

therefore saw.”⁵⁵ Our two Muslim friends here today are a witness to this. They wrote us saying that meeting us made them take their own tradition more seriously. When a person is seen, he looks at things differently, even his own classmates on a field trip, as one of you told us. After years of thinking her classmates were “complete idiots,” she wrote:

“Speaking with my classmates, I understood that they have the same questions, doubts, and desire for life that I have; it’s just that no one ever offered them a better alternative, because they have never met Christ. I, however, have; I’ve seen how He changed me, I remember how I was before, and so I cannot stop seeking to be 100% myself.”

This is how you recognize that Christianity is true: because it rekindles your humanity, it makes you more human. It doesn’t make you more like everyone else; it makes you more yourself. That pain, that begging is still there, but with a great certainty like Mary’s: that God would never abandon her, that he would continue to make her life great. “Because through magnificent things / Because through horrible things / I have the hope of seeing something more / Something that goes beneath the surface / That goes beyond the depths,”⁵⁶ wrote one of you, whose family is going through a hard time. The heart can finally voice its pain and absence, because it is certain of the One who can bring happiness, as our friend Miriam told us in speaking about the death of her brother Francesco:

“Why was February 10 (the day after Francesco died) the most beautiful day of my life? I ask myself every day. I don’t exactly know how to answer. I only know that after days of anxiety and desperation, I felt overwhelmed with serenity. And that there were thousands of people everywhere. Thousands of people around. A thousand people who were serene. The evening of February 9, we toasted ‘Francesco, who is in Paradise,’ and the morning of the 10th I was at Rocca di Manerba, in peace with Elisa (a friend of mine). She was there every evening that week before Francesco died. With me, for me. She explained how all of it is a miracle, that the sacrifice Francesco made was not in vain. She helped me to understand that Francesco had saved my life, because, in the face of a fact, you cannot remain indifferent. In the face of something that is so evident, you become certain. I am certain. Because for me to be serene, and even happy, in this situation, I either have to be crazy or there’s something much greater. This is the most beautiful time in my life. It’s paradoxical, discovering the greatest beauty in the ugliest time of life. Yet that’s how it is. As Elisa said, this is my measuring stick for the rest of my life, for every moment in which it seems easier to say that life is a trick and that there isn’t really something greater out there.”

It’s paradoxical: you can be joyful and sad at the same time. When someone is looked at as Miriam is, not only do they look at death with pain but, at the same time, with certainty, but they also begin to look at themselves in a different way: they love themselves. This is the greatest miracle today; I challenge you to find another place that can give you this gift, because today no one likes him or herself; everyone wants to change his or her image. Not here! The sign that you’ve encountered someone who loves you, who tells you He is God, is that you start loving yourself just as you are.⁵⁷ As another friend wrote: “Adhering to the Movement made the most impossible thing of all possible for me: to like myself and see I’m beautiful.” And beautiful not because you look like Chiara Ferragni, or because you have tattoos like Fedez. You’re beautiful because you are loved, because there is someone who gives His life for you, because you start to look at yourself with His eyes, and say, “Then, I must be something completely different than I thought!”

We’ll listen to a song by Adriana Mascagni that’s remarkably deep, *Amica del Mistero [Friend of the Mys-*

⁵⁵ What St. Augustine said, referring to Zaccheus; cf. St. Augustine, *Sermon 174*, 4.4.

⁵⁶ Cfr. *Triduum Booklet*, p. 44.

⁵⁷ “So now you can understand the greatness and value of your own ‘I,’ and begin to have an esteem and tenderness for yourself; you begin to be aware of your own value just as the Mystery was aware, so aware that He troubled himself for us, for you and for me.” (J. Carrón, *He Was Seen and Therefore Saw*, in *Triduum Booklet*, p. 44).

tery].⁵⁸ Who am I? I am loved by the Mystery, friend of the Mystery. Let's try to listen to each word thinking of this question: Who am I? What is it that makes me beautiful for the world?

Amica del Mistero

We can follow like Peter: like children in love, fully aware of their mistakes, who ask themselves, "Who are you who fill my life?" or like Mary: living pain and sadness, but certain and glad because He will never abandon us. But the question remains: why didn't Jesus, who was God, come down from the cross? Why didn't he ascend straight into heaven? Why didn't he spare His mother all that suffering? Why didn't He spare Peter the temptation to betray Him? Why does He walk toward death, saying nothing? Where is God in all this? What answer does He give?

