

**Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón  
Milan, January 21, 2015**

*Reference text: L. Giussani, Why the Church?, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001, pp. 1-9.*

- *Zamba de mi speranza*
- *My song is love unknown*
- *Liberazione no. 2*

*Glory Be*

Let's begin our work on the new text for School of Community, *Why the Church?* From the first page of the first chapter, Fr. Giussani's concern becomes very clear. It is a concern that seems quite relevant to what we have been saying. In fact, we are in a moment of history in which we see happening what we, along with Benedict XVI, called "the collapse of evidences." What a while ago, not so long ago, was evident to everyone, was acknowledged by everyone, today has collapsed. The Enlightenment position, that is, that the evidences born of Christianity could endure apart from Christianity, is an irreparable failure. It is striking that Fr. Giussani already had this concern with respect to evidence long ago: the existence of a fact is not enough to guarantee its recognition. In fact, the starting point of the chapter is the recognition of a fact: "The Church is not just an expression of life, something born of life. It *is* a life." Right away, he acknowledges that people can have different opinions about this fact. He does not find this strange, stating, "Anyone seeking to verify a personal opinion of the Church [whoever wants to verify whether or not his opinion is true] must keep in mind that any real understanding of a life [this is the concern: that one may understand the life that is the Church], requires that one share that life in a way that lets him or her know it." He knows very well that affirming that there is a life is not the same as understanding this life, because between the evidence of reality and the understanding of reality, there is always a journey to be made. That is why he says again, "The *conditio sine qua non* for understanding life is *living out a shared existence* with it" (p. 5). Fr. Giussani is very aware that man needs something in order to understand, to grasp what is in front of him. His goal in educating is that each person may reach an objective critical judgment. He doesn't want to exploit us or brainwash us. He wants each person to reach an objective critical judgment. From where does he start in order to help us understand? From the least controversial point. Even among those who might object to the Church, everyone would agree that the Church is a "religious reality." He doesn't dwell on the details, but simply starts from what everyone can most easily recognize. How can someone recognize this religious reality? Fr. Giussani appeals to the general criterion for knowing something: "Man recognizes only what somehow connects with something that is already *present* in him." This is the tool that we have for knowing everything. He gives the example of Dante or Shakespeare, but we can also say this of a movie, a novel, a poem, or a conversation with

a friend. It is the same – we can establish a relationship with something, we can be in tune with what we are told, if this connects with something that is somehow already present in us. Therefore, since the Church is a religious reality, only if the religious aspect has been activated within us, will we be able to understand the religious reality that is the Church. If, instead, this aspect has not been activated or has stopped, if, at a certain point of the person’s development, it was blocked, “it will be more difficult for me to judge that religious fact objectively, with a critical eye,” that is, to know it. In short, he says, “There must be a correspondence if there is to be understanding” (p. 6). We think that these things are something that we already know, and yet they are not our first concern. On the contrary, this is so crucial for Fr. Giussani that he says that many of the difficulties that we face on our journey originate precisely here – we have difficulty approaching a religious reality because our religious sense has not been educated. Without an education of the religious sense, it is impossible for us to be in tune with that reality, and that is why we perceive as “removed from us” – he says – “those realities which are really rooted in our own flesh and in our own spirit.” Therefore, since we are going to work on *Why the Church?* for at least a year or two, we shouldn’t lose sight of Fr. Giussani’s invitation if we don’t want to have a reduced and abstract understanding of this reality. We need to understand a life, not a book. We need to understand a life! If this were not yet clear, he stresses that “the first difficulty in approaching the Church is a difficulty in understanding,” that is, a problem of knowledge. If, independently from the connection to School of Community, someone had asked us, “What do you think is the greatest difficulty in understanding the Church?” who would have answered that it is a difficulty in understanding? And the same thing that happens to those who don’t do School of Community, happens to us, too. This difficulty is “caused by the fact that the religious sense has not evolved” (p. 7). He continues – pay attention, Fr. Giussani is so aware of the human journey that each of us has to make, that he gives us all of the tools – that the first difficulty is not ethical (that is, it doesn’t have to do with the difficulties that we have in our life, it is not related to the scandals that may happen in the Church). No, no, no – it is a problem of understanding. However, for us, this almost doesn’t count. That is why he continues to insist, “The gravest errors along all of man’s pathways have their origins rooted in the religious sense” (pp. 8-9). What is the root of the question for him? It is the fact that we lack an education in the religious sense, because only an educated religious sense can be “the irreplaceable yeast needed for a reasonable progression” of our ability to know. On the contrary, a religious sense left undeveloped “becomes a hindrance to every step of the way.” That is why we often find ourselves with this “hindrance,” and we get distracted by other things without understanding that the origin of the hindrance lies precisely here. Therefore, what does Fr. Giussani do? “Since we have reached the final volume of this trilogy,” *Why the Church?*, he goes back to the point of departure, that is, to the first chapter of *The Religious Sense*, where the criterion for judgment is explained: elementary experience, the religious sense, with which we can judge the reality of the Church. Then, with this education, we can recognize in ourselves that correspondence that makes us understand the reason why. “I would stress that this correspondence [as if he were thinking of each of us today, we who are a bit reluctant to recognize the significance of the matter] is revealed within a living religious sense and it is only fostered by its continual education” (p. 9).

