



THE LIFE I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH
I LIVE BY FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD

EXERCISES OF THE FRATERNITY
OF COMMUNION AND LIBERATION



RIMINI 2002

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Cover: Raphael, *Saint Cecilia Altarpiece*, detail of St Paul, Bologna, Pinacoteca

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On the occasion of the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation in Rimini on the theme "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God," the Supreme Pontiff charges Your Eminence with transmitting to the organizers and participants his warm good wishes and greetings, expressing his pleasure at the timely initiative, and in hopes that this may arouse renewed adherence to Christ and a growing commitment to witnessing to the Gospel, invokes abundant heavenly grace and gladly sends to Your Eminence who presides over the Eucharistic celebration and all those present the desired apostolic blessing.

Cardinal Angelo Sodano,
Secretary of State

Friday evening, May 3

M OPENING GREETINGS

During the entrance and exit:

Johannes Brahms, Symphony no. 4 in E minor, op. 98,

Riccardo Muti - Philadelphia Orchestra

"Spirto Gentil," Philips

FrPino (Stefano Alberto). I would like to greet, together with each of you, our friends in eighteen countries who are with us by satellite link. In the coming weeks, another thirty-six countries will follow these Exercises.

Being in this enormous space, which affords us an impressive sight, must not make us forget that in this instant each one of us is personally face to face with his Destiny; indeed, our gathering is conceived precisely as an aid so that each one of us may stand before that Presence to whom each of us is freely giving his life.

We begin this gesture with Holy Mass, asking the Holy Spirit to sweep away any tendency to take things for granted and any superficiality or distraction we might have, everything that could be extraneous to the truth of our hearts.

We ask the Spirit of Christ to make us vigilant, i.e., true and sincere in the expectation of an impending newness in our lives.

Let us stand.

Discendi Santo Spirito

HOLY MASS

HOMILY BY FR LUIGI NEGRI

The word of salvation resounds through all the world, the living Word of God, who is Christ, the Redeemer of man, present here and now in the mystery of this our ecclesial communion. It resounds in the world that is each of us, where we daily have the experience of the greatness of the desires of our heart, but also of our shameful readiness to forget this greatness; our heart where certainties and trepidations, joys and sorrows make their home. The Word who is Christ resounds there and summons our life to salvation, to new dignity, new freedom, to an immortal hope.

But the Word of God, the word of salvation resounds through all the world. With what wonder, with what immense gratitude to God, have we this year too seen the flourishing, the spreading of the same event that has happened to us in places and before men that we had not foreseen, in the open space of the world, there where man experiences every day how great is the power of darkness.

The Word of God who called us together - a few or many years ago - has resounded and resounds in the heart of so many of our brothers and finds possibilities of correspondence that we did not imagine and that educate and edify us.

The Word of God resounds, then, through all the world. The word of salvation resounds today in its absolute concreteness, in its pertinence, it engages each of us, because Philip and James and their generation remained faithful to the encounter they had had. It became something so completely one with that event - as the Pope reminded us in his letter for the twentieth anniversary of the Fraternity¹ - they became so united with the event as to become themselves an event for others.

By the mysterious and concrete web of the Christian tradition, by this passage from generation to generation, the Faith, the word of salvation comes to us and re-encounters us today. But it encounters us also because we have encountered in Fr Giussani's charism a form of Christian life, of education of our intelligence, of our heart and our will, to which we must remain faithful and steadfast, because only steadfastness in remaining faithful will make us participate, day after day, in the salvation that has been promised to us. This great companionship, totally sacramental, is the locus of the aid that is most continuous, most daily, most discreet, but also the most tenacious in keeping us faithful to the form to which we have been entrusted.¹

The word of salvation is, thus, mysteriously, but really, bound to the form of Fr Giussani's charism, in which - without any merit and despite all our faults - we have been called to participate and that has fermented within the heart of each one of us, identifying new opportunities for growth and greatness.

Thus let us remain faithful, so that the greatness of our life may be accomplished. the morality of our being, the possibility of working in accordance with the unheard-of promise of the Lord ("You will do greater things than these"¹); this Christian industriousness which for two thousand years has been testifying that the event of Christ is not over, but pervades the world and converts it by the force of the change which He generates in the heart and life of men.

Let us help each other to remain faithful, to be entrusted ever more consciously and freely to the charism. And may the heart of our life this evening

cry out the purest and simplest cry: "Repeat to me. Lord, the word by which you gave me hope." And may it be thus for each of us.

• INTRODUCTION

Fr Pino. "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God."⁴ Living in the flesh, within the circumstances in which everyone lives, within that vibration which is set up in the heart when - consciously or un-awares - we utter the word "life": mine, that of the persons dear to me, that of the one whom each of us recognizes and feels to be a father, of the one who introduces us to the true meaning of things, that of those who are suffering and those who live in hatred and insecurity - like so many of our friends in the land where Jesus was born and died and rose again.

We have come here to celebrate a rite, to feel good being together, even if our coming together fills our heart with a vibration of expectation, reawakens it to the greatness of what has happened to us in our life. We are here to realize what it means to live in the flesh, in the concreteness of reality, the encounter we have had as the blossoming of a different humanity within the humanity of all; we are not better, but different: we bear something new.

This instant cannot be a moment of inertia, lived because of a tradition - even if it is a beautiful one - or out of habit; the gesture we are beginning in these hours lies completely within the horizon of the invitation which Fr Giussani extended to us not long ago, in his letter in response to the letter from the Pope: "A new beginning is now opening up for us: to demonstrate, to re-demonstrate the evidence of the truth of what, following the Tradition of the Church, we have always said to each other."⁵

This demonstration cannot be a discourse or a series of definitions that are proper in form, but devoid of passion, intelligence, drama; it cannot be a series of obvious rules, a self-sufficiency which leads us so often to be content with surviving and never to take the risk of truly living.

What does living by faith in the Son of God mean, really, for me and for you? We cannot assume that we already know, as though the confusion which characterizes our day left us untouched. How could we ever think we could live within a general context without being influenced by it?

Preparing these Exercises together, Fr Giussani insisted on one point as a shortcut, which condenses the expectation of our change, the exercise of our responsibility in the face of all the beauty, the greatness, the new humanity that falls to us: the return to St Paul's expression in the first letter to the Corinthians: "God is all in all." It should be the most immediate thing, the

most immediately evident thing in our day. in our life; it should be the well-spring, the impetus of a leap of surprise, of wonder, of openness. And yet it is true that so many times precisely in this we adopt as our own everyone's mentality, maybe subtly, almost without realizing it, not because of outright rebellion, immediately not because of a will to sin or a desire for evil: we conceive of this phrase - "God all in all" - as abstract, distant, to the point of denying it in practice.

And it is true that if this evidence becomes abstract and distant, we lose that blow of truth recognized and loved, that attraction which is able to bind our heart and change our awareness, to move our freedom.

My friends at the Università Cattolica are doing a study vacation in these days, in which a great many new kids of all sorts are coming together. In the Faculty of Economics, they were the protagonists of dialogues with these kids, and one of them, who wanted - and almost succeeded - to organize a particularly imaginative evening of revelry, said: "What is Christianity, for me? Christianity is giving up what is human, what interests us, what moves man's desire, in view of a reward in the next life, afterwards," and he was struck - I would even say bowled over - by the evidence that he was with kids, with young people for whom nothing is extraneous to the human, for whom Christ does not put aside any desire, any surge of the heart, any resonance of the human, now, not in the next life!

We cannot take anything for granted; we cannot neglect the fact that the responsibility which Fr Giussani asks of us, for which he asks us to entreat a great clarity, so many times fails precisely because of the superficiality which causes "God all in all" not to resonate in our life.

All the drama of this responsibility begins for each of us with the recognition or not of this evidence, in the instants that make up our days. This is why the responsibility, i.e., the use of our adult awareness, our freedom, our humanity is in play right now. I am not an individual mixed up in a great crowd, but an I that has been struck, through my own frailty and limitations, by something altogether new, which I am expecting to happen.

Each of us. we have been told, "is responsible for the whole Fraternity in which he is immersed, whatever may be his current condition, of health or sickness, of gladness or trial."

We shall develop the theme indicated in this passage from St Paul through Julian Carron's words and my own, trying first all, tomorrow morning, to go more deeply into what it means that Christ is not a road, one among the many possible, but *the* road, and then in the afternoon, by comparing our experience with the fact that, since we have encountered Him. in our life Christ is the beginning of the end, the beginning already now of fulfillment.

I ask of you that this gesture be really the work of each of us, of our awareness and of our freedom.

Above all I urge you in particular, because none of us can say - if he is sincere - "I already know how it is, I have already understood. I already know that you are going to ask it of me," to live your exit and entrance into the auditorium and the bus trips in silence. This is the condition by which we can realize that our life is really now a relationship with Christ's presence. Skipping this means reducing this gesture to a great carnival...; I daren't go into this any more deeply.

I recommend, too, your own personal work on the lessons and the shared work in the assemblies tomorrow evening in the hotels, to bring into focus the points that can become immediately the subject of a comparison, a deepening, a clarification.

Once again I recommend order, which is not only an organizational necessity, but is the condition for expressing the beauty of a gesture, and every gesture bears the original constitutive dimensions of the 'I'. Thus follow, please, very promptly and simply the directions given by the secretariat for coming to and leaving the Fairground and for living together in the hotels.

This is a moment of responsibility. Each of us can concur with it in an orderly and obedient way, or can resist, as a claim of our flesh. "Everything [in life, even these two days, which are a paradigm of life] depends on a serene, and thus constructive, obedience on the part of our toil. This toil is at its origin a sacrifice that follows Christ, His death and His resurrection. To follow Christ, to love Christ in everything: this is what must be acknowledged as the principal characteristic of our journey."⁸

Saturday morning, May 4

m FIRST MEDITATION

Not a road, but the road

During the entrance unci exit:

*Liuiwii; van Beethoven. Triple concerto in C major
for violin, cello, and piano, op. 56*

*H. von Karajan - Berliner Philharmoniker,
soloists: D. Oistrakh. M. Rostropovich. S. Richter
EMI*

Fr Pino. God has broken through the distance at which we would like to keep Him, at which we normally keep Him with our thoughts, our reasoning, our images. His move, which is pure gratuitousness, reopens our conscience and moves our freedom. Our life, from the instant in which that young woman in the house in Nazareth said Yes. becomes a movement of freedom, an adventure of discovery of a relationship with the Mystery that becomes a companion to our life.

Angelus

Lauds

I would like first of all to pass on to you greetings from His Excellency Msgr Paolo Romeo, Nuncio of the Holy See in Italy, and then to read you the message sent by the Patriarch of Venice, His Excellency Msgr Angelo Scola, to Fr Giussani and all of us participating in the Exercises:

"Dearest Fr Gius, The wounds in the body of the Risen Christ into which Thomas put his hand, the time and space that no longer confine Him, the food that Jesus could but did not 'have to' eat, represent the manner of expression of His accomplished existence; they are the powerful signs of the flesh of Him who rose again in His real body and is really present in our midst.

In faith, from this moment on. our flesh, in a burgeoning way, already participates in the gift of the Risen One. The body. time, and space no longer have the face of an enemy, but are the road that leads to the fulfillment of our freedom: the Father's embrace.

Thank you, because you have made us touch with our own hands the fact that such an unheard-of humanity is possible and is really happening.

May Our Lady of Victory, who is venerated in San Marco, bring the victory of this faith to all the Christian people through the dedication of the many members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation.

With an affectionate hug."

1. The denial of Mystery as Being

To introduce this morning's theme - "Not *a* road, but *the* road" - let's reread the beginning of Fr Giussani's letter to us: "'The Movement,' the Holy Father wrote us, 'has chosen and chooses to indicate not a road, but the road towards a solution to this existential drama' of man who never stops seeking. 'The road... is Christ. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, who reaches the person in his day-to-day existence.'"

As we began our work in School of Community this year, we were made to observe that "it would not be possible for us to perceive fully what Jesus Christ means if first we were not well aware of the nature of the dynamism which

makes man a man. For Christ posits himself as the answer to all that I am. and only an attentive, tender and impassioned consciousness of myself can open me up and dispose me to acknowledge, to admire, to thank, to live Christ. Without this consciousness, even the name of Jesus Christ becomes just a name."¹

What does it mean in our life that even Christ's becomes just a name? What influence does the mentality in which we are immersed have on this reduction?

This is the first point of our meditation this morning. We too live immersed in a context, in a reality that surrounds us in which, concerning destiny, concerning the Mystery, abstraction triumphs, an image of God detached from life, from the urgency posited by our existence in the world.

Why? Even if it might seem a bit difficult put like this, it is because today we are witnessing what School of Community calls the ultimate realization of the idolatry in which man always risks falling, which is that of not giving God, the Mystery who makes us be, the chance to manifest Himself as companionship within our lives, as what makes me be, what is right now the wellspring at the origin of my being, of the flow of my existence."

In the mentality in which we are immersed and that conditions us. the ex-

perience of the relationship with the Mystery as relationship with the Origin, with the Being that makes us. is censored, eliminated. The problem of the foundation, the origin, of What makes me be. What makes reality be. What makes everything have substance. What makes it possible for the desires that crowd my heart to be fulfilled, is simply abolished.

It seems impossible, and yet it has happened. We live immersed in a context in which the word "God." "Mystery." is not formally denied, quite the opposite, but we manage to talk about God leaving aside the demand for truth. We no longer pose the problem of what it means that God is. that God is all in all, and thus the possibility is totally excluded that this truth may take shape, assume a face, become a reality that attracts our eye, that moves our freedom, that engages our existence, binding it to Him.

Denying not the name of God. but His being, means denying the possibility that He may be a real presence in our lives and that we may acknowledge Him as a discovery of our reason and adhere to Him as an act of our freedom. And all this normally comes about not as a tragic rebellion, but softly, with sentiment prevailing: so many thoughts, so many images. Faith, the acknowledgment of the Presence, the being of God. is reduced to a muddle of images.

