

Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón
Milan, March 22, 2017

Reference text: L. Giussani, Why the Church? McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2001, pp. 155-162.

- *Non son sincera [I am not sincere]*
- *The things that I see*

Glory Be
Veni Sancte Spiritus

“I am not sincere.” We are often stuck in our evil and when we become aware of it, the entreaty arises: “Let me encounter [...] He who is sincere, He who is real/He who I can at least follow” (A. Mascagni, “Non son sincera,” Songbook, p. 232), that is, someone who can reawaken me, who can get me unstuck, who can set me back on track on the path of life. The Lord answers this entreaty and life changes: “The things that I see / got me laughin’ like a baby [...] got me cryin’ like a man. / The things that I see / I can look at what He gave me! / and He’s gonna show me / even more than I see” (R. Veras—M. Maniscalco, “The Things That I See,” Songbook, p. 34), and my horizon widens, and all of my religious sense is re-awakened. That is why we continue our journey, to recognize more and more what the task of the Church in the world toward earthly man is.

I would like to ask you a question: Isn't the statement that the function of the Church is educating man to the religious sense too narrow? One of my daughters, when she was a little girl, wasn't curious about big things, she didn't show any great desire. I remember telling my wife, "She lives without a sense of expectation, actually she seems to lack any religious sense." My wife answered, "You idiot!"

Your wife doesn't mince words with you!

No, she is smart, she is intelligent! "Our daughter has the religious sense like everyone else, we just need to help her, to educate her," she told me. I wished that my daughter could live fully a great sense of expectation. Then, with time, this expectation showed in her as restlessness, as a restless waiting. Then, my desire changed, and I began to wish that she no longer simply lived the religious sense, but that she could perceive the value of the Church that I have learned, that I have "tasted" in the movement. Something more than the religious sense, the perception of the presence of Destiny within a human companionship—free to embrace it or to refuse it—but that she at least could perceive it. I wished that she could realize that life is not an undefined search, but rather that in a specific place, in a reality made of men, there is a density of life that is what we are looking for. The question, then, is: Isn't it too narrow to say that the function of the Church is an education to the religious sense? This statement is true, very true, but isn't it less than saying that the function of the Church is to educate man to faith, that is, to recognizing Christ mysteriously present among us?

In your opinion, what can make recognizing Christ present among us easier? If the purpose is recognizing Christ, what can help with this recognition?

Certainly, waiting for Christ with one's whole self.