That is why, in doing the work of School of Community, I can see – based on the questions that arrived – that you immediately went to the heart of the matter: How can we educate to the religious sense?

*This is precisely the question. Considering that the absence of education of the natural religious sense all too easily leads us to perceive these realities as removed from us, how can we educate the religious sense? Because too often I take for granted both sensitivity to the religious sense (because I think that I am ready and by now able) and the fact that the Church is the answer to this religious sense.*

Do you have any hypotheses? After years of studying the religious sense, after years of studying the Christian claim, and now the Church – do you have any suggestions?

*Follow the Movement.*

Thank you.

*How can we constantly educate this religious sense as we live? I have realized that I don't want to live for a meaning that I unconsciously decide, that is inevitably present, but that, in the end, turns out to be inadequate. I don't want to end up short-changed because during the day I lived with a poor awareness of my need for meaning. I would like to always feel aware of it in my flesh, because after a day in which I haven't kept this religious sense alert, I am seized by sadness, and I feel this very strongly. However, this pushes me and makes the first pages of the text that we are reading necessary, captivating, and very promising.*

Based on what you said, my friend, based just on what you said, how are you educated to the religious sense as you live your life? Based on what you said! Did you say something that has to do with the religious sense?

*That is...*

When sadness seizes you, is this the religious sense or not?

*Yes.*

Life... You can spend your day however you want to, but from within life, in the evening, the sadness emerges that seizes you. Where does the religious sense come from? As you said very well, it comes from life. However, if we don't realize this, then we will continue to ask the question: How can I be educated to the religious sense? Simply by recognizing what emerges in you. It's not religious sense to have a lesson on the theory of the religious sense. The religious sense is an experience – among other things, it is this sadness that seizes you and that arises from living. The more you recognize it, the more you start from there. Do you understand? This is the question. What is the religious sense? To say it briefly – from Chapter 5 of *The Religious Sense* – what is the religious sense? I will read from the book. “The religious sense lies within the reality of our self at the level of these questions: *it coincides with the radical engagement of the self with life, an involvement which exemplifies itself in these questions*” (*The Religious Sense*, McGill-Queen's, 1997, p. 45). It would be enough to become aware of this: educating myself to the religious sense is this engagement with my life. You find it in yourself in the evening or during

the day, through your tiredness, through the longing, through the solitude, though the questions that life raises in you. The religious sense coincides with this. It's not necessary to do who knows what; it is necessary to live reality intensely! This engagement of our "I" with life is what we have to face. Let's take a further step. How are these questions reawakened? Do you remember how the questions of the religious sense are reawakened? Does this question remind you of a chapter in the book?