This is Cardinal Ratzinger's observation: "A farewell to the claim to truth, which in and of itself would be a farewell to Christian faith as such, is here softened, granting to faith - understood as a sort of falling in love, with its pleasant subjective consolations - to continue to exist. Faith is transferred onto the plane of play, while up to now it concerned the plane of life as such. Faith as a game is something radically different from faith believed and lived. It does not point out a path, it is merely an ornament. It does not help us to live or to die: at the most it furnishes a little entertainment, a little bit of pleasant appearance - but. precisely, only appearance, and this is not enough for living and dying."¹

Here is the characteristic of this generic religiosity, reduced (I think you may remember the observations made by Solov'ev on the crisis of the Christian experience, that led to the rise and surprising spread of Islam in just a few years, starting in the seventh century), in which the relationship with the Creator, whose omnipotent distance is glorified, becomes a purely external relationship."

The creature without freedom and the Creator without form, without a face, not inside life, not the root of things, but distant, make the religious ideal something that serves so as not to draw on. not to let oneself be struck, not to let oneself be amazed by the meaning that is there and that comes to meet us in the impact with things. Religiosity has to guarantee an immediate fulfillment. a satisfaction, thus in this case a series of rules, of norms that give

some order to life. How many times does, for us, the relationship with God, the relationship with this history become the search or the expectation not of a meaning, but of rules, a security, some instructions that can set life right.

What is the most evident aspect of this religiosity lived as a purely external relationship? In the March issue of *Traces* you find this expression: "Flight from reality."¹⁴ Reality, experience understood precisely as the impact with the materiality of life that brings a new meaning, is no longer important. In a passage from Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*, the Tempter is advised to fill the head of his "patient" with confused thoughts, with opinions on "his" God, "his" time, "his" life, "his" woman, on everything that he considers ridiculously "his," on what should be or could be, so as never to let him dwell on what is, because being is the only thing that too clearly does not belong to him, that could call him back to the Other who gives him everything and who makes him.¹⁵

Flight from reality and refuge in the many myths, the many gods that can, for an instant, satisfy, put a particular of existence in order. There are even philosophers, like Calasso, who theorize the return of the gods of antiquity.¹⁶ The problem of the relationship with God is not if He is real or not, if He corresponds or not to reality, if He satisfies or not my desire, my thirst for freedom, freedom as responsibility in facing life, but if He puts the pieces of existence in order.

There is also a tendency on the part of some intellectuals to replace a reality that is felt to be hostile and inimical with their own interpretation: this is the return of the gnosis, in the sense that some initiates possess the ultimate sense of things and can decide what is real and what is not. Let's not go into too sophisticated reasoning: just think of the reaction to the latest elections in France: many people exorcised the surprising and worrying result by denying its existence since, they said, its outcome was theoretically impossible.

Especially after September 11, we have many times had occasion to run into this attitude that claims to reproduce, re-create a reality to suit its own purposes; since events cannot be foreseen, the unforeseeability of life becomes the enemy, the unforeseen becomes the incumbency of a fragility submitted to with fatalism. Maria Zambrano, a Spanish philosopher, observes: "Events can be foreseen, and the impression is given that nothing unforeseeable can occur... It is only when catastrophe arrives that we come to know."¹⁷ Therefore it is a tragic knowledge.

If you have read the press review that comes out every week on the CL site, thanks mainly to the work of Giancarlo Cesana, you will have found traces of this thought which spreads into our daily life. To cite just one example, Filippo Gentiloni in *Il manifesto* maintains that this fragility must be sought in God Himself: "God is violent because He arouses war in the Mus-

lims, and He is useless because He does not answer the Christians' prayer for peace. What we have in front of us is therefore a victory for atheism."¹ But rightly the reply was that it is not God who arouses wars, wars are unleashed by the hatred and falsehood of men. and it is strange that so-called secular thought tends to give so little importance to the working of man's freedom in history, as though everything were after all predetermined by a fatalism that dates to time immemorial.

But here is the tragic conclusion that is reached: God is bad and man is mortal and at His mercy. This is a dismal way of thinking, that does not have the courage, i.e.. the simplicity, to seek a good God because man is bad. The tone of our society, when it entrusts its liberation from evil to the moral efforts of man. becomes funereal. There are even those who. as Umberto Galimberti recently did. reach the point of wondering: Why renounce the gift of evil, seeing that we commit it. instead of abhorring it? Why don't we use it as a more direct channel, perhaps the only one available to us, for understanding others and communicating with them?"

A very different tone is given by this letter written by Giovanni, a young university student, to his father right after the tragedy of the Pirelli Building, the evening of April 18: ""Because of the experience that I am living, that I have encountered, my concern was not that I might doubt the existence of Christ, but that I might view it as a consolation. [How many times it is like this for us: in the face of the tragedy of living. Christ is a consolation.] What brought me to say that Christ is the first thing above all else was not the fruit of reasoning. It is what you and your colleagues made me understand by the way you lived this dramatic circumstance. I have finally (I think) understood what is meant by what Giussani calls 'the inexorable positivity of reality.' You made me understand it. you testified it to me. Dad, when in all that chaos you managed to phone home as soon as you could, to tell us that you were all right, and then set right to work, staying up all night, because now more than ever 'there are things that need to be done.' And Fiorenzo (whom I don't even know) demonstrated it to me when he phoned our house and without wasting time with formalities, asked where you were because people had to get together to re-organize. Mother and Maria showed it to me in a moving way when they did not run 'desperately" to look for you. but prayed. In short. Dad, what I want to tell you is that you have made me understand that in front of the 'gutted' Pirelli Building, the inexorable positivity of reality is not saying. 'Yes. but God exists anyway.' It is something entirely different, it is a group of persons who respond immediately to what has to be done. We. or at least I. always make mistakes because we struggle with our reason to look for Christ in the things that happen, but at the most we can identify Him in what

goes well for us. The greatness of God, on the other hand, the inexorable greatness, is that it is reality itself that continues to question us. And man's freedom lies in facing it, in responding to it. You don't know this, but Friday morning around 9:30 I went to the Pirelli Building, and I saw you with the others behind Fonnigoni, who was being interviewed. And your faces, after a tragedy and a sleepless night, were anything but tired and sad. Quite the opposite. So then I said to myself that in my little sphere, responding to reality was going to class at the Academy. And I was glad to go, not because there was a class that I might like, since I didn't even know this. I was glad to go because it was there and it was my freedom to face it."''

Facing reality. Because the alternative is precisely that of reducing the fact of our life to thoughts. We can cite the words of a well-known man of the Church, who in a public speech said: "Knowing is not the same thing as seeing, as coming into contact with something outside of us, but is above all an inner process, because the truth lies in our inmost being and the truth emerges at the end of a process of transcendence of self." Unfortunately, even in the Church contributions to the general confusion are not lacking. But in this way what prevails is a great moralism. It is not the analyses inside myself that open up my reason to the impact with the meaning of reality, and it is not rules that can touch and move my freedom to adhere to the good.

How true what Fr Giussani brilliantly notes in *Il senso di Dio e /'noma moderno \ The Sense of God and Modern Man*] is, about moralism, which always reduces freedom, always accuses man, or better, it accuses him on one hand and justifies him on the other. Some values are glorified and others are censured, full compliance is demanded for some, and for others, their absence is accepted and sometimes applauded.¹¹

I cite two striking examples in this sense. The first is the systematic censoring of the persecution and martyrdom of hundreds of thousands of Christians - especially in this century, especially in our own age. I urge you to read Antonio Socci's splendid book. / *nuovi perseguitati. Indagine suW intolleranza anti-cristiana nel mtovo secolo del martirio [The Newly Persecuted. An investigation of anti-Christian intolerance in the new century of martyrdom]*,¹¹ which documents the fact that thousands of persons every year lose their lives because of the simple fact of belonging to Christ.

The second is the abnormal emphasis given to the scandal of sexual abuse by priests in the United States, where it is so very evident that it is not an insistence on moralism that can give hope and fill man's evil with forgiveness.

In different ways, the two dimensions that represent the heights of the witness to the irreducible difference that lives in the frailty of the flesh of the Christian are under attack.

Who is able with his strength, with his thoughts, to give his life, his whole life for Christ? And who can live the sacrifice of virginity as the total giving over also of the most immediately natural manner of expression, if it is not Christ who brings this about, if it is not another light, another being that makes an unimaginable newness bloom forth in the frailty of man's flesh?

It is no coincidence that the two forms which testify most clearly to this possible difference within man's life - virginity and martyrdom - are under attack, either in a paroxysm of moralism or in the silence of censorship.

This is why we must adopt the realism with which Cardinal Ratzinger observes: "Certainly, the flight from the one God and His claim will go on. And the skepticism, for which there seem today to be stronger reasons than in Antiquity, will continue."

This is not pessimism, it is an invitation to look with humility, which means with realism, simplicity, i.e., with courage, at the context in which we live.

2. Being reveals itself in the event of Christ as charity for man

What overcomes the looming abstraction, the looming whirl of thoughts and imaginings in us? What vanquishes the yielding to setting ourselves up with rules, to clinging somewhat hysterically to the things that don't work out. to the point of complaint and disillusionment? What makes it always possible to start over afresh in our lives?

How moving it was to hear Fr Giussani say to us at the Responsibles Assembly. as you can read in *Traces*, picking up on something Paolo Sciume had said: "'New beginning' does not mean something new that we do, something that we invent, that has not yet been said or given. The new beginning is the replication of the Presence, of a Presence: it is a Presence that imposes itself, that touches us... What has to happen, in order for the new encounter to be the 'new encounter'... is to become again what we were. What were we? Nothing! [Friend, you weren't here, you weren't here: you're here!] Therefore, we must become again what we were, illuminated by a light that no one could build, could build for himself, on his own."³

In *L' autocoscienza del cosmo [The Self-Awareness of the Cosmos]*. Fr Giussani describes how this newness begins in life, which is not the bedlam of interpretations and of constructions. "Our religious sense, too, would be frail... if God. the Mystery had not become a Man and in that great forum of the world had not shouted: 'I am the way to destiny, because I am destiny,' if this Man had not come and had not claimed to identify Himself - this Man

who ate, drank, slept, kept vigil, and was killed and rose again - [if He had not claimed to identify Himself] with the divine, with man's destiny, with the true object of the religious sense. The object of the religious sense ultimately is the unfathomable Mystery; therefore, the fact that man thinks about it in such a way that he has a thousand thoughts about it is understandable. But the truth is one alone, it is just that man cannot reach it. So the Mystery became a human fact. He became a Man, a Man who moved about using His legs, ate with His mouth, wept with His eyes, who died: this is the true object of the religious sense. So then, in discovering this fact of Christ, the religious sense as well is revealed to me, is magnificently made clear to me."²⁵

What do we discover in this fact (not as a result of a reasoning, but through the impact of a difference that is otherwise unimaginable)? Not only that God is, but that God, towards me, towards us, is charity.

In Jesus of Nazareth - as *Si pud vivere cost? [Can One Live Like This?]* reminds us: " - God makes Himself known as the gift of Himself, the gift of Himself to man, the gift of Himself who is touched. What does He give you? Himself. What does this mean? God gives me being, He gives man the possibility to be. He gives man the possibility to be more, to grow. He gives man the possibility to be completely himself, to grow to fulfillment. He gives him the possibility to be happy, himself, He gives me His being: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."⁷

And then, when man least expects it (not being able even to dream of this, not being able even to imagine it), when man no longer thinks about Him from whom he received being, He comes back into man's life to save him. He gives Himself again by dying for man: "No one loves his friends as much as he who gives his life for his friends." "This is life. What He gives us is greater than what we expected. It is like an angle open onto infinity, to be fathomed as the time of life unfolds, to be experimented.

God's charity is the gift of His "touched" self, Fr Giussani reminds us. Why? Why does He give Himself to me by creating me, giving me being?

"I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore I have drawn you to me. taking pity on your nothingness."¹ God was touched by our nothingness. Not only this. God was moved by our betrayal, by our crude, forgetful, and traitorous poverty, by our pettiness. God was moved by our pettiness, which is even more than being moved by our nothingness. And this fact of His being moved brings a judgment, it is a judgment, it is a reason, not because we can understand it fully (how can mercy be understood?), but it brings into our life a profound reason, and this reason becomes a throbbing of the heart.

"I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore I have made you part of me, taking pity on your nothingness." The event of this Presence, the event

of Being in our life is not something that happens leaving us aside, without us: it is for us.

"I have made you take part in my life, in my being, taking pity on your nothingness." This is the new beginning. For us it is the opportunity to affirm this gratuitousness as experience, this Being that communicates Himself to us.

Affirming being means first of all facing reality, seizing the beauty, the gift of the being of things.

I want to read you some passages from the letter that Rosetta Brambilla, together with Fr Pigi, wrote to Fr Giussani from Belo Horizonte, describing the discoveries made by the young people who live with them at the Alvorada Center. These kids wrote to Fr Giussani: "We want to tell you first of all that even if we have only known you through stories, books, and photographs, you are our dear friend and we often talk about you. If it had not been for your Yes to Christ, we would never have known Rosetta and then Fr Virgilio and then Cristina and then all their friends who come to see us, we would never have had the kindergarten where we learned to trust adults and the Alvorada Center that helps us to grow. This friendship has become even stronger ever since we began living the adventure of GS [in *thefarela*, how about that?!]. Now there is our Yes too. We have decided to tell you about these things. We went to see Lake Pampulha, in Belo Horizonte. None of us had ever seen it because the bus is expensive and at home we don't have much money. In front of this beauty, Tatiana was moved to tears and said, matter-of-factly, 'The lake is not like rice and beans!' What she meant was that you never get your fill of beauty!"

"Cristina had me listen to a piece of music by Beethoven. That music, which I did not know since I have never listened to classical music, described me, my wish for happiness, my fear of the future, my profound desire to know my father."

"When I get up in the morning, to go to the private school where, through my godfather, I was given a scholarship, it is still dark. The first thoughts that pop into my head are that I am alive and I want to be happy, that I have friends, and that the day before I caused some trouble. Then I give thanks and ask for help. What is the beginning of your day like?"¹ What is the beginning of every day like for me?

Through the impact with things comes the discovery, the blossoming, the realization that a You happens. Each of us can approve of Him, accept Him, host Him, or we can resent Him because He made us. because He made us like this. The attraction falls immediately into extraneousness. But the irrupting of the event in the materiality of the impact with reality occurs, not be-

cause I say so, not because I impose that it must happen. I wait for it. This is the great insight Leopardi had in seeing in beauty the sign of something else, which he addresses as an "unknown lover": "Receive from an unknown lover this hymn."