In fact, you can recognize Him precisely because you are waiting for Him with your whole self. *Yes, but waiting in the sense of education: being educated to wait, being educated to the answer.* This is the problem. I think this is a very pertinent question. It is very pertinent to the times in which we are living. What Fr. Giussani said when he spoke in Chieti many years ago, in 1986, comes to mind, something that helps us understand his insistence on being educated in the religious sense: “We Christians in the contemporary climate haven’t been separated directly from Christian formulas or from Christian rites [...], or from the laws of the Ten Commandments [...]. We have been separated from our human foundation, from the religious sense.” (L. Giussani – Chieti 1986, in A. Savorana, *Vita di Don Giussani*, BUR, Milan, 2014, p. X). When he began to teach at the Berchet High School, Fr. Giussani realized that all his student knew the Christian formulas. In fact, in Milan in 1954 it was unheard of that a boy hadn’t attended the parish religious education program, hadn’t learned the Christian formulas, and hadn’t received the sacraments. However, at a certain point, all of this started to be no longer enough to make faith interesting for them. At the beginning of the Sixties, Fr. Giussani—as we read in Marta Busani’s book—was asked by Cardinal Montini to explain the reason for his insistence on experience. Fr. Giussani answered that the life he had shared with young people had shown clearly that “typically ‘Christian’ words” didn’t correspond in the kids’ awareness “to any concrete experience in their lives.” Here is the problem! The students felt that “the Christian doctrine was abstract and without meaning for their existence.” (M. Busani, *Gioventu` Studentesca. Storia di un movimento cattolico dalla risostruzione alla contestazione [Student Youth: The History of a Catholic Movement from the Time of Reconstruction to the Student Protests]* Studium, Rome, 2016, p. 233). Their freedom had not been set in motion so that they could recognize and adhere to the doctrine. Fr. Giussani believed that experience was necessary to be able to understand and live the ideas that express the Christian reality. Only a personal experience would have made possible a new and more profound discovery of the teachings of the Church. Fr. Giussani identified well—as you can see—what we are often concerned about for our children, friends, coworkers, and the people we encounter along our journey. In fact, in *Vivendo nella carne [Living in the Flesh]*, he states that, “The reason why people no longer believe, or believe without believing (reduce believing to a formal, ritualistic participation, to gestures, or to moralism) is because they don’t live their own humanity, they are not engaged with their own humanity, with their own sensitivity, with their own conscience, and therefore with their own humanity” (*Vivendo nella carne [Living in the flesh]*, BUR, Milan, 1998, p. 66). Thus, this is not a secondary aspect—it is crucial to setting a person’s entire humanity into motion, so that one can really participate in the event of faith, an event that allows a person to recognize Christ. That is why Jesus constantly says that He has come for those who are sick, for those who have a wound, and not for those who are healthy. It is the cure for this wound that shows that faith is pertinent to the needs of life. In this chapter of *Why the Church?*, the topic is not the salvation of the world, that is, Christ. The topic is how Christ is useful to the human journey in our relationship with things, because one’s whole humanity, what makes us human, begins to re-awaken. What is this called? *Christian witness*. As happened to you, to us, and as it can happen to your daughter. One certainly doesn’t need to reduce the proposal to the religious sense. Jesus didn’t exclude His total presence, with all His human-divine features—we could say. He presented Himself with His whole self, and that was the witness that fascinated those who encountered Him: “We have never seen anything like this!” (Mk 2:12). The religious sense wasn’t enough to engage the whole humanity of those He encountered, to re-awaken man so that he could adhere. The total

presence of faith was necessary. What is the connection between faith and religious sense? The re-awakening of the religious sense is the true verification of the totality of faith. Afterwards, to adhere or not adhere is a free decision. Yet, the task of the Church is this, so that also your daughter may discover it.

On the 39th anniversary of the kidnapping of Aldo Moro (which occurred on March 16, 1978), I discovered by chance that when he was a young university professor in the Forties he wrote, "Despite everything, the historical evolution that we will determine will not likely satisfy our ideal needs: the wonderful promise that seems contained in the intrinsic strength and beauty of those ideals will never be fulfilled. That means that men will have to stay in front of the law and the state in a position of more or less acute pessimism. Their pain will never be completely comforted. Yet, this dissatisfaction, this sorrow, is the very dissatisfaction of man in front of his life, too often poorer and more petty than what its ideal beauty would make one rightly hope for. The pain of the man who constantly finds everything to be smaller than what he would like it to be, whose life is so different from the ideal he dreams about. It is a sorrow that is never appeased, only a little, when it is confessed to souls who can understand it, or it is celebrated through the arts, or when the strength of faith or the beauty of nature dissolve that anxiety and give back peace. Perhaps man's destiny is not to realize justice fully, but rather to hunger and thirst for justice forever. And yet, it is always a great destiny" (A. Moro, Lo Stato. Corso di lezioni di filosofia del diritto [The State: Course of Lectures in Philosophy of Law], CEDAM, Padua, 1943, pp. 7-8). This is a very current witness of the challenge that we face: living up to a desire that no circumstance can reduce. This is particularly true for those who, like us, have had the experience of an encounter in which we can verify that the expectation of our heart has been embraced, not resolved, but relaunched into reality, where Someone sacrificed Himself to allow Himself be found by those who never stop seeking Him: we are the Samaritan woman, the prodigal son, of today. For about a year I have been coming to your School of Community with an ex-coworker. He still claims to be an atheist, but his heart has not stopped asking. Things happened simply. About a year ago, he called me after many years during which we had not kept in touch, and told me that he had started to go to Mass. I was surprised. When he worked with me, because he came from a tradition of Marxism and social commitment, he always had many questions, he always asked me questions about many topics, about the Church, about what happened at work. He had an honest position, that is, it was clear that he was looking for some unity or for common ground. When he told me that he had started to go to Mass, I asked him why, and he answered, "To understand." The first thing I thought of proposing to him was to attend the video connection to your School of Community. So, for a year, once a month we have been having a pizza together, talking about life, and then we have been attending School of Community. In watching him, no longer a young man, listen to you so seriously and with such determination, I rediscover that I am made of an expectation that is never appeased; this hunger and thirst are the weapons to rediscover Him present in what happens, in those we encounter. Before School of Community, while we are having dinner together, our conversation is always a bit awkward, the problems always bigger than our ability to solve them. Instead, after School of Community, as we are going home, our problems are still the same, they are still there, but a sense of peace takes over and my friend often tells me, "Those kids who speak and are so serious with what they are living and with those they meet—it makes me see the things that I live in a different way and with greater hope." He continues to go to Mass