This is the why we will do the *Via Crucis*, the Way of the Cross this afternoon, to listen to God's response to these questions. We can follow the path of the cross standing like Mary, one who suffers carrying all the difficulties of life, but who is certain; or like Peter, who is deeply pained by his own sin, but full of affection and the desire to be reborn like a baby. To live it this way, to discover how God responds to our questions, we have to be silent and follow, without letting ourselves be blinded by our sentiments, as were the disciples who ran away.

If you are not coming to listen to Jesus' response to this question, it's best for you to stay at the hotel. We think of silence as a constraint. When a person thinks of himself, he sees all the confusion inside, and this is why we're afraid of silence. But think of when a girl is about to kiss you: do you start wanting to talk? Talking isn't needed; it's better to remain in silence. To welcome God's response to our question, we have to stay in silence, where silence is understood as being totally attentive to listening, listening to Jesus' response to our questions.

We have one single duty in life, my friend, on which all our other duties depend: not doing well in school, not making a name for ourselves in the world, not having a family or even finding a successful career. We have one single duty: to be ourselves, to be happy. In fulfilling this duty, I can discover if Christ makes me more myself in everything I have to do, as it was for Peter and Mary. The opportunity we are offered today is to discover if Christ is *the* presence that can make us happy. And we only have to do one thing to discover it: to be ourselves. This is our only major duty.

Dulcis Christe

Angelus

⁵⁸ A. Mascagni, "Amica del Mistero [Friend of the Mystery]," in *Triduum Booklet*, pp. 44-46.

Way of the Cross, Pigi Banna

Friday Afternoon, March 30

First Station

JUDAS, PETER AND PILATE: OUR BETRAYAL

Jesus goes to His crucifixion. We follow this cross in the same total powerlessness Jesus took on. Why doesn't He speak? He knew Judas better than anyone; He could've stopped him, but He doesn't. He knew Peter better than anyone; He could've stopped him, but He doesn't. He was more intelligent and much more powerful than Pilate, but He says nothing. He knows all of our betrayals, our sins, but He doesn't condemn us. Why not? Many of us have similar questions: "Where is God? Why did he allow our friend to die? Why does he permit such terrible family difficulties? Why doesn't he fix everything for me?" We think God isn't responding; that He is powerless.

In the end, what are 5,000 people gathered here today compared to the 75,000 who are flocking to the soccer stadium? Nothing. What are you, who have come here, compared to all your other classmates? Nothing. What are this Triduum or the most beautiful moments in our life compared to our distraction, our sins and the thoughts that usually fill our heads? Nothing. When we think, "It's all nothing," we betray Him; we're like Peter, Judas or Pilate. "He's nothing; He hasn't done anything!" If we think that way, we can quit after this station. Peter and Pilate quit after this station; for them, it was all over. Our temptation is to say, "What good is GS, what good is the Church compared to all the confusion in today's world." We quit, and we betray Him.

Alternatively, we can begin to walk, without having understood everything yet, to see how He will respond, how he will show us His power by dying. This isn't rhetoric. Those who don't understand the meaning of this gesture and want to stop here may do so, thinking, "A man who goes to his death like this is powerless; I have no use for him." Those, however, who want to follow this cross, who want to see if it has anything to say to our lives, can start walking.

We'll walk to the second station silently, so we can hear if Jesus has something to say to all our questions. We follow a man who goes to die like an innocent lamb,⁵⁹ hardly saying anything. Therefore, we need silence to be able to hear His response, staying close to those who help us gaze on the cross without distracting us.

Second Station

MARY, SIMON, DISMAS: BEHIND THE CROSS

Mary followed. How many times did we hear that verb repeated in the reading we listened to by Péguy? "She followed, she followed..."⁶⁰ And we, too, are following; we didn't quit after the first station.

Following requires sacrifice. For Mary, it required the sacrifice of her tears. She, who was a woman of remarkable goodness, whose purity was recognized by everyone, now appeared as "one who begs pity."⁶¹ We, too, in following, make the sacrifice of staying silent, as you have done quite impressively so far. It's a silence in which, at times, we simply find ourselves distracted, in which we don't know what to think or say, discovering how confused and superficial we are. Yet we go back to following, looking at the cross, trying to follow the footsteps of that man to understand what answer He has for us. This is why I was struck by the two girls in the choir who sang *Ognun m'entenda*.⁶² At first, they were looking at their music, but at a certain point they started singing it while looking at the cross.