3. The encounter with a Presence, principle of reality

I was struck, revising the recording of Fr Giussani's meeting with the university students at the Politecnico on Leopardi,³² by his comment: "I an unknown lover of You, God made Flesh; You unknown lover of me, ignored by me, not known by me, not remembered by me." Literally, this identity is the Christian message as I have known it, as it is objectively. What Leopardi expresses as the supreme need to be able to see and live the relationship with beauty made flesh, happened. John and Andrew represent the first ones to be knocked over by the amazement of hearing that Man speak, of watching Him speak.

Here, we, knocked over by amazement, become aware of this event that makes us be, of this life that makes us live, in the so prompt and so all-encompassing phenomenon of the encounter. For each of us, not "it was," but "it is" like this.

Precisely this encounter unveils the possibility of saying You, and this You is all-encompassing, it gives shape to life. It is not simply a new sphere of relationships, it is a true shape with which I look at everything, with which I begin looking again, discovering myself, others, things. And this happens again in the impact with things, it happens again in the description of the encounters which make us discover again, make this newness in our life happen again.

In the February issue of *Traces*, among the continuing testimonies of the life of the Movement in the United States, there was an article, "Captain Jones' Long March," about the U.S. Army captain who went through all the faiths and religions, from Islam to New Age, until he had the encounter which for him took the "imposing" shape of Msgr Albacete. What makes a man, invited by Jonathan at the last minute to the Diaconia in the United States, state in utter simplicity, "What Giussani says cannot be compared to anything that I have read in my life"? David says, "Here I feel at home. Here, as opposed to other places I have been, is Christ. I am struck by the reasonableness of faith" then, referring to the Diaconia, "I listened to Fr Fabio explaining that if we do not start with Christ's Incarnation, we end up between nihilism and pantheism. I think I'm pretty 'tough' [a captain in the U.S.

Army] but when I heard those words I almost felt like crying, because this has been precisely the story of my life, up to this encounter."

It is an encounter in which a hope emerges for all of life. We objectively are bearers of this difference. You will have certainly read what "inexplicably" happened during the Way of the Cross in New York: the testimony of Firefighter Bartlett, the Mayor's words, and the thousands of people moved by this "strange" gesture. It is the strangest gesture with regard to the world's mentality, and yet it is what objectively represented for so many people the beginning of a new opportunity.

Yesterday Alberto received a letter from one of the policemen who participated in the Way of the Cross: "Dear Editor: I wish to share my experience with you of the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday. I was asked three days beforehand if I wanted to go to the Brooklyn cathedral of St James, cross over the Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall in Manhattan, then proceed to St Peter's Church next to Ground Zero. I am a police officer with the town of Southold in the easternmost part of Suffolk County. I thought to myself that this would have even more significance to me considering the tragic events of September 11, 2001. I was asked to wear my uniform and told that I would be in a procession along with others. As the Stations started, I knew this was special, this was different. I could feel sadness, hope, and a sense of sacrifice as we went along - a sense of sacrifice for what Jesus did for me and for my fellow men and a sense of sacrifice for what the police and firefighters did for the people in those buildings. I was so proud to wear that uniform, more so than any time in my 16 years of service. To be a part of something so real and to be spiritually drawn to represent the hundreds that died was such an honor, an honor I will never forget. Many people thanked me after the service was over, but I was at a loss for words. The words were not lost though when fellow firefighter John Bartlett spoke. To my friends I say, 'Thank you!!!' for letting me be a part of this."

4. The friendship of a companionship guided towards Destiny

The event of a beginning, the newness that makes us experience, precisely as an opening of our reason and a move of our freedom, that a Man takes pity on our nothingness: this is a fact, it is an encounter. We are part of this fact.

In the afternoon, Julian will develop the itinerary, the adventure of knowledge, the adventure of experience that develops out of this encounter, but here it is important to reiterate just this fact, which is very simple, has no antecedents, does not require reflection, reasoning, or correspondences before-

hand: it happens, and we find ourselves not on *a* road, but on the road, *the* road, in a place.

It is here that what happens to another changes me. The event happens, I grasp it as an experience of change much more in the discovery I make of God's working, Christ's working in another. This is the value of a companionship like ours, guided towards Destiny; this is the value of our friendship. We must not be afraid to use this word that is misused so many times. "We cannot be friends if not because of this, if not because of Christ, to whom we must-this we understand-first of all entrust what we are, what our things are, what our things are not."¹⁵

A guided companionship. This is why precisely because the dynamic of the event is the dynamic of the encounter; our last observation is on the fact that in the great confusion, in the continuing possibility, also for each of us, of betrayal and falsehood, *the* road, Christ, wears the face of a guided companionship.

Our friendship, our Fraternity is a companionship guided towards Destiny. Just as Fr Giussani reminded us, speaking at the most recent Responsibles Assembly: "The event into which God has 'thrown us,' in which God has grabbed us, is the most human thing, it is the only completely, totally human thing that we can touch. We belong... to this event, to this living together. We belong! This is why we follow with love, with affection, fraternally, those in command.""

Saturday afternoon, May 4

m SECOND MEDITATION

Christ is the beginning of the end

During the entrance and exit:

Ludwig van Beethoven, Piano concerto no. 5 in E flat major, "Emperor," op. 73

C.M. Giu'ini - Wiener Philharmoniker,

Soloist: A. Benedetti Michelangeli,

Deutsche Grammophon

Julian Carron. Christ is the road because He is the beginning of the end; not *a* road, but *the* road, precisely because He is - as Fr Giussani told us to develop in this lesson - the beginning of the end. He said to the National Council, as Fr Pino reminded us: "Christ is something different from everything [something different] and thus posits the difference that we would not have thought possible. Christ is the new thing in the world. He is the beginning of the end of the world, He is the demonstrating, the revealing, the demonstration of a face, of the supreme 'because,' of a victorious force over the world.""

Christ is something other, something different from everything: we shall never repeat it enough. Something other, and thus He posits the difference that we would not have thought possible, imaginable before; no one could imagine before what started with Him, therefore He is the new thing in the world, the beginning of the end of the world, because His face is the demonstration of a victorious force over the world, and we, all of us who are here know, even if initially, what this is about, know what we are talking about, when we say: "He is something different." We have all experienced this victorious force over ourselves in a moment in time and space, in an instant of our lives: the moment that we call "encounter." A victorious force over the confusion that surrounds us, over the skepticism, one capable of halting the otherwise inevitable destruction of the human, of our 'I.'

And this shows that Christ is not just any road, not one among other roads, but *the* road.

Today, in an age in which it seems that everything is the same, that all forms of religion are equal, this is proved true by the capacity He has to over-

come this confusion, to awaken the human that is in us, to halt the destruction, and we are witnesses of this already at this moment, if we have the simplicity of heart that Fr Giussani spoke to us about in Rome: "It was a simplicity of heart that made me feel and recognize Christ as exceptional, with that certain promptness that marks the unassailable and indestructible evidence of factors and moments of reality, which, on entering the horizon of our person, pierce us to the heart."⁵

If we have this simplicity, we have also had the unassailable and indestructible evidence, therefore we have also achieved the unassailable certainty that Christ is something different.

If we have had this experience, the uncertainty that sometimes blocks us is not a lack of reasons, nor a lack of evidence, but immorality. There is in so many people - Fr Giussani reminds us in *The Self-Awareness of the Cosmos* - an uncertainty, as it were, at accepting what is rationally evident. Not accepting the evidence of things, what is implied in the evidence of things, is the alcove of immorality; an uncertainty that, if it lasts over time, is like a self-condemnation, a self-damnation." Therefore, faced with the experience of the evidence of the encounter, the first move of simple freedom is a welcoming, a serene obedience, as Fr Giussani told us not long ago.

But who among us does not want this evidence to become truly his, familiar, want this victorious force that has been demonstrated in the encounter to reach to all the particulars of life? Indeed, this certainty generated by the inescapable recognition of the correspondence is called to become each time more profound, otherwise we are frail in the face of reality and we too are tempted to flee from reality. This frailty cannot be removed with mere words. I already knew these words: I was already a priest when I encountered the Movement, I knew (hem very well, but I was not capable of overcoming this ultimate frailty, and thus of facing reality head-on. Therefore I am grateful to the encounter I have had because it has enabled me to make a journey without which I would not be what I am.

No one can avoid this journey, which each time deepens this certainty even more.

1. The journey as knowledge: the trajectory of conviction

Two conditions are necessary for making this journey. The first is to *engage your humanity*. I do not fully understand what Christ is without engaging my humanity. Friends, in the encounter we have begun to know Jesus, but it is only the beginning. Many times we think we know Him and that it is

therefore better to seek elsewhere, instead of following the itinerary which enables us truly to know Him fully in depth.

"The reason," Fr Giussani says, "people no longer believe, or believe without believing ([that is to say] reduce believing to a formal participation, to gestures, or to a moralism) is that they do not live their humanity, they do not engage their humanity, their sensibility, their conscience, and thus their humanity."⁴⁰

At times, moralism is an easier way. A friend in the *Memores Domini* in Spain told me that one fine evening, leaving work, she asked herself, "Why should I go home? Why not go have something with someone from work?" But she stopped herself with a question, "What corresponds to me?" And she concluded. "Other times I would have thought, 'I must go home,' and I would have gone home angry. Instead this time, the question, 'What corresponds to me?' made me take my humanity seriously, and I was compelled to admit that what corresponded to me was He whom I had already encountered, the passion of my life, and I went home calm, at peace."

I was struck by this episode, because so many times we skip doing this work: we do things, but there is not an adequate reason, and thus the decision is a fragile one. We do not travel this road of knowledge, without which we cannot arrive at deepening this certainty, at becoming more convinced of what answers our desire, our humanity. This is why Fr Giussani says that "the gravest fault... is that so many [among us] do not live the human."⁴¹

For me, it was truly a crucial step in my life to realize that my humanity just as it was, with my desires, my anxieties, my sufferings, my darkness was not an enemy, not an adversary, not an objection, as had occurred so many times before, but everything that happened was truly a friend, was an opportunity for greater knowledge. And thus everything that happens to us can be used to know Jesus better.

As Fr Giussani reminded us several years ago: "The Lord in His greatness, in his infiniteness, in His incomprehensibility, is precisely within the boundaries limiting our earthly existence, right there, within these boundaries [not beyond, but within these boundaries], where an imponderable factor is at play that transforms the limitations into steps, into stepping stones towards an even greater profundity."

But where can one be told that everything that happens to him in life is a stepping stone, an opportunity for an ever deeper relationship?! Who can say that?! Only someone who can say, in front of everything that happens in life: "How human is my humanity!" Only an embrace of one's own humanity of this kind can turn everything that happens to us into an opportunity for relationship.

This is why we have to pay attention to the course taken by the School of Community, which cannot be merely a meditation, thought, using one's head, but also an experience in which our humanity must be engaged. As Fr Pino reminded us this morning, if this humanity is not engaged, Jesus is just a name, which does not enable us to face reality, to face circumstances. The lack of this engagement of our humanity has as its consequence that Jesus is a mere name and in time we end up not believing any more.

The second condition for this journey is *to have the courage to vest all relationships with the Presence we have encountered.*

The whole problem of life, Fr Giussani says, "lies in the courage to apply the relationship with Christ when we have discovered its correspondence with the heart: the courage to vest all relationships with this memory, this consciousness, like when one keeps in his mind his beloved's face."⁴: Only someone who has the courage to vest all relationships with this Presence, with Christ, can truly know Him, because what Christ is becomes transparent in experience, in the answer to my humanity, to the circumstances I go through. The mother reveals what she is in her response to her baby's needs. No special ability is needed to make this comparison: children do it... but they have this simplicity, the courage to vest everything with this presence.

St Anselm says in the *Proslogion*, after the already famous expression "*credo ut intelligam*" (I believe in order to understand): "Because whoever does not believe does not experience, and whoever does not experience does not understand."⁴ Whoever does not have the courage to apply his relationship with Christ to all his relationships, whoever does not believe does not experience what Christ is, and whoever does not experience, does not understand what Christ is. Therefore, we who have discovered this correspondence must ask for this courage to vest all our relationships (life is a continuing relationship with circumstances) with this memory, this Presence.

Maureen writes from the United States, from New York: "Dear Fr Giussani, My exposure to CL began about a year ago, and I have been attending School of Community since September 14, 2001... but my life has already been changed immeasurably. I now live, mostly on a daily basis, with intensity I never knew possible [a difference that we would never have thought possible] ... I was so glad that I had chosen to attend and was sure I wanted to return again and get to know those people better. As we walked to our cars after the meeting, I discovered that mine had been broken into by someone shattering a window. My immediate response was, 'I should never have come. I should have gone out for dinner and drinks with a friend.' (I had turned down such an invitation to go to the meeting.) Later that evening, as I felt torn by the pleasure and support of the meeting and my anger about the

car, I had an amazing insight. The presence of evil was alive and trying to manipulate me away from the positivity of the people I had just met. I had a choice to make. I could try to listen to what God had in mind for me with this group or I could exercise my willfulness and let the *ifs*, *ands* and *burs* annihilate the encounter. For once, I prayed for guidance and was blessed with the courage to stay in the Presence [the courage to stay in His presence]. My life has been changed forever. As I have read, discussed, tried to contribute and mostly tried to stay in the moment and open to God's will, I have changed. I am now frequently aware of God acting or communicating through me. As I have accepted that, for now, He wants me to be in the crazy office where I work, the quality of my work and my contribution to the company have been magnified."⁴⁴ When one has this courage, everything becomes new.

2. Christ, the beginning of the end, a new relationship with reality

What experience does an 'I' constituted by this Presence have as it enters into the vicissitudes of life? This 'I' experiences, as we have just heard from Maureen, a new relationship with reality, which confirms to him that it is the beginning of the fulfillment, of the end, "intensity I never knew possible."

But it is necessary to stop a second to clarify the concept of end, because Fr Giussani says that "the situation in which we are now of total de-Christianization, of total extraneousness to the Christian mystery, is caused precisely by the integralistic or moralistic way in which the end or the goal... has been glorified in these centuries as the only thing for which life is worth living."⁴⁴ Only the final moment, conceived as the end of the world, is worth it.

In this conception, the end has nothing to do with this life. But this concept of end is not the one to which the entire Bible testifies. From the beginning, from the exodus out of Egypt, following all the course of the Jewish people, the promises of the prophets, all the way to Jesus, it testifies precisely to the opposite: that here, right in the midst of history, the end began. It is thus true that the New Testament calls the time inaugurated by Jesus as "the time of fulfillment": "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing,"⁴⁴ says Jesus of Nazareth. That is: the beginning of the end is here and now.