to understand, but he says that here, in this experience of the School of Community, he discovers that what he hears has to do with his own life. Thus, this gesture has become an appointment we look forward to more and more, and his tension has re-awakened me as well.

This is what continues to awaken hope: participating in a place where life is awakened. We know, as we always see in the Gospel, that what happened to those who encountered Jesus was the re-awakening of their hope—“We have never seen anything like this!” Like a university student who is abroad with the Erasmus program tells me: he has met another student who, each time they get together, asks him a ton of questions with a beautiful simplicity. “Last week, while we were having a beer, he told me, ‘You know, since I have been talking with you it is as if I had within me a wave that I didn’t know I had’ (he rediscovered himself). We speak about deep and yet basic things, essential things. I was deeply struck because I saw that I—in my inability, not due to some merit that I do not have—am an instrument in bringing to life the true nature of another, in making some questions arise in him in an authentic way in front of life. It is really true that only by encountering someone can one change and become more himself, and also discover that I am the instrument of what filled my life with joy.” That student he just met has begun, through our friend who is studying abroad, to participate in what Christ has come to bring; he begins to experience “a wave within,” a “more” of humanity. We must understand well the nature of this phenomenon, because it describes the very nature of the Church. One of you asks me, “In the past weeks we had proposed to our friends to recount how the Church introduces us to the Mystery and how our consciousness lets itself be accompanied through what happens. A discussion ensued on what the Church is. That is why I would like to ask you if we can look deeper into what the Church really is, where we can discover that the Church is fulfilling her task. Because, sometimes we identify the Church with the companionship, and in some passages I agreed with some of the reasoning, while in others I totally disagreed.” It is as if we continued to wonder: In the relationship we are living, in the way in which we live the life of the Church, is it clear what the Church truly is? The contribution of this chapter is fundamental, first and foremost because we can understand what the Church is by seeing the way in which she presents herself. We can live it authentically, or we can ask the Church to give us prepackaged solutions, but this second way generates negative consequences. First, if the Church did that, says Fr. Giussani, she would fail in “her foremost educational attitude,” and second, this would devalue time and impoverish history. That is why Fr. Giussani gives as an example of an ambiguous way of keeping each other company or of understanding the Church that of the man who asks Jesus to be the judge between him and his brother on a matter of inheritance. Fr. Giussani writes that this temptation is always lurking— at the time of Jesus there were always some teachers one could turn to “to resolve quarrels and controversies. How instinctive [he underlines] it is in man to think he has found the source of solutions to his problems! However, Jesus [pay attention!] immediately clears the air of this misunderstanding.” There can be a misunderstanding in what we ask of the Church, as there can be a misunderstanding in what someone asked of Jesus. That is why Fr. Giussani says that “undoubtedly, He must have disconcerted his interlocutor” with his response, because one would expect Jesus to be involved to the point of resolving the problem. Instead, Jesus doesn’t fall prey to the illusion of thinking that by doing so He would help that man. He doesn’t fall prey to the illusion, says Fr. Giussani, of those parents who think that they can solve the problems of their children by taking their place. This is not the task of the Church. In fact, “this would be an illusion for the Church, too, because it would mean falling short of its educational task. [...] Moreover, this illusion would also diminish the