The true sacrifice of silence is not so much obeying—because a person can force himself to obey in a passive way—but in exposing the weakest part of oneself within that silence. For Mary, it was letting her tears be seen, let-

⁵⁹ T.L. De Victoria, "Eram Quasi Agnus," in *Triduum Booklet*, p. 60.

⁶⁰ Charles Péguy, "The Mystery of the Charity of Joan of Arc," in *Triduum Booklet*, pp. 63-65.

⁶¹ Charles Péguy, "The Mystery of the Charity of Joan of Arc," in *Triduum Booklet*, p. 65.

⁶² Anonymous, from the Marciana Library in Venice, 15th century "Ognun m'entenda," in *Triduum Booklet*, pp. 62-63.

ting everyone see her as a poor woman who was weeping. For Simon the Cyrene, it was letting everyone see that he—a strong working man—was a friend of Jesus, without being ashamed. And for the thief, a man whose heart was hardened, a man who wasn't afraid of the cross, it was a sacrifice to let his childlike heart be seen, saying to Jesus, "It's true, I did everything wrong, but remember me!"⁶³

This is the kind of sacrifice asked of us in this last station nearing the death of Jesus: keeping our eyes on the cross and not just forcing ourselves to stay quiet, but carrying in silence all that weighs on us the most, all that makes us ashamed of ourselves. This is the true sacrifice.

This is the time to entrust some friend we have, a person dear to us who is sick, a situation we can't manage to resolve on our own, as well as situations that embarrass us, as Mary was embarrassed by her tears or the thief was embarrassed to reveal he was like a gentle lamb. Each of us has the freedom to accept this sacrifice: letting oneself be seen for what he or she is, in continuing to walk behind the cross.

Third Station

HE IS HERE AS HE WAS ON THE FIRST DAY

Did you hear Jesus' response? Those who didn't quit, even at the intellectual level, after the first station, for those, like you, who followed Him to the point of death, within that sacrifice, carrying the things in life that most weigh on us to him, have had the possibility to hear Jesus' response.

Did you hear it? It's that terrible cry on the cross. That is His answer: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"⁶⁴ This is the answer Christ gives to our question of where God is in the most difficult moments of our lives. He Himself shoulders the burden of our pain and our death. This is Christ's response. He doesn't come in with "plastic surgery" to alleviate our pain, resolving things with a snap of His fingers; rather, He takes on all our pain, all our evil and carries them with us, for us.

None of us could ever have imagined a God like this, yet, deep down, it's what we all needed. Would you prefer a God who took away all your weakness and takes off up to heaven, or a God who loves you, taking your weakness upon himself? This is how Christ's death challenges us. This is how the centurion, someone who showed up at the last minute—it could be someone whose mind was wandering along the whole *Way of the Cross*—seeing that man die as He did, could say, "Truly, this man was the Son of God."⁶⁵

Conclusion

At the end of this *Way of the Cross*, I am here with a question in my heart: who is it that brought us here, once again today? Who made us into such a sight to see, even for ourselves, once again? Who has held us in such unity for over 2,000 years? We will never finish understanding the answers to these questions, but the first seed you can see sprouting is definitely the seed of happiness. This is what I hope for you as we go: let this little seed that has begun to blossom in your life grow. Do not be afraid if it seems like the world is going a different way; don't be afraid if it seems like your life is going a different way. That seed is there, it has continued to grow for over 2,000 years, and has touched your heart, as well. According to the time and modality of God's choosing, it will become the joy of your lives.

This is Christ's resurrection: a seed that has broken through the stones of that tomb for 2,000 years and that touches us even today.

⁶³ Cf. *Lk* 23:41-42.

⁶⁴ *Mk* 15:34.

⁶⁵ *Mk* 15:39.

Witness by Rose Busingye*
Saturday Morning, March 31

Barco negro

Pigi Banna. You should have seen your faces as we listened to *Barco negro*.⁶⁶ Your faces the last three days reminded me, in the most beautiful and lively sense, of the faces of Peter and John depicted in the Easter Poster.⁶⁷ Look at their eyes: you see the reflection of much of what you have experienced. At this point, a light has come on; for your heart, the game is on. It's true: it hurts; it's true: you forget; it's true: you can repress it. But it's there! A light has come on. When everyone is saying it's all over, that Jesus is dead, their eyes cannot believe it; He's there, He has to be there, and they run to the tomb to see what happened. For you, too, the game is on: will you put more stock in your heart or in the fear of those who are saying it's all over?