The event of Christ gives the person who welcomes Him a new relationship with reality, a new knowledge. As we learned last year in School of Community: "None of us can, on his own, maintain a true gaze on reality."⁴⁷ For new knowledge arises, as we have just heard from Maureen, from adherence to an event, from the *affectus* to an event to which we are attached, to which we say Yes.

This was understood very well by Andrew's wife, who knew Jesus not through what Andrew told her but through the embrace in which she felt herself being embraced that time as never before. Jesus, all of Jesus was there in that embrace, Jesus coincided with the trepidation with which Andrew embraced his wife. This is anything but otherworldly, abstract, spiritualistic! Here, in the midst of the history that we all live! It was the event of Andrew's encounter with Jesus, which vested him with a power, a newness, that made him embrace his wife as never before.

Since this knowledge, this new relationship with reality is born out of an event, the only hope for us is that this event may keep on happening. What awakens this possibility in us is not a reasoning, not a discourse, not rules, not the repetition of things we have heard: either this event continues to happen, or Christianity simply is no more. It will be something else, but Christianity is no more. Because new knowledge implies being contemporaneous with the event that generates it and sustains it continually.

Where is this origin? It is not an idea of which we can take possession: it is a locus, it is belonging to a locus, to a living reality. The only hope is that this event may continue to happen in a precise locus and that we, participating in this locus, belonging to this locus, may be vested each time with an event, something that moves us, that enables us to relate to reality in a completely different way.

This continues to happen among us all the time. We have had many instances of this recently: the letter from the Pope, Fr Giussani's letter, the Way of the Cross everywhere and especially in New York. Alberto Savorana said at one of the Responsibles Assemblies that if someone is faced with these events, if these events are not just episodes among others, by participating in all this, he cannot help leaving work vested with that event that he carries inside him and makes him relate to ordinary circumstances, to his family with the trepidation that only the event of His presence can make possible, not only in the past, but today, now.

So many of us can testify to this, by participating with simplicity in many of our gestures, participating in this locus, where one experiences precisely the end of the world, the beginning of the end. We need to participate in this event, because no one is exempt from this possibility of succumbing to rules. Fr Giussani reminded us of this years ago, in the insert recently published in *Traces*: "In the beginning we built, we tried to build on something that was happening, not on the values... No matter how naive and overwhelmingly out of proportion this may have been, it was a pure position... Since we have in a sense abandoned it, as we have settled into a position that has been primarily, I would almost say, a 'cultural tradition' rather than enthusiasm for a Pres-

ence, we do not know Christ, we do not know the mystery of God, because He is not familiar to us."⁴⁵

A person who is determined, generated continually by the Christian event, can say with St Paul, "I live, not I. but Christ lives in me." "He lives in me:" He matches my vibration, my way of looking at, of perceiving myself: He lives inside me. When someone has the courage to stay with His presence, as Maureen said, it happens that he can say. with St Paul: "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."⁴¹

"The life I now live in the flesh." that is to say in the normal situations of life: in front of the girl who strikes my fancy, in my family with my father, working twelve hours a day, being sick, being unable to do everything that needs to be done... in all this, in all this flesh. "I live by faith in the Son of God," i.e., I belong to an event that changes the way I look at things, that makes me capable of a new intelligence, deeper and truer about my circumstances.

"The life I now live in the flesh," I view everything with these eyes, and so that girl, to the extent of the attraction she arouses in me, is the sign through which I am invited to adhere in the flesh to the being of things, to descend into the reality of things, to the point where things are made.

This descending to the being of things, to the point where things are made, is an offering, the most acute form of prayer, of entreaty. Offering is first and foremost acknowledging what reality is made of; as a result, the more one understands and faces this, the more he feels it to be. the more he makes it become the content of experience, the more he feels the urge to say, "Come, Lord! Let me see You! If this thing is made of You, let me see You! Make me acute enough to see everything as a sign of Your beauty and come!"

Offering is not when trouble comes ("Now I'll offer it up"), it lies at the beginning, at the origin of the true relationship with everything. It is in our interest to learn this, learn this way of looking at things, to give each other a hand in looking at things, because the new relationship with reality is an incomparable intensification of human experience.

Maureen said "intensity never known": this promise is for all of us! To have the opportunity to experience life with an intensity never known before: who doesn't want this?

The person who lives his life by faith already in this life experiences eternity, the beginning of the end. because he has at this time, at this moment in life the experience of an otherworldly intensity in this world. It is the hundredfold. An intensification, a hundred times more: the hundredfold here below, not only in the next life, but already in the experience of this life. Every-

thing, everybody: father, mother, spouse, child, fiance, become a hundred times more in our experience on earth.

It is to our advantage to have the courage to challenge everything with His presence before our eyes, to live everything - like St Paul - by faith in the Son of God, so that everything we are living may become a hundred times more, may become more intense, not spiritually more intense, but more intense in the flesh, humanly more intense. It is the victory over abstraction. Because Christ has to do with life, with everything that happens to us and through everything that we live in our humanity. Otherwise, what would Christ be? A mere name, an abstraction. This is not Christ, because ever since Christ entered history, the first impact was the arousal of wonder in those who encountered Him. If he does not awaken this in us, we are not in front of Christ, we do not experience Christ: it is just words, words, words, because it is not possible to be in front of Christ, to encounter Christ really, without this intensification. Like Andrew, like John, like the Samaritan woman, like Zacchaeus. For Peter, for John, for Andrew, that Man was the hundredfold: they found themselves thinking about their wives, their children, their friends, with a tenderness they had never felt before.

But we have to clarify, because so many times we think that the hundredfold is a hundred times our instinct, the image we have of it. This is why Fr Giussani says: "To understand what the hundredfold is, we have to succeed in experiencing - therefore in recognizing, seeing, perceiving - the paradigm of true love. This is the event of absolute gratuitousness."⁵⁰

What a change of mentality is necessary in us! The hundredfold is the paradigm of true love, as he reminds us in his commentary on Ada Negri: "Love, and don't think about being loved: for every/ flower that blooms or fruit that ripens/ or child that is born, to the God of fields/ and families give thanks in your heart."⁵¹

Love without demanding to be loved back. The first dawning of love is that someone, in front of someone else, feels that it is a wonderful thing that this person is. Not that he is mine, but that he exists: the wonderful thing is that he exists, the world is different because he is a sign of Him who exists first of all. Thus, "love the flower not because you smell it, but because it is there; love the fruit not because you bite into it, but because it is there; love the baby not because he is yours, but because he is there."⁵²

What a change! But, watch out, what a challenge! What a challenging change of mentality is in these words! We think that this cannot be possible, but instead it is. Where is the problem? That when someone loves without demanding to be loved back, he is vested with a force of love never known before. Absolute gratuitousness: because he exists.

The hundredfold is the relationship with reality because it is there. This is the praise of being, the glory of being, the glory of Christ. It is the absolute top when someone can get up in the morning and be happy because He exists. Nothing can be compared to this. The absolute top of the hundredfold: He exists.

3. Intensification of the human experience of affection and work

This intensification of human experience is to be lived in the two most human experiences that we all live: affection and work. This loving without demanding to be loved back is true possession, to which we are all called.

Fr Giussani says in *Affection and Dwelling*: "The possession to which love tends is much greater a yard away from the object than when you grab it... The intensity of love is much greater when you stop a yard away and everything is vibrating and everything seems to want to grab it and you stop yourself from grabbing... In order to love a presence, you have to recognize that it is a sign... of Christ... And everything in you, faced with it, stretches towards and throws itself into the entreaty to Christ to reveal Himself, to let Himself be seen. Because, when Christ shows Himself in that face, it will be the end of the world, it will be eternity... Being a yard away without grabbing means being completely stretched towards becoming aware of the sign that it is, of whatever it is a sign of, of its value as a sign."⁵¹

Since we, so many times, instead of staying a yard away, grab it, like picking a flower, we miss the best part, because the best part of a sign is not the sign, but Him to whom the sign refers. The best part of the flower is not taking it to my room and enjoying it until it wilts and festers (because everything rots, everything); the best part is He to whom the flowers refer. This is not poetry in a negative sense, like a sentimental emotion. It is not that Fr Giussani is a "poet" and these are not real, fleshly things: the best part is elsewhere, it is inside. This is why virginity is the ideal Christian virtue for any relationship, even the relationship between a married man and woman: if you don't want to lose her, if you don't want to get sick of her, you have to go to where the origin lies.

The same is true of work, because work is basically man working. In the modern mentality, the operator, i.e.. man. has as it were abandoned the origin, the origin is taken for granted, to the point that it becomes clouded with time, until it goes away. Therefore, what a challenge it is to go to work with this Presence before your eyes! As Elena, from Crema, reminds us: "Diego [a friend who is head of the medical staff at a geriatric hospital] and I immedi-

ately began reciting the *Angelus*, so great was our desire to be a concrete presence in our workplace... Reciting the *Angelus* before starting work changes our day and our way of working. The others, too, are amazed at the friendship that is starting up with some of my co-workers, and so some of them say the *Angelus* with us in the morning. A true friendship is being born, which leads to Jesus!"⁴

Someone who has this experience cannot help recognizing that what changes life is this Presence at work in our lives, when we open the door to Him.

4. Mission

One who does this becomes a witness and a missionary at the same time, because the grace given to us, friends, is for everybody, it is for the world, it is for our co-workers. God's method is election: He chooses us so that through us He can reach everybody.

How does He reach them? "Witness is affirming inexorably, by our own way of living. One who exists," says Fr Giussani, "because all the possible motives for the difference that I am is something that comes from the presence of something different."

Affirming by our own way of living an Other who is there: thus through me Jesus makes Himself present and we become fathers, as he reminded us years ago: "My wish is that you may have the experience of father, any of you." "You," someone said, "are truly more father." "And something was evident...", Fr Giussani comments, "through me... dear God! This is Jesus: a presence that, through me, becomes a presence [that makes others change]. He becomes Himself through me." "You can't have a greater victory over abstraction than this! "He becomes Himself through me." God does everything through me, through my Yes, through your Yes.

If someone keeps his eyes on the difference in his experience when he believes in Jesus, then everything that happens in life is the confirmation of the encounter he has had, and thus the time of his life is the opportunity for an ever greater conviction.

HOLY MASS

HOMILY BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CRESCENZIO SEPE

PREFECT OF THE CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES

"Beloved... in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you."⁵⁶

Dearest friends of Communion and Liberation, the celebration in which we are taking part constitutes the loftiest place and time for encountering Christ alive and present in us and among us, so as to adore Him and to grow in the faith that must press us on to witness to Him, answering all those who, near and far, ask us, out of curiosity or wonder, to account for the hope that is in us.

We live in Christ and Christ lives in us; with Christ, we live in the Father through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

This vital experience of God in us and us in God is founded in the love that unites us to God and unites us to each other, and is made of the love that communicates to us understanding, the feeling by which we experience the Persons living in us. God dwells in us and we experience Him, which calls forth wonder, ecstasy, and self-giving: God is all in all.

Dear ones, I am happy to be able to preside at this Eucharistic celebration on the occasion of your Spiritual Exercises. Besides us gathered together here in Rimini, members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation in eighteen European countries are listening in via satellite link (another 2,500 joined with us). What an occasion this is for reviewing and meditating on the letter the Holy Father sent to your founder on February 11 of this year, the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of pontifical recognition of your association.⁵⁷

The Pope acknowledges in Fr Giussani a particular "style" in announcing the faith. Not only this: the Pope judges this style to be particularly well-suited for talking and listening to our fellow men of today.

In practical terms, what are the characteristics, the principal, foundational notes that the pontifical document highlights concerning the charism of Fr Giussani and of the Movement?

First of all, the Pope emphasizes the capacity to "listen to the needs of today's man," noting the existence of an unending search which every man lives through every state of mind, every situation he is in, "both when he is marked by the drama of violence, loneliness, and insignificance," the Holy Father continues, "and when he lives in serenity and joy."

Your style of announcement is expressed, therefore, above all in the special attention you pay to this search of man's, in whatever form it may be manifested. The Movement has shown, all through its history, a lively and particular interest in the profound questions of every man, wherever he is, from whatever cultural or ideological area these questions might originate, and you, guided by Fr Giussani, have made St Paul's motto your own: "Test everything; hold fast what is good."⁵⁸

This brief reference to the First Letter to the Thessalonians, with its invitation to judge, gives us a good introduction to the second characteristic of this particular style of Fr Giussani which distinguishes your Movement. A Movement - the Holy Father also wrote in his letter - that has chosen to point out to today's man not *a* possible road to be traveled, whatever it may be, but has chosen to indicate *the* road, because it is the road that leads to the appeasement of the profound drama that man lives, sometimes without even knowing it, unawares, in his dialogue with the Mystery of God that is hidden in man's heart and in things. Not *a* road, then, but *the* road: to use a word that was very important at the beginning of your history, I would say that the second characteristic of your manner of living and announcing the faith is decisiveness. the courage to risk, to say before the world, without paraphrase or glossing over or hesitation, that Christ, Christ alone, is the only answer to the real needs of man, of every man in every time.

This might give rise to a question: how can these two things coexist, how can they stay together? This question imposes itself, because we all know that today's prevailing mentality teaches us that decisiveness means intolerance; that openly expressing one's conviction inevitably becomes fundamentalism, that being oneself means being incapable of respecting the differences of others. I believe that this is a bad kind of confusion. Christian courage is born out of the personal experience of Christ as the fulfillment of one's personal search for meaning and out of the conviction that what has fallen to us is, or can be, the answer to the expectations of each and every man. And it is this profound personal conviction that in turn generates openness, self-giving, and generosity. The Christian's decisiveness in living and communicating the reasons for his hope, his enthusiasm, this decisiveness is nourished by passion for concrete man and therefore in turn feeds a willingness to place oneself, to stay in an attitude of listening to others, their needs and their necessities. This attitude, this magnanimity is something that does not remain inside us, it is not a passive, hidden reality, but is an essentially active and dynamic factor, because it is full of initiatives towards others, towards those who are different from us. It is thus an attitude that is very distant from the lack of distinction - from the politically correct, as we say now - which is

propagandized as the ideal of our days and which instead is often (and this is the real paradox) at the origin of the prevarications for which Christians too, in so many parts of the world, are paying the consequences.