essential history of the Christian phenomenon, and it would impoverish man's journey" (p. 155). Imagine parents who did the homework for their children: would this be true love for their children, or would this taking their place rather make them more and more incapable of facing challenges? It would empty the meaning of time and impoverish the journey of their children. There is a way of conceiving our being together, and the task of the Church toward us, against which Jesus rebels. In fact, He doesn't accept the role that we want Him to play. Likewise, the Church cannot accept it either, and neither can our companionship, because it would fall short—the Church and our companionship within the Church—of her educational task. Therefore, we cannot finish this chapter without asking ourselves what we ask of the Movement. We often ask for solutions, and if it doesn't give them to us we think that it is falling short of its educational task; for example, when we ask to be told for whom or how to vote. Instead, the task of the Movement is to set us on a journey, without emptying our humanity. This is not intimism, this is not a religious choice! It is simply Jesus's method in dealing with the two brothers: "If you put yourself in the adequate condition, you can find the answer on your own." What does Jesus do not to give in to their request? He challenges their freedom and their reason: "Realize that if you are attached to money, even if I gave you the solution, you wouldn't be able to accept it." Fr. Giussani adds that this is not "a magic [pay attention to the expression he uses] formula for the mechanical avoidance" of mistakes, but "is the basis for which the solution may more easily be more human." What is the sign that it is human? "The essential symptom of the humanity of a solution is freedom." Jesus trusts in the fact that if man takes the right attitude, he will be able to find his way. Likewise, He knows well that if man refuses to put himself in the right attitude, even if He offered him the solution, he wouldn't be able to accept it. Thus, man is re-awakened to the right attitude and can then find the way, says Fr. Giussani. In fact, only then, spurred by the Church to live with a true religious attitude, when man adopts this attitude, he "soon start[s] to experience an energy and pride [pay attention here!] in settling down to work [...] with a special kind of intensity" (pp. 157-158). The sign of this attitude is that we are more and more engaged, we are ever more involved with reality, and we have the desire to get our hands dirty without expecting someone else to give us the solution. This is what will truly let the person grow, helping him participate in that fullness that Christ wants to communicate to man in history. Instead of impoverishing the journey, this makes one experience the energy to enter the details of history, the concreteness of problems. When I was young, I didn't want to just repeat what my math teacher was saying, I wanted to learn it! So, today I want to learn what Fr. Giussani says, I want it to become mine! This cannot happen without the involvement of my self, without my freedom being constantly engaged. If this energy is not constantly re-awakened in us and re-proposed through what happens in life, it will never become ours. Like when I see another person live reality intensely—if this doesn't become mine, I will not be able to perceive that faith is pertinent to life's needs. I can verify this only if I am fully engaged. A person writes to me, "How do I recognize that the Church is fulfilling her task with me?" I recognize this if I see that my person grows within the reality I live, that my person becomes more and more engaged, that I am able to get my hands dirty and I want to discover the solutions. Because this is my task. "This part of the School of Community made me reflect at length—writes a person who couldn't come this evening—on our history and on the ambiguity to which we have succumbed, as you reminded us at the Fraternity Exercises three years ago. 'In a history in which God has become flesh as the proof of His love for men, to be committed to the problems time presents us is the first form of charity' (p. 159). This statement found me enthusiastically engaged for many