Angelus

I saw what you're writing about Morning Prayer on Instagram. Some people think it's a total bore! But I accept the challenge! Some people get up and go out for a break already, during Morning Prayer. The loss is his! Those who only do things halfway will only understand half of everything. Let's try not to say Morning Prayer today like whiny old ladies, but rather like men who want to wake up; not like those who already know what's going to happen, but like a person awaiting a single word. We will say, for example, "Can a woman forget her child?"⁶⁸ Unfortunately, in today's world this happens; sometimes a mother kills a baby before he or she is born, and yet there's someone who never forgets us. So now, not like old ladies, let our prayer be like the wailing of a newborn, who cries as if to say, "I'm here, I'm here in the world! And I am wanted!" Let's try to stay, let's try to let out our cry like the wailing of a newborn.

Morning Prayer

*Be Thou My Vision*⁶⁹

La canzone della Bassa [Song of the Bassa]

Alberto Bonfanti. What I'd like to say to all of you first is a sincere "thank you," to each of you for the way you've helped me to live the Easter Triduum, to personally follow in the footsteps of Christ's cross and, "come to see myself walking behind an Other," as one friend said yesterday. We experienced a gesture. We didn't just listen to words and music; the words, the singing, walking behind the cross, and the conversation among us were a gesture of friendship for each of us, in which each of us is a protagonist to the degree that he participates with his heart, because his heart was called upon to respond as never before by the proposal of these days. Yesterday, one of you said to me, "I really savored the present. I savored what was happening for the first time without thinking about the next moment, what will happen tomorrow, about how much of all the truth I've perceived these three days I will be able to apply to my life after." I jumped in my seat when I heard that. What made it possible? This is the most sincere question in the face of what we have lived. What made it possible for

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⁶⁶ "The old women on the beach say you will not return. / They are crazy! They are crazy / *I know, my love, that you have not even departed / for everything around tells me that you are always with me,*" (A. Rodrigues, "Barco Negro [Black Ship]," in *Triduum Booklet*, pp. 85-86).

⁶⁷ E. Burnand, *The Disciples Peter and John Running to the Sepulchre on the Morning of the Resurrection*, 1898. Paris Musée d'Orsay.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Is* 49:15.

⁶⁹ "Be Thou My Vision," traditional Irish hymn.

our friend to savor the present? What made it possible for many of us to savor what was happening, as it happened? It's such an important question that we can't settle for formal or partial answers. Many of us can put our own name, mine included, behind that affirmation, not only based on what you said in the assemblies, with so much participation—in my assembly, for the first time one of you said, “It's already over?,” after an hour, one that usually says, “Can't we make the Radius a little shorter?”—but based on the attention we all maintained, the passion that those who were singing put into the music, the passion with which we were welcomed Thursday evening, yesterday morning and this morning by our friends who played music for us to welcome us. You could also pick up on how many were savoring it by the joyful and attentive service of many of our friends ushering, for the real attention, not military discipline—because by now, thanks be to God, you can no longer have military discipline—with which you took in the lessons, the songs, the *Way of the Cross*. That attention was moving for many adults, too (and it's not easy to move adults); it was visible in your eyes, like the eyes of Peter and John, in your words even more than in the words you spoke. “What make all this possible?” That is the fundamental, decisive question that each of us has to carry in our hearts, and which is the source from which all the other questions that you sent flow, and they were all questions that demonstrated your attentiveness once again, and how relevant what was proposed to us was. They are all questions to be hold on to, because they are the opening through which God, that “You” that fills our hearts with His absence, wants to enter our hearts. “What made all this possible?” It's only by looking ourselves and this question in the face that we will be able to make out the answers to all our other questions from within our experience, and with the logical explanation that we—more often adults, but we all do it a little—try to “plug” all the sincerest questions, as if we were like Aristotle, Father Pigi's dog. Of all the topics that have come up and that you brought up, the most crucial is surely the lack that each of us feels. A friend from Milan articulated it this way, which struck a chord with many other contributions, “How can I see this crack inside as a resource and not a curse?” Each of us, staying in front of the question, “What make it possible to savor the present on the Triduum?” can find, not a logical explanation, but a road to follow to live this dramatic relationship with our hearts.