*Yes, in the encounter with reality.*

In the encounter with reality. Chapter 10 of *The Religious Sense*: "How the questions arise...." As you can see, it is impossible for reality not to reawaken the questions in you. The questions are reawakened in the impact with reality. The facts that happen have the power to awaken the questions, even if we are flat. One can be distracted, but in the evening, he cannot help feeling all of this longing. And we cannot say that recently we have not had facts that caused the questions to emerge even more clearly. Do the most recent facts, like those in Paris, have something to do with the reawakening of this level of the human experience? It would be enough for each of us to become aware of what impact those facts had on him. One person writes, "Every time that these things that shake the whole world happen, I always feel a disproportion in comparison with the journey that I am making [it is impossible for the questions not to come to the surface, the kind of questions for which an answer like those that we seek is not adequate]. At times, I think that the problem is that I don't have enough information about the facts [as if I could exhaust the nature of the question just with more precise information about the facts]. And perhaps even among ourselves in our community, we don't help each other and we don't provoke each other to have a gaze directed toward the whole, but instead, we limit ourselves to sometimes sterile psychological introspections [and instead, the desire to take that ultimate question seriously emerges]. The facts of Paris have been crucial for me in order to understand whether the experience that I have collapses in front of a fact like this, or whether it helps me to stand." Many times, in front of these challenges, we look for someone who can help us immediately; we are so lost and bewildered that we are immediately anxious to find an answer. However, this demonstrates how a fact that is so striking generates a kind of question that needs an answer.

*What you said before happened to me – that is, in general, it's not taken for granted that I become interested in what happens. However, when I saw that all of my friends were shocked, I started to gather information, and I was a bit bewildered in front of all of these things. I immediately found some help in what the Pope was saying – I went on the Internet to see if you or someone else had said something, because I understood that this was important, and I didn't want to just let it go by. However, I noticed that something was missing, because I went to a meeting with some kids who had prepared a presentation on Christians persecuted in the Middle East, and the indirect encounter with these witnesses caused me to think: they die for Christ, and what do I do with my life? The question was born in me again: Who is Christ for me, who for them is so concrete? What was missing, what I had bypassed, was my first reaction, the fact that I had felt bewildered and I had immediately looked for someone who would reassure me.*

What is the difference that you see between you, who were bewildered as a first reaction, and what you heard about those Christians? What do they have that you are lacking, or what are you lacking that they have?

*I often don't have...*

Because you hear someone speaking about violence that is far away, but they suffer it personally. Where is the difference?

*I often live my life feeling that Christ is something separated from me. Instead, for them, it's not like that.*

And yet you have heard about Christ, and yet you have Him in front of you, and yet you have found Him.

*Yes, I have encountered Him, but...*

Exactly. We shouldn't be afraid to say these things (as you did by describing it to me and then by saying it now in front of everyone), because this is part of the journey. This is precisely our difficulty. Fr. Giussani says it: "knowing it" is not enough to understand the significance of what we have encountered.

*Yes.*

And so?

*In fact, I was struck that, at the end of the meeting, an Iraqi doctor who lives there asked, "In your opinion, why do you think they do this?" One of us answered, "Because they find it very reasonable." She answered, "Well, more than for the fact that it is reasonable, it is because they have been totally captivated by the person of Christ."*

And that is why they are reasonable!