Today the Church is going through a very difficult moment in her history. Often she is subjected to forms of persecution, and not only in many countries where courageous missionaries go to proclaim Christ in the midst of countless hardships, torture, persecution, imprisonment, and sometimes even death, but also in our opulent West, where campaigns by the media aim at taking away this Church's credibility even in the eyes of Christians themselves, campaigns that are spreading and becoming more frequent in an increasingly underhanded way. The hypocrisy with which our people is attacked today, especially in the person of its shepherds, cannot avoid recalling us to the need for an even more serious, more convinced, more tenacious commitment to defend the possibility for all men, in whatever situation they may be, to encounter what has changed our lives, giving them hope, joy, trust, and a desire to rebuild. My thoughts at this moment go especially to the Bishops in the United States, but also to the gesture with which your community in New York chose to testify fearlessly to its faith by carrying the Cross through the streets of the metropolis all the way to the place whose name will long remain in the history of mankind as the symbol, the dark symbol of the mindless violence of which man is capable.

Today there is, as it were, a kind of "heresy" that, albeit subterranean and hidden, is perhaps more widespread than we think: it is fear, hiding from oneself, from others, and in the last analysis, from God: it is the fear of going against the flow, of showing one's identity as a Christian in a materialistically globalized society that tends to cancel out what makes each of us specifically and personally who we are.

These reflections lead me to consider a third characteristic which the Holy Father in his letter chose to describe your conception and experience of faith in today's world. Respect for others does not arise from putting into parentheses, but from manifesting one's own identity and what one belongs to, and this attitude is born of a particular experience. The Holy Father speaks of the "event" of an encounter, the experience, that is to say, of the experience of the mercy with which Christ has reached us through the faces, the words, the actions of so many other human beings, of so many others of our brothers and sisters, and it is in this experience that we, first of all, have been treated with firmness by Jesus Christ (this Christ who is not *a* road, but is *the* road); Christ, who has drawn us to Himself with the patience of One who, day by day, awaits our conversion. It is Christ who set out looking for us, on our road, as the Holy Father wrote in a chapter of the *Tertio millennio*

adveniente and as Fr Giussani himself, with a concrete image, has clarified: Christ begging for our souls." Because it is only Christ who, a just Man, died for us unjust men, so that we might be brought back to God. Here therefore is the ultimate origin of what the Pope praises in you: the event of God's mercy that has touched us and continues to touch us directly and personally.

The particular meaning that you assign to the word "event" has taught you the emphasis that you have always given to the objective dimension of your faith, of Christian faith and the Church. What is the event? Something that comes from outside, from the exterior; it is a gift that is given and received independently of our, of my and your, personal abilities or qualities. It is an offering, it is a precious jewel that is put in our hands. And so the Pope in his letter recalls the two great characteristics of this objectivity of our faith: the *deposition fidei* and those who are called to interpret it with authority, i.e., to safeguard it and hand it on, that is to say the Magisterium of the Successor of Peter and of the Bishops.

But here too, right here emerges something that modern culture, as always, finds paradoxical: the originality of a charism today fecundates a centuries-old tradition. Communion and Liberation is a new style of speaking to the men of today, which draws however on ancient truths, and this - says the Holy Father - contributes to "finding adequate answers to the challenges and urges of the times and ever-changing historical circumstances." There is no contradiction, as some would like to have us think, between this freedom that is communicated to us by the Spirit and obedience. There is no contradiction between the freedom of forms, the search for new roads to reach men, which the Holy Father urges you to do, and obedience to the shepherds that the Lord has put in His Church. There is no contradiction, but, yes, there is communion, communion because we all draw the energy and grace for facing the difficult task that comes to us from the Spirit in Christ. And it is this communion that gives liberation, because the communion with God and our brothers makes us free.

The Holy Father gives us, in the very next lines, a confirmation of all this. He writes, "Jesus of Nazareth... lived the human experience as no one else could have [and] posits Himself as the goal of every human aspiration." Christ, therefore, who fulfilled man completely and showed, so to speak, all the potentiality of man, is the truly free Man. His freedom was obedience, obedience to the Father, and His human greatness lay completely in saying, throughout His whole existence: "Not my will, but Thine, be done."⁶¹

From this freedom, which is at the same time obedience and creativity, is born the by now long tradition of works which the Pope mentioned, a tradition made up of the commitment of many of you in civilian society, even on

that insidious terrain which is politics. Through this commitment you have contributed and you continue to contribute to the mission of the Church in Italy and - even though naturally in numerically smaller proportions - in many other countries in the world, in about 70 countries in the world, making yourselves missionaries of the Gospel of Christ, lived with sincerity and faith in the charism of your founder. And I find it significant that the Holy Father urged you once again to proceed along this road, repeating the words he said to you on September 29, 1984, during the meeting in the Nervi Auditorium, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the birth of the Movement. The Pope had said: "Go into all the world and bring the truth, the beauty and the peace which are found in Christ the Redeemer."² cooperating - the Pope added - also with the more strictly institutional spheres of the dioceses and the parishes. And today, this missionary action of yours is a living and concrete reality, a reality for which the Church and - if you will allow me - also the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, is immensely grateful to you.

Fr Giussani, writing precisely to you. the members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, spoke of the "imposing work" that derives from this instruction, of the "extremely weighty step" - Fr Giussani wrote - which it (this instruction) calls for. He spoke also of "a moment of responsibility... to which each of us can concur in an orderly and obedient manner or can resist." and he added. "Everything depends on a serene, and thus constructive, obedience on the part of our toil." Finally, he reiterated the concern that has always guided him in his care for your persons through all these years: "To follow Christ, to love Christ in everything: this is what must be acknowledged as the principal characteristic of our journey."⁶

Dear brothers and sisters, the love for Christ that we bear, as a reflection of His charity towards us, is the origin of the new light that we are all called to shed on the world, in whatever place, in whatever sphere and circumstance we are called to live. It is our love for Christ that makes us patient builders in our families, in our society, in the spheres of our professions, untiring builders in a world that seems to tend to delight in destroying the foundations of human coexistence itself. It is our love for Christ that can give us the daring to "embark on the future freely, even if others were not to accept what we are" and what we want to continue to be. The Church is born and reborn continuously in the heart of men wherever this feeling of magnanimity, of openness is established, and - let me use a word that is so congenial to you - where a feeling of tenderness for Christ is born.

Do not let yourselves be discouraged by anything. Persevere in the work in which the Holy Spirit has engaged you through the training and teaching you

have received from Fr Giussani. The Church, today especially, needs people who are able to acknowledge clearly before the world that they belong to her, belong to the Church, and are proud to belong to her. The Church needs people who train others, starting with the younger generations, to acknowledge Christ as the "center of the cosmos and of history," the foundation stone for a different and peaceful humanity. The way, the only way, the only road that leads to life and is the truth.

May you never lack, in this your daily commitment and sacrifice, the comfort of the love, the understanding of the Church who loves you.

May Mary, the Mother of Trust, aid you and protect you.

Amen.

BEFORE THE FINAL BLESSING

Fr Pino. Your Eminence, on behalf of Fr Giussani and all of us, while I ask you for a special blessing on our gesture, on our life, I would like above all to thank you with all my heart for being here with us, for the attentive way you follow our experience, and because with your words you have managed to unite a familiarity which is precisely the sign of an exquisite sensibility and great faith with a forcefulness in recalling us to the reason for which each of us is here. This growth in faith becomes a surge embracing all the world.

Thank you! Heartfelt thanks, Your Eminence.

Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe. This applause is all for the Pope and Fr Giussani!

Fr Massimo Camisaca. The Cardinal brought a telegram from the Pope, which I shall now read:

"On the occasion of the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation in Rimini on the theme 'The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,' the Supreme Pontiff charges Your Eminence with transmitting to the organizers and participants his warm good wishes and greetings, expressing his pleasure at the timely initiative, and in hopes that this may arouse renewed adherence to Christ and a growing commitment to witnessing to the Gospel, invokes abundant heavenly grace and gladly sends to Your Eminence who presides over the Eucharistic celebration and all those present the desired apostolic blessing.

Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State"

Sunday morning, May 5

• ASSEMBLY

During the entrance and exit:

Russian Folk Songs, Vol. II,

*A.r. Sveshnikov, Chorus of the State Academy of Russian Songs,
"Spirto Gentil"*

Angelas

Lauds

Giancarlo Cesana. There are eleven questions. The first is representative of the majority: "We were told this afternoon that we have to have the courage to vest all our relationships with the Presence we have encountered [never has a word called forth so many questions as "courage"], but Fr Abbondio in *The Betrothed* says, 'courage is not something you can give to yourself.'⁶ Moreover, isn't it Jesus who invests our life, who manifests Himself through my way of being? He is, if He operates. Isn't it grace that does things?"

Yes, it is grace that does things, it even makes us courageous. In any case, Carron did not want to turn the Movement into a movement of cowboys, or better, of toreros; now he will explain.

Julian Carron. This part of the itinerary we covered yesterday is very important. These words by Fr Giussani impressed me, because they answer a problem that we have very often, which keeps us from making progress on our journey, and therefore we do not achieve the certainty we all desire for our life. Why don't we make this progress? Because after the encounter, as Fr Giussani said, the whole problem lies in the courage to put our relationship with Christ into practice when we have discovered its correspondence. I encounter something that corresponds to me as nothing else before. But what happens almost an instant later? That so many times we do not start out from this point: something happens to us and an instant later we change our method and return, as if nothing had happened, to wondering how to face the rest, that is, we go back to the religious sense.

How many times does it happen that you get up in the morning and you catch yourself beginning to wonder how to respond to the whole day. Or when you are tired, fed up, you start to wonder what the answer is. What does it mean to have the courage to stand up to the challenge, to vest everything with His presence? It means starting from the Presence you have encountered. Like when someone falls in love, and he cannot think about money, free time, what he intends to do in the future without thinking about the person he loves.

It is not a question of voluntarism, i.e. of the moralistic reduction of courage that has come out so many times. It is a question of certainty that something has happened in our life, which has received such an impact that I cannot look at reality, face the new circumstances that may arise without His presence in my eyes.

This is how what Christ is comes out, otherwise we think we know Him, but we talk about Christ detached from the experience we have of Him. and therefore we never achieve certainty about Him.

Cesana. In any case, the truth is not something cold, it is warm, that is to say, the truth has to do with affection, it has impact, it is an energy, a knowledge that is communicated, laden with affection. Grabbing this energy means taking courage and comparing everything with this. Like the example Carron gave us: if you fall in love, you take energy from this and you look at the whole world, and the world is better. This is courage.

Question. "Can you explain more fully the difference between the fatalism Fr Pino talked about Saturday morning, which makes reality something to which we have to submit, and obedience, which also implies acknowledging that it is God who makes everything?"

The difference is simple: fatalism means that things happen and you don't have anything to do with it; obedience means that in order for things to happen, you have to have something to do with them, i.e., obedience requires freedom.

It is impressive that we Christians are the ones recalling this today, that is, that God needs man, God needs you, God has joined with you, He has become your "partner," He has "set up shop" together with you: the business can't be run without you. Obedience is this. However, you stand before God. i.e., you have to acknowledge Him, you have to recognize the truth that comes to meet you, thus you have to bow your head, you have to obey, but it is for you; it is not without you, it is for you. That's it: obedience means that the truth is for you, it is for you and requires you.

Question: "Love reality, not because it is yours, but because it is there.' But if it is not for you, what use is it? There are aspects of reality that are humanly not lovable: how can we love it all?"

Carron. This question reveals the manner in which so many times we view reality. When we ask: "There are aspects of reality that are humanly not lovable: how can we love it all?," we are thinking about reality as something with which Christ has nothing to do. But reality is Christ, and we cannot talk about reality without talking about Jesus. Otherwise, we live reality rationalistically, like everybody else, and then we add Jesus as a pious fact. But reality is Christ, and it is to our advantage to look at reality as we have been educated to do, i.e., in accordance with all its factors, all of them, and we do not finish looking closely at reality without reaching Jesus, without saying His name.

Christ is precisely the victory over this dualism, because when the disciples encountered Him, that encounter was the explosion of their humanity. When they went to the wedding at Cana, and when Zacchaeus was looked at by that Man, or when the Samaritan woman had the experience of reality so profound as to overcome this dualism of separating reality from Jesus. Jesus enabled the Samaritan woman to have an experience of reality in its entirety. Therefore it is Jesus who makes it possible to embrace and love everything; without Him it is impossible, because even the wonderful things sooner or later fail.

Cesana. Yes. Allow me to recall also the example Fr Giussani gives, which is also in *The Religious Sense*.¹⁰⁰ Suppose you emerge from your mother's womb at the age you are now and with the awareness you have now and you are placed in front of reality: reality immediately appears to you as fascinating, that is to say, it has impact on you, it is for you. But then, it is true that within reality facts and events are manifested which seem to be against you, and so the problem arises: What is the meaning of reality? This second hypothesis, hostility to me, hatred for me, or the first one, love for me? If it is the second, there is no hope, everything is really useless. The only rational possibility is that it is the first hypothesis, i.e., the one that is originally perceived in front of reality: reality is for you. The only hypothesis is this one, and Christ came to confirm it, because without Christ this hypothesis does not stand up, because He is risen.

Question. "For me, a limitation is an obstacle to getting what I desire. How can I conceive it as a stepping stone towards fulfillment? What makes this way of looking at myself possible?"

A limitation is a stepping stone towards fulfillment because the limitation opens us up to the awareness that it is God who makes everything, i.e., that we are not the masters of the world and that what saves us is the awareness that it is God who makes everything. For this reason, certainly it is better not to have limitations, it is better to try to avoid sins and errors, but if through this I learn who the Lord is for me, then blessings on my limitations! I thank God that I am ugly, because this is the way we become beautiful, that is to say, that we find a meaning in things. What Carron was saying before is wonderful: reality, like a woman, is not loved in pieces; I don't take the piece of you that I like and throw away what I don't like and take you apart: we love the meaning and the limitation is inside this meaning; and precisely because I am limited I understand that I need to be saved. In this sense, limitations are stepping stones towards perfection. An ongoing approximation, made up of so many imperfect acts. Our life is this.

Question: "On one hand, if I do not face reality I live an abstraction, but when reality arouses an attraction I am asked for detachment. Where is the limit at which, going fully into reality, I am not abstract, without however possessing it?"

