ours witnessed with simplicity how political commitment originates from a desire to build something good for all. He told us how some friends simply provoked by a question from their Pastor got together to look at and judge the reality they were living, and made some proposals. The people they met became involved as well.

What emerged is a proposal of witness and judgment that is valid for everyone, also for those who don't have an election immediately in front of them, because it poses an interesting question of method. This text aims at being a starting point for a conversation in which we can relate to each other our experiences in working for the common good in the circumstances of an election, or in our daily life.

The second contribution: *Reasons for a commitment for the good of all.* This is a flier that proposes the reasons, originating from our experience, for being attentive to the electoral appointments.

The next School of Community will be on Wednesday, June 21st at 9:30 pm.

We will continue our work on the Introduction to the Fraternity Exercises “*My Heart is Glad Because You Live, Oh Lord.*” We will work on points 4–6.

The Exercises booklet will be included with the June issue of *Tracce*.

Family Vacations. The time of vacation, or time off (for those who work), makes clear what interests us in life in general and on a daily basis. Fr. Giussani always told us that what makes us most aware of what we care for becomes clear during our free time when we are not forced, by obligations to earn a salary or to our work, to do this or that. During my free time, I can choose to do what I want, and therefore what I care for, what I cannot separate myself from, is revealed. We can take note of the place of prayer in our life, the place of the work of reviewing the text of School of Community, reading, and searching for true relationship. In short, whether we are interested in taking seriously our human need. Does our need go on vacation, or we have a need also when we are on vacation? This is important to answer, also to understand what true rest is, so that we don't return more tired than when we left.

Books for the summer:

- *Una strana compagnia* [A strange companionship], by L. Giussani, BUR. This is a collection of all the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, which we have begun publishing in the series *Cristianesimo alla prova* [Christianity Put to the Test] for BUR.
- *Bearing false witness: Debunking Centuries of Anti-Catholic History*, by Rodney Stark, Templeton Press.
- *Il grande spettacolo del cielo* [The Amazing Spectacle of the Sky], by Marco Bersanelli, Sperling& Kupfer.
- *The Betrothed*, by Alessandro Manzoni, BUR (Biblioteca dello Spirito Cristiano [Library of the Christian Spirit])
- *The Legend of the Holy Drinker*, by Joseph Roth.

Procession on the Feast of Corpus Christi/Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

I remind all of us to participate, in our own diocese, in this simple gesture that helps to educate us to look at things with the whole breadth of the Universal Church.

Veni Sancte Spiritus

Good evening everyone!