*Yes, but I wouldn't give my life for a reasonable idea.*

Is faith reasonable, or not? There are people who, in front of the extraordinary circumstances that they suffer in their lives, have a certainty that allows them to face them. We often do not. Another letter says, "In front of the facts of Paris, I felt shocked by what happened and lost as I tried to understand and judge. Gathering information from the media and discussing with friends and colleagues only added to the confusion. In the end, what was more concrete than any interpretation was the reaction of fear that made me look at what happened as a terrible threat. Therefore, I went and reread in *Vita di don Giussani* [*Life of Father Giussani*] how he had reacted to the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>. First of all, I was struck by how he emphasized the gravity of those facts. I am bewildered, too, but my perception is more superficial [it's not that one finds himself facing one fact and another finds himself facing another fact – no, we are all facing the same fact, but one is able to grasp it and another remains on the surface], whereas Fr. Giussani declares that everything is a sign, that the last word on reality is that it is positive, that God's mercy is the greatest word [how do the two things coexist?]. If I don't understand the reasons behind his statement about the positivity of reality, I can even honor what he says, but it will not become my own judgment [this is the point: I can repeat the judgment that someone else offers to me, but it will not become mine unless I have the experience he had], and fear will remain more concrete." I can repeat a judgment that another person gives to me, but the fear remains, because fear is defeated by an experience, as

we will say later. “So I questioned myself about my fears. I don’t want people to die, I don’t want my friends to die, I don’t want us to suffer, I don’t want our contradictory civilization to be overpowered. I realize that, underneath all of this, that final implication, that ineradicable aspiration that life may be fulfilled is crying out. It is this last implication that Fr. Giussani’s words cause to echo through my fears, and Fr. Giussani’s words become reasonable, because they are intercepted by this last implication. Then, the words of the second chapter of *Why the Church?* become clear, too: ‘Something distinctly objective educated man’s subjectivity’ (p. 20). It is a presence in history that influences me, causing what I am – my ultimate core – to come to life, so that at last I can go beyond analyses and reactions and begin to look at and recognize what happens. These are the traces of that shoot that you mentioned in your Christmas letter to *Corriere della Sera*, quoting Fr. Giussani: ‘We are truly able to be [...] the first protagonists of that profound change, of that profound revolution that will never – I say never – consist in what we demand, if it is not first [...] in us. [...] Unless a revolution of self, in the way of conceiving of oneself [...], without prejudices or reserves, begins among us’ (“The apparent fragility that continues to cause us to reflect,” *Corriere della Sera*, December 22, 2014).” In fact, what did reawaken all of these questions, all of this turmoil, all of this sense of peace? Some facts. Life is always full of facts – thank God that they are not all as sorrowful as this – that in one way or another reawaken all of the questions in us. Another person asks me, “Why should Christianity be precisely the answer to this problem, as the School of Community says?” We need to leave this question open, because what is proposed throughout the book is precisely the verification of this: whether Christ is truly the answer to this question. The problem of the Church is precisely this: whether I can reach an objective certainty that Christianity really answers the religious problem. It is a hypothesis that needs to be verified. No one else can answer for us. You can read the answers that Fr. Giussani gives in the book, but as soon as some event happens, if that judgment is not yours, then you will feel lost (as we have often felt lost in these days). This hypothesis that we need to verify is precisely the journey of *Why the Church?*, which is not a book that we have to learn to repeat, but a book that we have to live in order to verify whether the questions that life asks, the questions of the religious sense, find an answer in what the Church passes down to us and makes us experience through its life: Christ, Christ as the answer to the drama of living.

*I read an article on the internet about a fundamentalist who urged people to rape Christian women and to behead Christian men, and this question arose in me: How can the Lord, who claims to love us so much (and I was thinking only about us Christians), allow such a person to live? Why doesn't He eliminate him with a snap of his fingers? Why does He allow innocent men and women to suffer such horrible violence only because they have a different faith?*

Do you see how, in the end, our reaction is exactly the same as those whom we criticize? It is of the same nature that emerged earlier – a reaction dictated by the action of another person. What is the difference?