years of my life, and many other people with me, but I realize that if this commitment doesn't consist first and foremost of putting oneself, and the things and circumstances that create the problems, in relationship with the foundation of life, one becomes confused [to connect things and circumstances with the foundation of life: this is authentic religiosity] and one thinks that the solutions lie in one's own generosity. There is so much dogged persistence in these kinds of solutions! And everything is done in good faith, but the call was listened to only halfway [that is why we must pay attention and see whether the way in which we live our staying together reaches that point, because this can't be done by others in my place]. I noticed that only when one is aware of one's total dependence on the Mystery can gratuitousness be born within one's actions. Also in moments of conflict, it is always this awareness that makes us consistently refer to a positive hypothesis while tackling difficulties. For me this has been a true correction of my own experience, the possibility of considering all the factors and thus giving a better answer." If we pay attention, we have in our own experience the possibility of being corrected. How do we know if one is truly religious (in fact everything we say to each other is to educate us to true religiosity)? As Fr. Giussani always told us, we know that one is truly religious when he doesn't live reality by remaining only at the level of appearances. What is the sign, what does Fr. Giussani say in Chapter X of *The Religious Sense*? How do I know that I am truly living reality? If I breathe. If I suffocate, it is because I am a positivist, that is, I remain at the level of appearances. That is why if we don't get engaged in reality with the awareness of a total dependence on the Mystery, if we are not led to the Mystery, if there isn't a vanishing point, we suffocate.

As I worked on this chapter, as always, what at a certain point makes me understand what it is talking about is to discover the meaning in an experience I have had. This seemed to me particularly clear in two moments in the life of the Movement. First, Fr. Giussani's judgment on the outcome of 1968, which seems ancient, but that we have revisited recently. Why that disaster in the Movement? He summarized it by saying, "We didn't look for Him day and night." Lately, you have insisted again on revisiting that judgment and told us, "Note that it is relevant to our situation, note that it is pertinent to our experience of the Movement now." In reliving that situation in light of the judgment on it, it is as if I saw the entire contents of this chapter unfold in front of me. What does this "we didn't look for Him" mean? That we did everything except one thing? Or that we were supposed to do this instead of other things, looking for Him day and night instead of participating in the assemblies, instead of being, as you have reminded us now, so passionately involved in everyone's problems? The answer is on every page, but I will say it with a brief quote from p. 158, where Fr. Giussani speaks of freedom and history, where he says that "Because God did not insert us in the flow of time for no reason, man lives within the possibility of solving problems." "Within the possibility of solving problems." Thus, the problem is absolutely not that one participated in the assemblies with the Student Movement (of any affiliation), it definitely wasn't that. Rather, the problem is that our searching for a solution wasn't searching for the possibility of an exhaustive solution, that is, adequate to our desire. Where is this possibility? Fr. Giussani says that it "does not lie within a mechanism conceived by man. Nor does it come from the outside—from things. Rather, this possibility is entrusted to man's freedom [thus it is entrusted to you] to link himself—and the things or circumstances creating the problem—with the foundation of life," like you just reminded us. For me it was crucial to understand that this is the judgment that tells me how my attempts become effective, rather than telling me what I must do instead of

making an attempt. I think this is fundamental for all of us. A second very quick thing, again related to the experience that we are living now. I think that the example from A. Manzoni that you reminded us of so extraordinarily well in Corriere della Sera—the encounter between the Unnamed and Federigo—is always fundamental, at least for me, to understanding the meaning of this chapter. There is the description of the hand of the Unnamed that becomes able to right “so many wrongs, which will perform such widespread good works, which will raise up so many of the afflicted, which will offer itself, unarmed, to so many enemies in peace and humility.” (J. Carrón, “Pope Francis in Milan: Hope in an Embrace,” Corriere della Sera, March 1st, 2017, p. 28). It is incredible. This is a very concrete way of describing how a man moves who understands people’s needs and wants to face them and answer them. What is very simple and extraordinary? What makes this hand capable of doing this? It is the encounter with Cardinal Federigo who told the Unnamed, “Do not prevent me from clasping that hand.” Therefore, his hands are in the hands of someone who allows him to discover the awareness that Fr. Giussani expresses with these words on p. 161: “Acknowledged dependence on God who created me, in whose hands I fearlessly remain; an affirmation that because the substance of life is Another, so my hope for my destiny is Another.” What today’s man is lacking is what our companionship in the Church can educate us to.

Thank you.