The goal is not detachment. The goal of life is possession, the goal of life is happiness, the goal of life is enjoyment. There is a little "hitch" to this: it is that life, reality was not made by me, because if I had made it, I would have made all the roads go downhill and instead there are some that go uphill.

This is why, in order to possess reality I have to live it in accordance with the One who made it, i.e., I have to identify with the One who made it, otherwise I cannot have it. In order to possess a woman, I have to identify with the One who made her, otherwise I cannot truly have her. Detachment is this sacrifice, that is to say, it is this stepping away for a minute in order to understand who you are; detachment is this consciousness of the other's destiny, which is not mine, which I did not make, with my children, my wife, with everyone. Detachment is this, but it is in order to possess. Our goal in life is not to be detached, but to be impassioned, to possess, but in order to possess we have to recognize that we are not the truth.

We have to mortify, in the sense of kill, ourselves, but this gives us possession. The experience we have is that every time we respected this destiny of others, every time we did not violently take over the other, life has been better. And when we want to be loved, when we want someone to look at us, we want them to love us because of what we were made for, not for being at their service, and thus we want them to have this detachment, but in order to love us, not to throw us away.

Question: "What is the hundredfold and how can it be recognized, especially when things don't go the way you would like them to? What does it mean to say that it is the paradigm of true love?"

Carron. How can the hundredfold be recognized? It's clear...

Cesana. Like when you win the lottery: if you win the lottery, you've won!

Carron. We don't have to give a lot of explanation about this: it happens and you see that it corresponds more than something else. The hundredfold is the paradigm of true love because we all know how we want to be loved. Maybe we ourselves don't succeed in loving like this, but we all know how we want to be loved: not for someone else's plan, to serve someone else's plan, but for ourselves. Who doesn't want to be loved for himself, not because he knows how to do something, to serve in some way, but because he *is*? What do we desire more than the affirmation of our being, of our person? Loving means affirming the other as he is. And this is a fullness of relationship that cannot be compared to any other, not even imagined. But this is a challenge for us, because so often these things are not familiar to us yet. They do not become familiar by mere explanations, but by risking, risking an experience like the one we have, because otherwise these things are not understood. The beginning of knowledge is an event: things are understood when they happen.

Cesana. The hundredfold is not that I go to Mass, put in my offering of a dollar or a pound and then go out after Mass and God gives me a hundred dollars, is that clear? The hundredfold is not the multiplication by a hundred of what we calculate to be our sacrifice in life. The hundredfold is the fulfillment that God gives us and that we do not even imagine. Indeed, He has already given it to us: "The life I now live in the flesh," the life I live in frailty, limitations, the life I live in what rots, what dies, "I live by faith in the Son of God," i.e., I live by truth.

This question comes from the German community: "Julian said that true love does not demand to be loved back. This seems like a strongly moralistic claim: in truth, all of us want to be loved. Do we have to censor this desire? Could you go more deeply into the reasons?"

The matter is simpler than that. A mother doesn't wait for her baby to love her before she loves her baby, otherwise the poor kid would never survive... A mother loves her baby before the baby loves her, simply because

he is there. Thus it is not so much that we should censor our desire to be loved, because we all want to be loved, it is just that love begins gratuitously, it comes forth gratuitously. God loved us before we loved Him, in fact, He loved us precisely because we did not love Him, precisely because we lived as though He were not there. Love is a gratuitous act, but in order to love like this we have to be loved, we have to have the consciousness of the hundredfold mentioned earlier, that living in the flesh, we live by the love of God, we live by this Presence, by His Son; the presence of God is the Son of God, and we live by this hope. This is why we can love gratuitously, that is, we can love before the other responds. But this is love that asks again, that calls you back, that asks to be loved. "Love, which absolves no loved one from loving."⁶⁷ Thus let us ask to be loved, but above all let us love.

Question: "What does it mean that the uncertainty that sometimes blocks us is not a lack of reasons and evidence, but a lack of morality?"

Carrdn. Here we have to clarify that the immorality we were talking about is immorality in terms of knowledge. It seems very important to me to clarify this, because so often I find myself dealing with persons who have had enough reasons to adhere, have had enough clarity to adhere, but they think this is not the case and they are still waiting for many other reasons to adhere, and only when these reasons arrive will they be definitively able to adhere. But it's not like this. In my encounter, I have had the experience of a correspondence, and therefore I have enough clarity to adhere to what I have seen. It is only by adhering to what I have seen that it becomes clearer. Not first full clarity and then the decision to adhere, but I have to decide on the basis of what I have seen in order for it to become clearer. Imagine that someone meets a girl at a party and he likes her. Should he clarify first if she is the right one or not?... by the time he has finished clarifying, she has already left... He has to decide in her favor, he has had enough evidence to make the first move, and by deciding in her favor, things become clearer. Without this, we never make any progress. Not deciding in the face of this, not following that attraction of reality, blocks us: we must stop in front of what we like, but... we do not decide, we do not let ourselves be carried away by its attractiveness. But it is not like this: if he likes her, he asks her to go out the next day, that is, he decides; if he does not decide, sooner or later he is immoral in the face of the evidence he has seen.

Cesana. "What does it mean that God's emotion is a judgment?"

God is one who is touched, and the judgment is this: that the truth is touched. Because Jesus wept over Lazarus' tomb.^{6k} he wept over Jerusalem.^{6l} God is moved, i.e.. the truth is charged with affection.

Question: "Engagement with life coincides with the question, 'What corresponds to me?' Often, however, this question is reduced to: 'What do I like?' How can we live the difference between the two questions?"

Carrdn. Correspondence sometimes does not coincide with what you like, with what you have in mind, but you cannot avoid recognizing that it corresponds to you.

Returning to the already mythical example of the shoes, someone once told me about a woman who bought some shoes because she liked them, even if they did not correspond to her: the next day she had to go buy another pair... Because what we like is not always what corresponds to us.

Thanks be to God. we are not the ones who decide what corresponds to us, and this saves us from ourselves, because otherwise we would be capable of manipulating this too. We are not the ones who set our criterion for facing reality. The mass of evidences and needs that we have, with which we were born, with which we are thrown into reality for a comparison with everything, only this enables us to discover the truth, and, thank God, we cannot manipulate it ourselves. And this saves us.

What corresponds to me is where I find a satisfaction of my ultimate need, an adequate answer to that need, and this is not something I decide myself.

I can say: "I like a person, I like a girl," but this will never correspond to me, because a drop can never fill a glass. We are made for infinity. And we, after so many years of School of Community working on *The Religious Sense*, still often do not understand this: that the 'I' has this structural disproportion in its make-up, so that we are thrown into the world with this structural disproportion in order to find out what corresponds to us.⁷ⁿ Tell me what corresponds to this structural disproportion. We do not decide it ourselves.

Cesana. "What does it mean to say: 'Offering is the most acute form of entreaty'?"

Offering is the most acute form of the entreaty because offering is standing before God and asking God to accomplish, to accomplish what we desire, to give us the correspondence we are waiting for. Offering is not: "This turned out badly: God, I'll offer it to You," is that clear? Because God is not the trash bin. But offering is the beautiful example that Fr Pino cited of the boy who asked Fr Giussani: "How do you get up in the morning?" That's it: how

do you get up in the morning? Offering, i.e., saying to God: "You accomplish my day, You accomplish it." Why? Because I was made for the Infinite, but I am not the Infinite, the Infinite has to come to my aid, He has to come to meet me, and thus: "O Lord, I put my day in front of You so that it may be accomplished." To be sure, engaging all my freedom, all my energy, all my courage, everything, so that it may be accomplished, so that, Lord, You may accomplish it. Thus how my day goes, how my day ends up, how this event within my life ends up, I ask You, I ask You, I ask You to accomplish it. That is to say, I do everything possible, but I know that it falls to You to accomplish it, and I await this accomplishment. Thus offering is precisely a disposition of life. As Fr Giussani once said: God does not want what we do, God wants us. That's all.

In any case, let's stick with these Exercises! We have to have the courage to learn a little at a time.

HOLY MASS

HOMILY BY HIS EXCELLENCY MSGR GIANNI DANZI
SECRETARY OF THE GOVERNORATE OF VATICAN CITY

Truly great are the works of the Lord. Each of us better understands Peter's admonition, which we heard earlier, to give an account of the hope that is in us.⁷¹

Our person is not only - as Irenaeus says - the glory of God,⁷² but it is also the locus where the Lord has to be adored in order for us to be able to give an account of the hope that is in us.⁷³

We are asked, therefore, for the simplicity to stand before Him who is in us, to stand before this Presence which is in us and determines all of our person. The fundamental problem of my and your life remains, then, that of knowing how to contemplate this presence that is in us.

Giving an account of our faith is not a speech, but must be the springing forth of the human that is in us, that, visibly vested with the person of Christ, gives new sense and meaning to us ourselves and to what we do.

And all this is not at the mercy of our abilities or our limitations, but is the certainty of a gift which an Other has given us and gives us. We heard this in the passage from the Gospel: "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever,"⁷⁴ to be forever in our flesh and, remaining in us, not only to be present in us, but to give us the ability to make Him present to others, to the world.

What Jesus goes on to tell us in this Gospel passage is truly consoling: "I will not leave you desolate," I will not leave you to your capacities or incapacities, to your feelings and your good moods, but I will remain, I will be back " you will see Me; because I live, you will live also."⁷⁵

Your life is life because it is consummated in the consciousness of His presence.

May the Mother help us to live the Son's presence, may the truth fascinate our person always more and more, so that our knowledge, laden with affection, may redeem us and our workings, so that the life we now live in the flesh, we may live by faith in the Son of God.

CLOSING WORDS FROM FR GIUSSANI

That evening Jesus was interrupted, stopped on his journey to the village towards which He was heading, to which He had headed out, because loud weeping was heard from a woman, with a cry of pain that shook the hearts of all those present, but that shook, has shaken Christ's heart first of all.^{7"}

"Woman, do not weep!"⁷⁷ He had never seen her, never met her before.

"Woman, do not weep!" What support could she have, that woman as she listened to the words that Jesus said to her?

"Woman, do not weep!" When we return home, when we go on the bus, when we climb aboard the train, when we see the cars lined up in the streets, when we think about all the jumble of things that are involved in the lives of millions and millions of people, hundreds of millions of people... How decisive is the look that a child or a "great" adult would have turned on this Man who was coming along at the head of a small group of friends and had never seen that woman, but halted when the sound, the reverberation of her weeping reached Him! "Woman, do not weep!" - as though no one knew her, no one could recognize her more intensely, more totally, more decisively than He!

"Woman, do not weep!" When we see - as I said to you before - all the movement in the world, in whose river, in whose streams all men present themselves to life and make life present to them, the unknown of the end is nothing but the unknown of how this newness has been reached, this newness that makes us come upon a Man, makes us encounter a Man never seen before who, faced with the pain of this woman He sees for the first time, says to her: "Woman, do not weep!" "Woman, do not weep!"

"Woman, do not weep!" This is the heart with which we are placed before the gaze and the sadness, before the pain of all the people with whom we come into contact, in the street, along our way, in our travels.

"Woman, do not weep!" What an unimaginable thing it is that God - "God" - He who is making the whole world at this moment - seeing and listening to man, could say: "Man, do not weep!" "You, do not weep!" "Do not weep, because I did not make you for death, but for life! I put you in the world and placed you in a great company of people!"

Man, woman, boy, girl, you, all of you, do not weep! Do not weep! There is a gaze and a heart that penetrates to your very marrow and loves you all the way to your destiny, a gaze and a heart that no one can deflect from His course, no one can render incapable of saying what He thinks and what He feels, no one can render powerless!

*"Gloria Dei vivens homo."*¹* The glory of God. the greatness of Him who makes the stars in the sky, who puts into the sea, drop by drop, all the blue that defines it, is man who lives.

There is nothing that can suspend that immediate rush of love, of attachment. of esteem, of hope. Because He became hope for each one who saw Him, who heard Him: "Woman, do not weep!" who heard Jesus say this: "Woman, do not weep!"

There is nothing that can block the certainty of a destiny that is mysterious and good!

We are together, saying to each other: "You, I have never seen you, I don't know who you are: do not weep!" Because weeping is your destiny, it seems to be your unavoidable destiny: "Man, do not weep!"

"Gloria Dei vivens homo." The glory of God - the glory for whom He holds up the world, the universe - is man who lives, every man who lives: the man who lives, the woman who weeps, the woman who smiles, the child, the woman who dies a mother.

"Gloria Dei vivens homo." We want this and nothing but this, that the glory of God be manifested to all the world and touch all the spheres of earth: the leaves, all the leaves of the flowers and all the hearts of men.

We have never seen each other, but this is what we see among us, what we feel among us.

Ciao!

TELEGRAMS

*His Holiness
John Paul II*

"The Movement has chosen and chooses to indicate not a road, but the road towards a solution to this existential drama. The road is Christ." Your Holiness, these words from the letter you sent us on the twentieth anniversary of the recognition of the Fraternity filled the days of the annual Spiritual Exercises which gathered together in Rimini 26,000 adherents to the Fraternity and others connected by satellite in fifty nations of the world, on the theme, "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God."

We wish to repeat to you our gratitude for the great sign of your fatherhood which deepens the awareness of our history in each of us. Through the strength of your humanity in love with Christ, we feel embraced by the Spirit of Christ who launches us continually on our mission. We ask Our Lady to safeguard our willingness to work together for accomplishing God's plan for the salvation of all our brother men, repeating a prayer to Our Lady of Fatima which we sang with our miseries and those of the world in mind: "Miraculous Queen of Heaven, under your cloak woven of light, bring an end to war on earth and the peace of Jesus to men."

We entrust your person to the Mother of our Risen Lord on the eve of your birthday, sending you our best wishes like children who love the heart of the father who gives them life.

Fr Luigi Giussani, Prof Giorgio Feliciani

*His Excellency Monsignor Angela Scola
Patriarch of Venice*

Dearest Angelo, thank you for your letter which makes us feel your person even closer to ours, in this flesh - full of limitations and inconsistencies as ours is - that the energy of the Spirit uses to press forward in the world. In your new call to serve the Church, we see a prophecy for the future, that unity which is the most impressive demonstration of the presence in the world of God who is all in all and through the strength of Jesus Christ is the beginning of the end of the world for all men and all history. Pray to Our Lady of Victory that upon His return, the Lord Jesus may not be scandalized at us. We too hug you close.