*The more I was asking these questions and trying to imagine the enormous suffering of these people who have to live daily with the fear of being the object of violence and killing, the more all of what*

*is happening became a scandal for me. During the day, I continued to go about my daily business, but this question continued to come back and wouldn't leave me in peace. That evening, I went to Mass, and the priest, in commenting on the Gospel, said, "While He was creating each of us, God had His gaze fixed on Jesus." Upon hearing this statement, the question that I had been carrying within me all day re-emerged: How is it possible that God created that man while looking at Jesus, that man who hates Christ to the point of killing those who love Him? But the homily did not end there. At a certain point, the priest repeated the words of the Gospel that he had just read, "And the Word became flesh and dwells among us." While he was reading the Gospel, I had listened to this phrase as something that I had heard many times; instead, when he repeated it during the homily, it was like a slap in the face – I immediately thought of the day when I encountered Christ for the first time in my life. I realized that I, too, had been like that man – I had hated everything that had to do with faith, I had thought that it was something for weak people, and I used to mock those who believed, no matter what they believed in. I told myself, "When Christ decided to bend down to you, you were anything but good and pious – you were full of evil down to the marrow of your bones, you weren't even one of His people because you hadn't been baptized! But this didn't stop Christ from coming to take hold of you to love you every day of your life." This observation not only revealed the truth about myself to me and freed me from the sense of scandal that had accompanied me during the day, but it caused me to have pity for that man, to the point of entrusting him to the Lord. Continuing to hate him would have meant, first of all, eliminating myself and the whole experience of Christ that I have had up to now. Until today, I had always considered farfetched what Jesus says to His disciples – "Love your enemies." However, since I experienced it today, I will no longer be able to think that it is impossible. It is really true that what rules my heart is the love that an Other has for me, because I had not felt so free in a long time. I really want to thank you for the work of this year, for continually insisting that we have to go to our core in order to be able to face all of life's challenges. I feel that what happened to me is an example of this. Only by taking seriously what happens in me as I run into the reality that provokes me, can I reach the heart of the questions. Any other method leaves me with assumptions – even good and correct ones, but sterile.*

Do you understand? We can know that the Word became flesh, but what imposes itself is another reaction – to the point that one doesn't realize what he has received. However, you wouldn't have understood this again in all of the density with which you said it now, if you had not been reawakened and almost shocked by a question through which you were able to recognize the answer given to you in that priest's homily (otherwise you would have listened to that homily like we usually do...). In order to recognize even a crumb of truth, one has to have a question, that is, it is necessary for a person's religious sense to be alert – otherwise, what is left of everything that we are told is just words. Because it's not that we are not told! Even just listening to some Gospel phrases being repeated is enough to grasp the significance of the answer that Christ is. The problem is that most of the time, since we don't have the question, we don't recognize anything. This is the origin of the problem, as Fr. Giussani says. Do you understand? It's not this one's fault or that one's fault. No. The problem is that we are not able to recognize the answer, and therefore we feel

that “repugnance” that is mentioned in the book, a repugnance that practically makes us run away. What overcomes this repugnance?

*At the last School of Community, you put us once more in front of the fact that without living the method that Fr. Giussani gave us, we will not be able to grasp the truth and relevance of the Christian fact. As I started this work, I lived this. On Monday, at the Diaconia with the university students, I saw again in you the unmistakable attraction of the life of the Church, the event of Christ that is alive again now, because there is a man who accepts it by starting from the constant comparison with his heart. In front of you, as you nailed us down with the question, “What is Christmas? What does Christmas have to do with what happened in France?” I finally felt at peace.*

Because to you, Christmas seemed useless for providing an answer to what happened in France! We needed something else. Christmas, which we had just celebrated, hadn’t left a trace to help us face the facts of Paris. This cannot be resolved by making another flier! I had to insist for the entire Diaconia in order to make you grasp the connection. Caught in the bewilderment of what had happened, how many people recognized some connection with Christmas (which, I have no doubt, we all celebrated devoutly)?