This year I began to do School of Community with three mothers. This forced me to really do the work of School of Community and it is wonderful, because of the relationships that are blossoming again, the miracles that happen every day. There is a true freedom in the way we are with each other, from the simplest things (“Can you take care of my daughter because grandma is sick?”), to the most delicate (“How can I restart the relationship with my husband? We have been arguing for months and I no longer know what to do. Please help me!”), to acknowledging to each other that the School of Community is the only point that holds up our life, to being thankful for what another person witnesses despite life’s difficulties, because it is clear that with Him everything is possible and life is really worth living. This immense gift God has given me began with meeting a friend. I had not experienced a friendship like this in twelve years—a friend who constantly shows me how beautiful it is to face my whole self, my freedom, my mistakes, my desire, my evil, my sins, without censoring anything, keeping everything at the same level, and who looks at me, as you were saying in the article in Corriere della Sera, with “a gaze full of affection to be able to face the incessant, daily challenges of life without fear.” (J. Carrón, “Pope Francis in Milan: Hope in an Embrace”). I realize that the tension of affirming reality according to Christ’s gaze is truly the foundation of peace, because if my husband works and comes home late, I might get upset and say to him, “You are never around! I do this and that, here and there,” but throwing at him my daily problems doesn’t make me happy, and even if my husband did everything I wanted, it wouldn’t be enough anyway, there would always be something else, and I wouldn’t be happy. It is clear that only if I desire that Jesus accompany me can I be happy. This is changing me, so much so that a friend told me, “I like this ‘new version’ of you.” First of all I am happier, everything is an embrace of Him and it a sign of His presence. Everything acquires a beauty, a freedom, a gusto, that allows me to stay up late at night, tired, to cook for a friend who needs it and who perhaps with a prepared meal will have an easier time. I find in my heart a gladness and a serenity that touch all of me, with no exclusions, which I desire for my entire life.

Thank you.

In the work of School of Community, I was deeply touched, provoked, and I would say irritated by the part that speaks of anxiety. If by anxiety it means that I am not able to pull back from the preoccupations of work, from my responsibilities, from the deadlines that continue to happen one after the other, that I am not able to stop losing sleep over them, to think about them even when I am with my family or on vacation, thus being not free in my relationships and in the use of time, then I am anxious. I have already worked on this text on other occasions, but it didn't affect me in the same way, probably because at the time I wasn't anxious. I am struck by the fact that Fr. Giussani speaks of anxiety as ultimately deriving from a forgetfulness of our original dependence, from the fact of not recognizing that what I consist of and where my hope lies is in God. Thus, instead of looking at reality with the gaze of Christ, anxiety is a lie that prevents me from affirming what I have recognized. I did and I do recognize this as true. I am passionate about the journey of a pilgrim who keeps walking toward the goal. I am not stuck in this position; I try to do the work that you propose to us, I ask God to change my heart, I stay with friends who are able to live reality without letting themselves be caged in by problems. I am working on this and I am sure of a good ending, but I ask you to help me to see more clearly this point, because it makes me suffer.

This question remains open.

I am very grateful for the work of School of Community. The circumstances that I am living in my work in this period are a verification of the contents of these pages. Beginning a few days ago, there have been changes at the top of the company where I work, and the climate is very tense and gloomy. Each person is somewhat preoccupied for the future, which might be different from the present situation, with all the consequences that this entails. Everyone is retreating into his own corner, trying to defend himself from a reality that seems hostile. I realized that I am not determined by the general climate, not because I am indifferent or detached, and even less because I am a hero, but because the School of Community is becoming a hypothesis for discovering what is happening. The first thing I have noticed is that the Church's education in the religious sense truly allows one to use reason, or better, it allows one to use it in a particular way, so that first of all reality stops being scary and the circumstances, even if apparently adverse, can be looked at as a positive possibility that one hasn't yet discovered, because I don't know how things will turn out. Yet, it is as if a curiosity has already arisen in me that asks, "Lord, let me understand what You want from me and what You are asking of me." A coworker of mine, preoccupied with the situation, came to my office, and after we talked about what was happening, on her way out, she said to me, "How nice to hear certain things in the morning! I will stop by also tomorrow." I hadn't said anything clearly religious, but just how I am trying to live the situation. I think that this way of using reason is the only possibility for being adults in the world, with the curiosity of a child that doesn't wane over time, but rather keeps growing. The second thing I am becoming aware of is that this education eliminates the preconceptions of the "already known," because it lets one see things in a way that corresponds more to what I have in mind. I think that this depending on reality is the most human way of depending on God. These days many other coworkers of mine have come to my office (I always keep the door open) asking about the future—and I don't work in human resources or personnel. When they come in, I think that they can depend on what I am able to tell them, but when they leave I actually realize that I am the one who depends