Fr Luigi Giussani, Prof Giorgio Feliciani

*His Eminence Cardinal James Francis Stafford
President, Pontifical Council for the Laity*

26,000 adherents to the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation gathered in Rimini and others in 50 nations of the world connected for the Spiritual Exercises on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of pontifical recognition, meditating on St Paul's statement, "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God," regretful that you were not present to celebrate the Eucharist, feel that you are near in faith in the Son of God. the beginning of the communion which makes us His witnesses among the men of our time. Renewing their Baptismal vows, they are faithful to the Church that ever sustains us and urges us on through the Holy Father and the Pontifical Council for the Laity, a sure bulwark at the side of our Fraternity.

Fr Luigi Giussani. Prof Giorgio Feliciani

*His Excellency Monsignor Stanislaw Rylko
Secretary, Pontifical Council for the Laity*

With the Holy Father's letter for our twentieth anniversary as a sure beacon, we express our thanks to you for your faithfulness to our unfaithfulness. Covered with shame at the affection you show us. we look forward to the day of our pilgrimage to Loreto. asking Our Lady of Czestochowa to protect and preserve your person in gladness and peace.

Fr Luigi Giussani. Prof Giorgio Feliciani

*His Eminence Cardinal Camilla Ruini
President, Conferenza Episcopate Italiana*

26,000 adherents to the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation gathered in Rimini and others in 50 nations of the world connected for the Spiritual Exercises on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of pontifical recognition, meditating on St Paul's statement, "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God." express their gratitude for the celebration of the twentieth anniversary in Rome. May your fatherly words not find us unworthy of the journey towards holiness in accordance with the accent of our charism and our task of mission in the spheres of Italian society to testify to the Christian event as the road to reach the solution to the existential drama of contemporary man. May Our Lady be aid and support to your responsibility of service to the Holy Father and the Church that is in Italy.

Fr Luigi Giussani. Prof Giorgio Feliciani

His Excellency Monsignor Giuseppe Betori
General Secretary, Conferenza Episcopate Italiana

26,000 adherents to the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation gathered in Rimini and others in 50 nations of the world connected for the Spiritual Exercises on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of pontifical recognition, meditating on St Paul's statement, "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God," grateful for your letter on the twentieth anniversary of the Fraternity, a sign of the fatherly friendship of the Italian Church, wish to continue to serve in the missionary task of testifying to Christ the beginning of the end of the world, faithful to the form of teaching to which they have been entrusted. May Our Lady ever be an aid to the responsibility of the Church in Italy.

Fr Luigi Giussani, Prof Giorgio Feliciani

His Excellency Monsignor Paolo Romeo
Apostolic Nuncio in Italy

26.000 adherents to the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation gathered in Rimini and others in 50 nations of the world connected for the Spiritual Exercises on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of pontifical recognition, meditating on St Paul's statement, "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God," assure you of our commitment to collaborating in the mission of the Church in Italy and faithfulness to the Holy Father to announce to Italian society that Christ is the road to the solution of the existential drama of our brother men.

Fr Luigi Giussani, Prof Giorgio Feliciani

His Excellency Monsignor Eilippo Santoro
Auxiliary Bishop of Rio de Janeiro

Dear Filippo.

Thank you for your message which renews our gratitude for your faithfulness to the history born out of the faithfulness of God. who launches us into the world for an ever new beginning which is mission, as you have taught His Excellency Monsignor His Excellency Monsignor us. Pray to Our Lady that She may watch over our journey to holiness and that of the entire Fraternity.

Fr Luigi Giussani, Prof Giorgio Feliciani

**THE LETTER FROM JOHN PAUL II
TO FR GIUSSANI
ON THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF
PONTIFICAL RECOGNITION OF THE FRATERNITY OF CL**

To the Reverend Monsignor
LUIGI GIUSSANI
Founder of the "Communion and Liberation" Movement

1. I share intensely in the joy of the Fraternity of "Communion and Liberation." on the twentieth anniversary of its recognition by the Pontifical Council for the Laity as an Association of Faithful of Pontifical Right. As early as 1954, dearest Monsignor Giussani, you initiated in Milan the "Communion and Liberation" Movement, which then spread to other parts of Italy and later also to other countries of the world. The Fraternity is the mature fruit of this Movement.

On this happy occasion of the twentieth anniversary, I am particularly pleased to review the significant steps in the ecclesial itinerary of the Movement, in order to thank God for what He has wrought through your initiative, Reverend Monsignor, and that of those who have joined hands with you over the years. It is a comfort to recall the events through which God's action has manifested itself and to acknowledge together the greatness of His mercy.

2. As I go back in memory over the life and works of the Fraternity and the Movement, the first aspect that strikes me is the commitment you have put into listening to the needs of today's man. Man never stops seeking: both when he is marked by the drama of violence, loneliness, and insignificance, and when he lives in serenity and joy, he continues to seek. The only answer which can satisfy him and appease this search of his comes from the encounter with the One who is at the source of his being and his action.

The Movement, therefore, has chosen and chooses to indicate not a road, but the road towards a solution to this existential drama. The road, as you have affirmed so many times, is Christ. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, who reaches the person in his day-to-day existence. The discovery of this road normally comes about through the mediation of other human beings. Marked through the gift of faith by the encounter with the Redeemer, believers are called to become an echo of the event of Christ, to become themselves an "event". Christianity, even before being a sum of doctrines or

a rule for salvation, is thus the "event" of an encounter. This is the insight and experience that you have transmitted in these years to so many persons who have adhered to the Movement. Communion and Liberation, more than offering new things, aims at helping people rediscover the Tradition and history of the Church, in order to express this in ways capable of speaking to and engaging the men of our time. In my *Message to the Participants in the World Congress of Ecclesia! Movements and New Communities* on May 27, 1998. I wrote that the originality of the charism of each movement "does not claim, nor could it, to add anything to the richness of the *deposition fidei*, safeguarded by the Church with impassioned fidelity" (no. 4). Yet this originality "constitutes a powerful support, a suggestive and persuasive reminder to live the Christian experience to the full, with intelligence and creativity. Herein lies the premise for finding adequate answers to the challenges and urges of the times and ever-changing historical circumstances" (*ibid*).

3. It is necessary to go back to Christ, the Word of God made flesh for the salvation of mankind. Jesus of Nazareth, who lived the human experience as no one else could have, posits Himself as the goal of every human aspiration. In Him alone can man achieve full self-knowledge.

Thus faith is shown to be an authentic adventure of cognition, for it is not an abstract discourse, nor a vague religious sentiment, but a personal encounter with Christ, which bestows new meaning on life. The work of education that in your activities and in your communities so many parents and teachers have striven to carry out has consisted precisely in accompanying brothers, children, and friends to discover in their affections, in work, in the diverse vocations, the voice that leads each one to the definitive encounter with the Word made flesh. Only in the only-begotten Son of the Father can man find a full, exhaustive answer to his intimate and fundamental expectations.

This permanent dialogue with Christ, nourished by personal and liturgical prayer, is a stimulus for an active presence in society, as the history of the Movement and the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation testifies. Yours is, really, also a history of works: works of culture, of charity, of formation, and - in respecting the distinction between the aims of the civil society and of the Church - it is also a history of engagement in the political field, a sphere by its very nature full of conflict, where it is at times hard to serve faithfully the cause of the common good.

4. In these twenty years, the Church has seen the birth and growth of many other movements, communities, and associations within herself. The strength

of Christ's Spirit never ceases to overcome, to break apart, as it were, the sedimentary schemes and forms of our former life, to push towards new unprecedented ways of expression. This push is the sign of the lively mission of the Church, in which Christ's face is made visible through the features of the faces of men in every time and place of history. How can we not be astonished at these wonders of the Holy Spirit? He works marvels, and at the dawn of a new millennium He encourages the faithful to go out into the deep towards more and more distant frontiers in the building of the Kingdom.

Years ago, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of Communion and Liberation, I happened to say to you: "Go into all the world and bring the truth, the beauty and the peace which are found in Christ the Redeemer" (Rome, September 29, 1984, no. 4). At the beginning of the third millennium of the Christian era, I forcefully and gratefully entrust to you once again the same mandate. I exhort you to cooperate with constant awareness in the mission of dioceses and parishes, courageously expanding their missionary action to the farthest edges of the world.

May the Lord accompany you and make your striving fruitful. May Mary, the faithful Virgin and the Star of the New Evangelization, be your support and guide you on the path of an ever more daring faithfulness to the Gospel.

With these sentiments I am happy to impart to you, Monsignor Giussani, your collaborators, and all the members of the Fraternity, as well as those who adhere to the Movement, a special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, February 11, 2002.
on the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Joannes Paulus II". The signature is written in dark ink and is centered below the typed text.

FR GIUSSANI'S LETTER TO THE MEMBERS OF THE FRATERNITY

Milan. February 22, 2002

Dearest friends,

The letter which the Holy Father sent me on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the pontifical recognition of the Fraternity is the most momentous gesture of our history.

In our gratitude for this sign of great fatherhood from John Paul II. we are authoritatively aided to recognize the straight line that our history has followed. "The Movement," the Holy Father wrote us, "has chosen and chooses to indicate not a road, but the road towards a solution to this existential drama" of man who never stops seeking. "The road... is Christ. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, who reaches the person in his day-to-day existence." For this reason, a new beginning is now opening up for us: to demonstrate, to re-demonstrate the evidence of the truth of what, following the Tradition of the Church, we have always said to each other. As the Holy Father also wrote: "Christianity, even before being a sum of doctrines or a rule for salvation. is the 'event of an encounter.'"

What an imposing work emerges from this letter! We are starting afresh, always! What has to happen is something new, an extremely weighty step in our history.

This is a moment of responsibility whose actions are made evident in time, as the urge to root in our existence the judgment of the Spirit, to which each of us can concur in an orderly and obedient manner or can resist as the claim of one's own carnality, which becomes the impossibility of defending serenity or fighting against the apparent destruction of what happens. Everything depends on a serene, and thus constructive, obedience on the part of our toil. This toil is at its origin a sacrifice that follows Christ, His death and His resurrection. To follow Christ, to love Christ in everything: this is what must be acknowledged as the principal characteristic of our journey.

This is why we must ask for a great clarity in the face of our responsibility. Because the individual is responsible for the whole Fraternity in which he is immersed, whatever may be his current condition, of health or sickness, of

gladness or trial. Reflecting on this helps us to grasp the crucial value of our journey, especially in the work done in School of Community, through which each of us may find evidence of the reason for the miracle of his adherence. God prompts each one of us to be a vanguard for the mission.

The greatest example in this sense is given us by those among us who have been entrusted with the weightiest responsibilities, also in the civil society, so that the newness that runs through our history may be manifest in them through their dedication to their service. And this newness is not judged primarily by the moral behavior of the individual, but by the sense of responsibility that each one feels in his service within the very community where God calls him. Given this, may the Responsible seek in his action to offer a service of charity, because accepting the will of God is a reality that derives from recognition of His ultimate aim for the incrementation of the life of the entire community and of the Church. The charity of those who are responsible is, first and foremost, help offered to everyone in the fulfillment of their task towards the Mystery. This is the criterion of merit for every man who wants to be a brother to other men.

For this reason, the Pope's letter concludes by relaunching us on our mission: the force of the mission becomes the force of martyrdom (witness). Let us embark on the future freely, even if others were not to accept what we are.

Let us pray to Our Lady for our miseries and those of the world. Within the adventure of every day, there is a risk that we may continue to ignore God's faithfulness to our history: this is the biggest sin. Our Lady urges us to collaborate in the greatness of God's plan of salvation for all our brother men.

Joining you with a heart full of adherence and strength. I feel that I am where I belong with all of you.

Fr Luigi Giussani

ART IN OUR COMPANY

Prepared by Sandro Chierici

(Guide to reading the images from the history of art accompanying the classical music during the entrances and exits)

Our course this year starts with the creation of man and his first sin, which is the origin of our "life in the flesh."

Some figures from the Old Testament (cf. Hebrews 11: Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac) embody faith in the unseen God, in the wait for His manifestation.

Through Mary, Christ enters into the everyday life of man. The faith of Mary and Joseph makes the Incarnation possible.

The faith of the shepherds, the Magi, the disciples, acknowledges that the fulfillment of the promise is a real presence. Christ who by sharing the dailiness of man's life affirms His mastery over the cosmos and history and re-takes possession of creation.