*In the total confusion of the previous hours, finally, my ears and my heart were patiently brought back to the truth, pulled out of the ruins – and not by an answer, but by a question. What is the Christian fact for you? Does it interest you? Why? As I heard this question, I found myself full of sorrow for my detachment, but immensely moved. I have experienced that the life of the Church, which manifests itself in a flesh in front of me, makes me go back, first of all, and live at that level that Fr. Giussani calls the religious sense. I am lacking this as a constant approach, but I am not afraid, because there is a place that gives it back to me. The same thing happens to me at charitable work. What a gift it is to have a place that gives me back the awareness of man’s destiny! I was profoundly amazed at how Fr. Giussani describes me, step by step, in this first chapter, especially when he speaks of the repugnance that man has for the fact that the religious sense dominates. It is true that this is the wound of original sin, because it is the absence of the question that prevents me from letting myself be loved by His ways in reality. It was the fact of finding myself in front of you on Monday that reawakened me and allowed me to engage with the religious sense again, and therefore also with the boy with whom I do charitable work. Here I understand why Fr. Giussani speaks of sharing a life with the Church. Without the Church, my heart goes back to being buried in ruins. Seeing you already enjoy the fact of Christ so much because of the commitment that you live with your heart is calming.*

What amazes me as I think of this repugnance is this: How did the prodigal son overcome it? It was this repugnance that caused him to leave home, because he felt that the place that could determine life in all of its factors was not enough. What amazes me is that what overcame the repugnance was not fighting it – the victory was not the result of an ascetic journey. He didn’t say, “Now I have learned how to mortify myself more, so now I can go back to my father.” This wouldn’t have defeated the repugnance. He would have gone back with a bit more training, but

with the same hidden repugnance. What allowed him to overcome the repugnance to the point of wanting to go back home was the fact that he understood his need. This is what Fr. Giussani essentially says: we feel this repugnance (we can also feel it at some points during the work on this book) because we have lost the awareness of our drama and our need. This repugnance cannot be overcome by fighting against it, but by becoming aware of what we are, by recognizing what our need is. Because when one understands what his need consists of – like the prodigal son – then he doesn't even remember the repugnance! That is why what happened in Paris is for our maturity, like everything else that the Mystery causes to happen or allows to happen. Many people felt a sense of impotence, and this is the first thing that we have to look at. How is it possible that a fact like this can make one feel lost in front of life, when others – as we have seen – don't feel this bewilderment? This tells us something about the experience that each of us is having. Here we have a fact that involved everyone, a fact that everyone lived. Each person can see in himself, objectively, how he lived it; he doesn't need someone to tell him. It is a simple test for our own journey, because it tells us what the nature of the question is that provokes the sense of impotence or bewilderment. Usually, we think that bewilderment is provoked by these facts, that the facts that happen are the cause of the bewilderment, but that's not it. The facts aren't the cause of bewilderment, but they are what emphasizes how lost we are! The facts don't have the power to generate fragility and bewilderment, unless one is already fragile and bewildered. In that case, anything is enough to emphasize it. For this reason, it is important to observe ourselves in action, because our problem here is not to look good. We are interested in understanding, we are interested in making a journey and judging it. Many people felt this bewilderment, and many tried to answer it. Each person tried to give an answer – some looked for more information, some went to the demonstration in Paris, some talked about it with friends. Each person has to verify if the attempt that he made eliminated his fear and helped him to leave the bewilderment behind. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it; life doesn't give anyone a free ride, with or without a flier from the Movement! Because often the flier is what we use to mask our nakedness – we have something to distribute to others, and so we don't have to think about the issue. This doesn't mean that we will not end up making another flier, as it happens on many occasions. The problem for us now is to try to observe our attempts to deal with this bewilderment. Each person has to observe himself and judge. With regard to this, I was struck by a text (“Christmas: the Mystery of God's Tenderness,” *Traces*, no. 11/2005, pp. 1-2), which has accompanied me during the Christmas season, in which Fr. Giussani says that we look for our consistency in what we do, or in what we have. Precisely because of this lack of consistency, we often think that we have to do something, and we look for the answer to our lack of consistency in what we want to do. Then we do something – and each person can identify what he did – but this doesn't take away the lack of consistency. How many people came back from the demonstration in Paris with less fear and less bewilderment, regardless of the number of those who took part in it? That is why Fr. Giussani insists: if we look for our consistency “in what we ourselves do, or in what we are [...], our life never has that feeling, that experience of full certainty, which the word ‘peace’ indicates, [...] that full certainty, that certainty and that fullness without which there is no peace and thus no gladness and no joy. At the most, we