on them, because their need makes me see again my own need. Thank you for your companionship on this journey.

What defines my attitude is whether I retreat into a corner defending myself from reality, or if Christ constantly re-awakens me, making me able to enter into reality and see—due to the attitude He generates in me—the possibility of living reality differently. This is what amazes everyone.

I will recount an incident that shed light on the passage of the School of Community where Fr. Giussani speaks of the possibility of an exhaustive solution being entrusted to my freedom of keeping vigil in front of the origin and destiny of life. During my internship, I met an ex-professor who during rounds declared that he had stopped practicing medicine because it is a losing battle, since the patient ultimately dies. In the general embarrassment that ensued, I felt as if I had been struck by lightning, because this question had already been stirring within me for a while, and I was wondering: What is the point of curing the body if it is destined to die, even if death is temporary? I had never had a special interest in medicine, actually mine is sort of a late vocation, and therefore I was wondering: What am I really doing here? And why, during His earthly life, didn't Jesus refuse to cure the sick saying, "In any case I will give my life for you, so don't worry too much about your illness"? On that day, I understood that death is too big a contradiction, because man is made for eternity and that is why in every century humans have done everything they could to prolong life. Yet what is a life that lasts a hundred years but has no meaning? Why is it worth living? These last months, which were rather challenging both physically and spiritually, have brought me to a radical position (to which the CLU Exercises in December contributed a lot) that for me it is crystal clear that without Christ, without the relationship with him, everything becomes dust, and every goal I give myself in order to live in the end becomes nothing, so that even curing a person loses value. However, also on that day I saw that it is worth it to spend my efforts in that place because God has taken hold of me, because this relationship is present in my life. God grabbed me by the hair and through a companionship He showed me that everything doesn't run toward oblivion, but rather is destined for an unimaginable good that has already planted its seeds in this world that is so wounded. I could give so many examples. God has chosen me to cry out to everyone that Jesus has come to save everything about us, that we are wanted and loved eternally and that death doesn't win. Obviously, I can't do this by starting to comment on the Gospel in the middle of the hospital. In fact, I often saw the witness of people who showed me that the Kingdom of God is built in the instances of reality, in the small things transfigured by our waiting for Him. Thus, I learned to pray that Christ could make Himself visible in these small things I had to do (taking a patient's blood pressure, picking up a piece of paper from the floor, smiling to a patient one more time). I discovered myself different, in the sense that for me a job like putting sheets of paper in a folder—which seemed useless, boring, and humiliating to the resident who was working with me—was something that brought joy, even if it is not a physician's job. I understand well that all of this is the fruit of my journey of the past years following the Movement, of faithfulness to the charitable work, of all those building bricks laid by the Church, which continued to recall me to the humble habit of looking for the correct attitude. This is the fruit of the witness of all the saints whom the Lord has placed next to me. In short, I started to answer "Yes" to His faithfulness.