1. *The Creation of the Stars*, mosaic, Palermo, Cappella Palatina
2. *The Separation of the Waters*, mosaic. Palermo, Cappella Palatina
3. *The Creation of Man*, mosaic, Palermo, Cappella Palatina
4. *The Tree of Knowledge*, mosaic, Palermo, Cappella Palatina
5. *The Creation of Eve*, mosaic, Palermo, Cappella Palatina
6. *Original Sin*. mosaic, Palermo. Cappella Palatina
7. *Adam and Eve in the Presence of God*, mosaic, Palermo, Cappella Palatina
8. *Adam and Eve Being Driven out of Paradise*, mosaic. Palermo, Cappella Palatina
9. *The Labors of Adam and Eve*, mosaic, Palermo, Cappella Palatina
10. *Noah and the Animals Entering the Ark*, mosaic, Venice. San Marco
11. *Noah and the Animals Entering the Ark*, mosaic. Venice, San Marco
12. *Noah Welcoming the Dove*, mosaic, Venice. San Marco
13. *Noah and the Animals Leaving the Ark*, mosaic, Palermo, Cappella Palatina
14. *Abraham in Front of the Lord*, mosaic, Palermo. Cappella Palatina
15. *Abraham and Sarah*, mosaic, Ravenna, San Vitale
16. *Abraham with the Three Angels*, mosaic, Palermo, Cappella Palatina

17. *Abraham Entertaining the Three Angels Unawares*, mosaic. Ravenna, San Vitale
18. *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, mosaic. Ravenna. San Vitale
19. *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, mosaic, Palermo, Cappella Palatina
20. Maestro di San Nicola. *The Annunciation Angel*. Assisi. San Francesco. Lower Church, north transept
21. Maestro di San Nicola. *The \ 'irgin Annunciate*, Assisi. San Francesco, Lower Church, north transept
22. 23. Fra Angelico. *The Annunciation*, Cortona. Museo diocesano
24. 25. 26. Giotto, *The Nativity*, Assisi, San Francesco, Lower Church
27. 28. Giotto, *The Flight into Egypt*. Assisi. San Francesco, Lower Church
29. Giotto's workshop, *The Announcement to the Shepherds*, detail of *The Nativity*, Assisi. San Francesco, Lower Church
30. Giotto, *The Adoration of the Magi*. Assisi. San Francesco, Lower Church
31. *The Adoration of the Magi*, Subiaco. Sacro Speco
32. Giotto, *The Adoration of the Magi*, Assisi. San Francesco, Lower Church
33. Maestro di San Nicola, *The Virgin and Child*, Assisi, San Francesco, Lower Church
34. Pietro Lorenzetti, *The Virgin and Child*, Assisi, San Francesco, Lower Church, chapel of St John the Baptist
35. Pietro Lorenzetti, *The Virgin and Child*, Assisi, San Francesco, Lower Church, south transept
36. Giotto's workshop, *Scenes from the Childhood of Christ*, Assisi, San Francesco. Lower Church, north transept
37. 38. Giotto's workshop. *The Presentation in the Temple*, Assisi, San Francesco. Lower Church, north transept
39. Fra Angelico, *The Presentation in the Temple*, Florence, convent of San Marco, cell no. 10
40. *Jesus Calming the Storm*, mosaic, Venice. San Marco
41. 42. *Christ and the Samaritan Woman*, mosaic. Venice, San Marco
43. 44. *The Miracle of the Loaves and Pishes*, mosaic, Venice, San Marco
45. Duccio da Boninsegna. *Christ Healing the Man Born Blind*, London, National Gallery
46. Duccio da Boninsegna. *The Wedding Feast at Cana*, Siena, Museo dell'Opera
47. Duccio da Boninsegna. *The Risen Christ Appearing to His Disciples*, Siena. Museo dell'Opera
48. Duccio da Boninsegna. *Christ Appearing on the Sea of Galilee*, Siena, Museo dell'Opera
49. Duccio da Boninsegna. *The Calling of Peter and Andrew*. Washington, National Gallery of Art

50. Andrea de' Bartoli (14th cen.). *Jesus and the Sleeping Disciples*. Assisi. San Francesco, Lower Church, chapel of St Lawrence
51. 52. Giotto's workshop. *Christ Washing the Apostles' Feet*, Assisi, San Francesco, Lower Church, north transept
53. Duccio da Boninsegna. *Christ Appearing on the Mountain*, Siena, Museo dell'Opera
54. Duccio da Boninsegna, *Christ and the Disciples on the Way to Emmaus*, Siena, Museo dell'Opera
55. 56. Giotto and students, *The Ascension of Christ*. Assisi, San Francesco, Lower Church
57. Anonymous Piedmontese artist, 15th cen., *The Peasants' Lunch*, Portofino, Museo del Monte
58. Anonymous Piedmontese artist, 15th cen., *The Labors of the Months, Mowing and Threshing*. Portofino, Museo del Monte
59. Anonymous Piedmontese artist, 15th cen., *Gathering Wood*. Portofino, Museo del Monte
60. Anonymous Piedmontese artist, 15th cen., *Tending the Vineyard*, Portofino, Museo del Monte
61. *Plowing*, miniature, from the *Ti es Riches Heures* of the *Due de Berry*
62. *Work in the Fields*, miniature, from the *Tres Riches Heures* of the *Due de Berry*
63. *Making Hay*. miniature, from the *Ti es Riches Heures* of the *Due de Berry*
64. *Shearing the Sheep*, miniature, from the *Tres Riches Heures* of the *Due de Berry*
65. Master of the Roman School, *Christ in Glory*, Assisi, San Francesco, Lower Church, vault of the third bay
66. Master of the Roman School. *Our Lady in Glory*. Assisi. San Francesco, Lower Church, vault of the third bay
67. 68. Jacopo Torriti, *Christ the Creator of the World*. Assisi, San Francesco, Lower Church, north wall, upper register

DIRECTORY FOR FRATERNITY GROUPS

The following indications, which have emerged from the last twelve years' experience, aim to reply to Fraternity groups who have expressed the desire for a greater seriousness in the way they lead their lives, both personal and in communion.

1. Obedience to the indications given by the person guiding the whole Fraternity

Those who participate in the life of the Fraternity are invited to obey the indications given by the person guiding the whole Fraternity, in a responsible immanency in the life of the Movement that goes as far as one's affectivity.

2. Nature and consistency of the group

A group is made up of adults who freely choose it or constitute it. The idea guiding the Fraternity is the discovery that an adult is just as responsible for his work and family as he is for his sanctity, for his life as a path to sanctity, that is to say, for his life as vocation.

The adult, in so far as he is responsible, joins up with others who recognize the same responsibility before life as vocation.

According to the method the Movement teaches, everyone should desire a Fraternity group, even though adherence to it is personal.

3. Guidance: each group must be guided

Each group must be guided. The person guiding the group is not necessarily the prior, but must be someone authoritative, in the evangelical sense of the term: someone who has faith, who can even be from outside *the* group. The person guiding must communicate a method of life: he must teach how to bring everything back to one fundamental idea, and by meditating upon it, watching it, loving it, "all the rest" may spring forth. This is the origin of our method: Christian life springs from the encounter with a presence, and by following this presence one is changed. It is precisely in this change of self that the idea of a rule slowly matures.

The person guiding must encourage an authentic seriousness in the faith. He should be one who gives the group a direction, comforts it, and helps it to correct the inevitable tendency toward artificiality and moralism.

A stable relationship with someone "external" to the group (a priest, a responsible of the Movement, a member of *Memores Domini*) is a way to avoid emphasizing one's own group to the detriment of the unity of the entire Fraternity, which is not a federation of autonomous entities.

Each group must have a prior, who performs a secretarial function (notices, document distribution, etc.) and maintains order. The prior follows the directives received from the Center through the diocesan and regional responsables as well as the member of the executive committee in charge of the region.

4. The rule

In the life of the group, the rule is in function of an increase of the relationship between the person and Christ, and thus as a consequence, of an increase of the Movement in service to the Church.

a) Prayer

Each group must give itself a rule of prayer: it may be reciting a Hail Mary in the evening or going to daily Mass. Whether one chooses the minimum or maximum hypothesis is not important. What is important is the gesture of prayer, and the faithfulness to it.

b) Poverty

Monthly support of the common fund of the entire Fraternity, which implies sacrifice, is in function of an increase in the consciousness of poverty as an evangelical virtue. As St Paul says: "We have nothing yet we possess everything." The true way to possess everything is to be detached from everything. One can pledge even a few coins, but to pay them with faithfulness has a fundamental value as a reminder, because it is both a concrete and unitary gesture. Whoever does not commit himself to this directive may not be considered part of the Fraternity.

c) Development of the knowledge of Church doctrine

The Movement's catechetical study is the School of Community: this illuminates our formation, which is our whole life's task. It should be carried out while taking into account the Exercises and the latest documents of the Movement which clarify the context in which the "course" set by the School of Community is placed.

In cases where the School of Community is done elsewhere (as the result of a missionary presence of adults in their environment), the Fraternity group should meditate on the spiritual Exercises or documents indicated by the Movement, without failing nevertheless to refer back to the School of Community.

5. Work

The work of the Fraternity is the increase of the Movement in service to the Church. Taking on specific commitments is therefore in function of this (see the letter to new enrollees to the Fraternity).

1. See the complete text of the letter sent by the Pope to Ft Giussani on p. 51.
2. Cf. "Faith is an obedience of the heart to the form of teaching to which we have been entrusted" (J. Ratzinger, from his address for the presentation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, in *L'Osservatore Romano*. January 20, 1993. p. 5).
3. Cf Jn 14:12
4. Cf Gal 2:20
5. See the complete text of Fr Giussani's letter to the members of the Fraternity on p. 54.
6. 1 Cor 15:28.
7. See the complete text of Fr Giussani's letter to the members of the Fraternity on p. 54.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. Luigi Giussani. *All'origine della pretesa Cristiana*. Milan. Riz/oli. 2001, p. 3 (English edition: *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*. Montreal. McGillQueen's University Press, 1998)
11. Cf *Ibid.*, p. 23.
12. J. Ratzinger. "Faith. Truth. Tolerance." in *Traces*. April 2002, p. 37.
13. Cf. V. Solov'ev. *La Russia e la Chiesa universale e altri scritti [Russia and the Universal Church and Other Writings]*. Milan, fa Casa di Matriona, 1989. See also A. Savorana (ed.), "In What Sense Islam Challenges the Church." *Traces*. January 2002, p. 17.
14. Cf. *Traces*. March 2002. p. 8 ff.
15. Cf C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, chap. 21, London. Collins. 1965. p. 109-110.
16. Cf R. Calasso. *La letteratura e i >li dei [Literature and the Gods]*, Milan. Adelphi. 2001.
17. M. Zambrano. *Persona e democrazia [Democracy and the Person]*, Milan. Mondadori, 2000, p. 42.
18. F. Gentiloni. "Vane preghiere di pace" ["Yain prayers for peace"], *il manifesto*. December 30, 2001, p. 15.
19. Cf U. Galimberti. "Il fiore del male" ["The flower of evil"]. *D-Repubblica*. April 9. 2002. p. 238.
20. Letter published in *Traces*. May 2002. p. 4.
21. Cf. L. Giussani. *Il senso di Dio e il nome moderno [The Sense of God and Modern Man]*. Milan. BUR, 1994. p. 122.
22. A. Soggi. *I nuovi perseguitati. Indagine sull'intolleranza anti-cristiana nel nuovo secolo del martirio*, Casale Monferrato, Piemonte. 2002.
23. J. Ratzinger. "Faith. Truth. Tolerance." in *Traces*. April 2002. p. 38.
24. L. Giussani, "A New Beginning," in *Traces*. April 2002, p. 7.
25. L. Giussani. *L'autocoscienza del cosmo [The Self-Awareness of the Cosmos]*, Milan. BUR, 2000. p. 17.
26. Cf L. Giussani. *Si può vivere così? [Can One Live Like This?]*. Milan. BUR. pp. 273-275.
27. Gen 1:26.
28. Cf. Jn 15:13.
29. Cf. Jer 31:3.
30. P. Bergamini. "Querido Fr Giuss..." in *Truces*. May 2002, pp. 26-27.
31. G. Leopardi. "Alia sua donna." l. 55. in *Cara heldt...* Milan. BUR. 1996. p. 55.
32. Reference is made to the lesson held for university students at the Politecnico in Milan, in 1985. now published in L. Giussani. *Le mie tenore [My Readings]*. Milan. BUR, 1996, pp. 9-31.
33. M. Bardazzi. "Captain Jones' Long March." in *Traces*. February 2002. pp. 17-18.
34. Letter published in *Traces*. May 2002. p. 4.
35. L. Giussani. "The Renewal of the Origin of the Question." greetings to the National Council of CL. March 2. 2002. in *Traces*. March 2002. p. I.
36. L. Giussani. "We Belong." in *Traces*. May 2002, p. 7.

37. L. Giussani, "The Renewal of the Origin of the Question," p. 1.
38. L. Giussani, Testimony during the meeting between the Holy Father John Paul II and the ecclesial movements and new communities, in L. Giussani, S. Alberto, and J. Prades. *Generare Irwve nella storia del mondo [Gem-rating Traces in the History of the World]*, Milan, Rizzoli, 1998. p. IV.
39. Cf. L. Giussani, *L'autocoscienza del vosmo*. p. 138.
40. L. Giussani. *Yivendo nella came [Living in the Flesh]*, Milan. B!IR. 1998. p. 66.
41. *I hid*, p. 116.
42. L. Giussani. *L'autocoscienza del eosmo*. p. 31.
43. St Anselm, *Pro.slogion*. 1^a de fide..., 2b: "Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credere, sed credo ut intelligam. Nam qui noil crediderit, non experietur. et qui expertus non fuerit. non intellegit."
44. Letter published in *Traces*, February 2002. p. 5.
45. L. Giussani, *Vivendi) nella came*, p. 78.
46. Cf. Lk 4:21.
47. Giussani, Alberto, Prades. *Generare trace...* p. 20.
48. L. Giussani. "The Work of the Movement." in *Traces*. January 2002. p. V.
49. Gal 2:20.
50. L. Giussani. *Yivendo nella came*, p. 207.
51. A. Negri. "Mia giovinezza." in *Mia giovinezza*. Milan. BUR. 1995. p. 78.
52. L. Giussani, *Yivendo nella came*, p. 205.
53. L. Giussani. *Affezione e dimora*. Milan. BUR. 2001. pp. 244-246.
54. Letter published in *Tracce.s*, February 2002. p. 6.
55. L. Giussani, *L'attrattiva Ge.su*. Milan. BUR. 1999. p. 169.
56. 1 Pet 3:15.
57. See the complete text of the letter sent by the Pope to Fr Giussani on p. 51.
58. CL 1 Thess 5:21.
59. Cf. *Tertio Millemia Adveniente*. Apostolic Letter in preparation for the Jubilee of the year 2000. November 10. 1994, in *La traeeia*. 1994. p. 1002.
60. Cf. L. Giussani, *Generare trace...* p. VII.
61. Lk 22:42.
62. John Paul II, "Take onto yourselves the Church's need," on the thirtieth anniversary of Communion and Liberation. September 29. 1984. in *La traeeia*. 1984, p. 1028.
63. See the complete text of Luigi Giussani's letter to the members of the Fraternity on p. 54.
64. John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, Encyclical Letter. March 4. 1979. in *La traeeia*. 1978/1979, p. 269.
65. A. Manzoni, / *prom.e.s.si spo.si [The Betrothed]*, Milan. BUR. 2000. chap. 25. p. 542.
66. Cf. Luigi Giussani, *The Religious Sense*. Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, pp. 100 II.
67. Dante, *Inferno*. V. 103. translated by Charles S. Singleton, Princeton. 1977. p. 53.
68. Cf. Jn 11:35.
69. Cf. Lk 19:41.
70. Cf. L. Giussani. *The Religious Sense*, pp. 49 ff.
71. LCI" 1 Pt 3:15.
72. "Gloria dei homo vivens" (Irenaeus of Lyons. *Atversus haere.ses*. IV, 20. 7).
73. "In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (1 Pt 3:15).
74. Jn 14:16.
75. Cf. Jn 14:18-19.
76. Cf. Lk 7:11-16.
77. Lk 7:13.
78. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haere.ses*. IV, 20. 7.

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