are gratified by what we do, or pleased with ourselves. And these fragments of gratification in what we do or in what we are bring no delight and no joy, no sense of secure fullness, no certainty and no fullness.” When we don’t understand this, we continue to re-propose solutions that are precisely those that lead us to this sense of bewilderment. However, at the same time, while there are people who are bewildered, many among us are not. Why? It is not because they are more intellectual or better informed. Recently, at one of our meetings, one of us said, “In front of the facts of Paris, my first thought went to the life of the Movement.” Before any other consideration, my thought went to the life of the Movement, to what we live. Because what gives us consistency is a life about which we are passionate. Why? Because our certainty does not lie in what we do, continues Fr. Giussani, but rather in “something that has happened to us. Our identity, the consistency of our persons, the certainty of time coincides – literally – with this something that has happened to us.” Or, better, says Fr. Giussani, quoting Mounier, “*Someone* has happened to us.” This is the judgment, and it is not the fruit of a more acute analysis, because as Chesterton says, the problem of the learned is not that they don’t understand the answer, but that they don’t understand the problem, they don’t understand the enigma, and therefore they aren’t able to recognize the answer. Fr. Giussani constantly insists that without an education in the religious sense, without understanding the problem, we cannot understand the answer, as some of the witnesses tonight were saying. We have it in front of our eyes, we celebrated Christmas! But we don’t recognize it, because we continue to think that we need to do something else, as if saying this were a mystical position. In order to respond to facts like those that happened in Paris – people say – much more than this is needed... Therefore, everything that we said at the Fraternity Exercises (especially during the first lesson), at the Beginning Day, in Page One of *Traces* in May and December, in the Christmas article in *Corriere della Sera* – it’s like it doesn’t exist! Then we say that the Movement doesn’t judge, that we don’t have a cultural face! As I was saying at the last School of Community, it’s not enough to repeat a discourse. It wasn’t enough for the prodigal son to be born in a family, to have a father and a home, in order to grasp the full meaning of what he had in front of him, and he had to make a whole journey in order to discover it. It’s not that we have to leave, no, we can even stay in the Movement. But if we don’t make the journey, then we will be like the brother who stayed home and hadn’t yet understood. From where do we expect our salvation? From a reaction? From an explanation? Or from a life that we have encountered, made of all that we are living? Here we see how we find ourselves once again in front of the relationship between truth and freedom, about which we have spoken on many recent occasions. Because there is no other access to the truth of what we live except through freedom, as the prodigal son shows. We Christians could also think of answering – as we have heard – with the same violent logic as the terrorists. How often do we think that what is needed is a reaction that is at the level of the provocation because, in the end, God’s plan is too small to change reality? Who would have ever believed, as we said at Christmas, that by choosing one man, Abraham, God would have changed the world? So we are facing a choice. It is the choice that the people of Israel faced: Barabbas or Jesus. Barabbas, not so much as a criminal – as we think of him, thus reducing his character – but as the one who was fighting against the Roman oppressor by using ways that had greater impact,

that, in his opinion, were more effective. Jesus' method was considered not effective enough. Peter's way of thinking in the Garden of Gethsemane was also like Barabbas'. We have to decide. Not even we, now, are spared the decision between Barabbas and Jesus. Because the temptation is to think that Christ is not enough for us. However, when we live the life that has been given to us and respond to the needs – and we do charitable work, or GS, or the tutoring at Portofranco – whoever encounters us, regardless of his religious affiliation, finds something that brings him to say (like that young Muslim man said to one of our friends), “I cannot help but change my life after having seen something like this.” Or another, who said with a great sense of humor, “Now I am a better Muslim than before, but the problem of Islam is that it doesn't have GS – that is, there isn't a place where I can become more myself.” This interaction, when it happens, is the life described in Chapter 1, the life of the Church. The life that attracted us is the life that can attract others. Because we European Christians have a problem – we don't have to go looking for the others who knows where, we have them here at home, of any religion. The problem is what they see when they encounter us.