It is this faithfulness of the Lord toward us that, when we live in a place that makes the instant become constantly different, makes us live the circumstances with such density, makes us get our

hands dirty, doesn't allow us to be just spectators from the bleachers, but makes us get deeply involved with life. Then, our whole person is exalted and we see the pertinence of this attitude to the needs of life, because it makes us face reality differently. You said it using contrasting images, either boredom or joy. The joy of living in a different way. Or, like the previous contribution said, either living with anxiety or in peace. These are all signs documenting the fact that those who live reality in a religious way can begin to show others what faith means relative to life's needs, re-awakening in others, as we saw, all their curiosity and desire to participate. That is why we have been chosen, called. We have been chosen to live reality so intensely to give others a contribution that then they may or may not accept, according to their freedom. In any case, by living reality in a religious way, we can witness how much the Christian faith is pertinent to life, how much everything truly becomes different. Ultimately, it is what Jesus witnessed to us: by living reality in relationship with the Father, everything becomes different. But to live like this, I must not live the religious sense as something separated from everything else. To live the religious sense like Jesus lived it is possible only because of His relationship with the Father. This School of Community shows us, as we noticed in the passages that were quoted, what introduces us more deeply to this relationship. This happens in the way we face problems: while for others the instant is boring or without value, for us it acquires an unimaginable density. Yet, we each must verify it within the circumstances, because only that will be able to convince us. Otherwise, ours will only be a discourse that remains outside reality. Only those who become involved, only those who commit themselves—"commitment" is a word repeated often in this chapter—will be able to experience it in their own lives, will see their lives blossom again, will notice in themselves an energy and an intensity of living that otherwise would remain only on paper, or would be entrusted to the witness of others, but never become ours. In fact, life shines only when we commit ourselves according to the attitude that the School of Community invites us to have. Think of what life can be when it is lived like that, and of the contribution we can give to the world, to our coworkers, and to our friends.

The next School of Community will be on Wednesday, May 24 at 9:30 pm. Until then we will work on Chapter 8 of *Why the Church?*, "The Divine in the Church," p. 163 to the beginning of p. 169 (Ordinary Magisterium excluded). The initial part of the chapter is closely connected to the journey we have made until now. We will go over it in the School of Community in May, together with the Introduction to the Fraternity Exercises.

Easter Poster. The image is by Beato Angelico, *Sermon on the Mount*, and the text is a passage by Péguy that documents what the Church is, as we saw in the chapter we just finished.

"Miracle of miracles, my child, mystery of mysteries.
Because Jesus Christ has become our carnal brother
Because he has pronounced carnally and in time, eternal words,
In Monte, upon the mountain,
It is to us, the weak, that it was given,
It depends on us, weak and carnal,
To bring to life and to nourish,
and to keep alive in time

These words pronounced alive in time."

This is our task: "To keep alive in time / These words pronounced alive in time" for ourselves and for others, because only in this way will others be able to perceive them as interesting for living. And we as well. The phrase of Péguy that is quoted also in the School of Community (p. 127), recalls all of us to discover and live the presence of Christ today, through this life, in the gestures, in getting our hands dirty, through the way in which we face and live reality. As we said at the end of the last School of Community, and as many contributions documented this evening, only when people see us enter reality and live circumstances and daily commitments differently, do the things that we say become alive, the words communicated becoming alive because our gestures are speaking.

Book of the Month for April and May will be Fr. Giussani's *Il miracolo dell'ospitalita`* [The miracle of hospitality], (Piemme).

We re-propose this text that collects contributions and conversations between Fr. Giussani and the Famiglie per l'Accoglienza (Families open to host people in need of a family). "The supreme example of hospitality is God who had such pity on man that He became one of us and died for us." Hospitality is therefore the greatest fulfillment of charity, that is, of recognizing Christ, God who loved us. I think that this text will be very helpful also to better understand the letter the Pope sent to us.

The Fraternity Spiritual Exercises, besides the lessons and the assembly, consist also of silence, singing, prayer, and attention to the other. Thus, let's prepare ourselves to live them in their totality, so that they may become effective in our life. We will be able to experience what we say if our being together is something that, in our reciprocal support, places us in front of the Mystery, educates us to the religious sense, educates us to dependence, places us in relationship with the ultimate origin from which we depend, not only with words, but with living words that become gestures.

Meeting with the Pope. I remind the Diocese of Milan to participate in the Mass with the Pope on Saturday afternoon. The letter I sent to *Corriere della Sera* on this event (published on March 1st) can be used also in these last few days to invite friends, coworkers, and acquaintances.

Veni Sancte Spiritus

Happy Easter to everyone!