The next School of Community will be on Wednesday, February 25<sup>th</sup> at 9:30pm on Chapter 2 of *Why the Church?* The theme of this chapter is how to reach certainty about Christ. Fr. Giussani describes three cultural positions with which one can face the question. We can reduce these cultural attitudes to a description of the historical steps of our culture, but Fr. Giussani insists that these cultural attitudes can also be ours now. Therefore, the question with which I invite you to approach this chapter is: Where do you recognize any of these attitudes in yourself? We are not interested in knowing if we are at the height of it or not, but in where we discover these attitudes, in order to answer the question: How can we reach certainty about Christ? Because it is inevitable that we often succumb to these attitudes, to some of them or to all of them at different times in our life. For this reason, to be able to recognize them, becoming aware of them is what will help us to take a step forward.

**DVD and exhibit for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fr. Giussani's death.** Many friends of the Movement, particularly young people and the many people whom we have encountered in the past 10 years, never met, or even saw or listened to, Fr. Giussani in person. For this reason, at first we had thought of preparing an exhibit that could present the fundamental traits of Fr. Giussani through a few panels, with significant images and written passages from his life. However, as we were thinking about this exhibit, we said: But who, upon seeing him, wouldn't want to hear him speak? Who among us wouldn't want to get to know him? How many people, in reading *Vita di don Giussani*, were sorry that they couldn't meet him! So we had the idea of making a DVD with segments of Fr. Giussani's life, precisely in order to answer the desire to know him that we have found in many people whom we have encountered – people who became curious about him because they were interested in the presentations of the book on Fr. Giussani's life, or who saw the video for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Movement (*La Strada Bella* [*The Beautiful Road*]). In this

commemoration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, we answer by sharing with others what we have received, the grace that we received in knowing him.

The **DVD**, which is 55 minutes long, will be available for purchase on February 22<sup>nd</sup> with *Corriere della Sera*.

The **exhibit**, entitled *Dalla mia vita alla vostra [From My Life to Yours]*, will be available as a free download in printable format on the CL website, starting on January 26, 2015. It is within everyone's reach, and you will be able to decide how to share it with whomever you wish in the various communities, work environments, apartment buildings, etc. Therefore, we already start this 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a task, to continue to share with everyone what we are living, which – as we said – has been received beyond all of our expectations. Imagine what can happen if they find him, his face and his voice!

**Fraternity of Communion and Liberation.** Those who want to enroll in the Fraternity and then come to the Fraternity Spiritual Exercises must submit their request by Monday, January 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Papal Audience on March 7<sup>th</sup>.** I remind you that, in order to participate in the Papal Audience on March 7<sup>th</sup>, you must register by February 12<sup>th</sup> through the secretary of your community. Among the songs that we will sing at the audience, I ask you to learn or to review in particular the Lenten Hymn *Sempre cantiam al rifiorir del giorno*, which we will sing in the square, and the Argentinian song that we want to sing to the Pope, *Zamba de mi speranza*.

Book for January and February. On the *Tracce* website, you can find a video of the interview with Fr. Francesco Braschi as a presentation of the book of the month, *La conversione al cristianesimo nei primi secoli [Conversion to Christianity in the Early Centuries]* by G. Bardy.

**Pharmaceutical Bank.** On Saturday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, the 15<sup>th</sup> national day for the collection of medicines will be held in more than 3,500 pharmacies in 97 provinces.

*Veni Sancte Spiritus*