It's the same question we'd like to pose to our friend Rose, who came from Uganda just to tell us about her experience.

First, I'd like to read you the letter that our friend Julián Carrón wanted to make sure to send once again this year, that each of us can judge how relevant what he says is to what we've experienced these three days together, to the witness Rose will give by communicating her own life, and to the truest questions that have emerged in response to the proposal we have lived here together. “Dear friends, I cannot think of you without being moved, joining myself to this most beautiful and dramatic period that you are passing through at your age. How I would like to be close to you! It is a time in which ‘the eternal mystery of our being,’ of which Leopardi spoke, comes to the surface. I know that sometimes the appearance of this great mystery in your lives baffles you, so much does it surpass you on every side, so immense that it cannot be mastered. ‘Who are you, that you fill my heart with your absence?’ Lagerkvist says. But precisely the ability to perceive this absence, this ‘mystery of our being’, is the most important resource that you've received, a gift made to your human nature: the detector for discovering what truly responds to your expectations. Ernesto Sabato understood this well: ‘The nostalgia for this absolute is the invisible, unknowable background with which we face everything in life.’ I am always amazed when I think that Jesus bet everything on the heart of those first two who met Him along the banks of the Jordan, on the heart as the criterion of judgment: ‘Come and see.’ When He said this, Jesus recognized that they had the capacity to grasp what responded their boundless desire for happiness, making them aware of their dignity. At the same time, he posed the greatest challenge to them: they could not cheat, not with their heart, not with what corresponds to it, once they had met Him. Inviting them to walk with Him, He offered John and Andrew the chance to discover the breadth of His friendship, a friendship so decisive for reaching the happiness they sought, without taking the place of their freedom. In fact, He challenged their freedom like no one else could have done, so much did the attraction of His presence press on their hearts. I dare you to find an adventure more fascinating than this! Happy Easter. Your companion on the journey, Julián”

Now we're all attentive, ready to hear about the experience and the witness of our friend Rose.

Rose Busingye. Good morning, everyone! My Italian will not be perfect, but my heart is burning, and I could almost cry seeing your faces. As Fr. Julián says: concepts become flesh and blood: Christ. Seeing each of you, these faces you have, I am certain of something: there is a hand that offers It to us now. Seeing this sea of faces—I didn't know I'd find all this—I would almost be overwhelmed. But this hand that offers It to us now—which become His flesh and blood that runs in our veins, that gives us life—makes us all one, united. I would be embarrassed to stand here to tell you only words, if not that He is here. This is exactly what moved me, because when I was your age, or maybe I was only 12 years old, I “met” this word: He became flesh; because when I met the CL Movement I really had no idea what CL was, but reading that God became flesh, I ran to the priest of the Movement and I asked him, “But does this flesh have to do with my flesh?” and he answered, “Yes, because God came for you and for me, who are incapable, fragile, nothing. Because if we were capable, we would have become God Himself and it would not have been important for Him to come down to earth.” For me, that was the moment that life started to be interesting, and so was God. Because before I thought God was for those people who were capable, like my mom who invited me to pray the rosary in the evening, and I fell asleep and she woke me up for the “Our Father,” and I said, “Hail Mary.” So, then, I thought, “There is no room for me in God's heart,” there's only room for my brothers and my mom. I lived that way thinking I wasn't worthy of God's heart because God was so pure and a person like me had no chance. That God should become flesh in my flesh seemed almost like blasphemy to me. I knew who I was. Entering God's heart seemed like something out of this world.

When I was 19, I wanted to meet Fr. Giussani, because at that moment it seemed like life truly became interesting, God became interesting for me, too, whereas, before He was for my mom and my brothers. When I met “don Gius” and I told him about my nothingness, I had just read the interview with Fr. Giussani about the *Memores Domini* and the first sentence was, “Those who live the presence of Christ in every aspect of their lives.” My goodness—I said to myself—even my nothingness! I went back to school and studied. There was a burning fire that no one could put out, so I went to a priest and said to him, “Can I go see Fr. Giussani?” and he let me go. I thought, “Jesus, I want only You.” So I went to see Fr. Giussani. When I met him, he asked me, “Do you love Jesus?” and I said, “Yes, I can say yes to that.” “Do you want to give your life to Him?” I said, “No.” And he asked me, “Why not?” and I said, “Look, Fr. Giussani, I don't have anything in my life to give to Jesus, but I want Him to take even the nothing that I am.” He pounded his fist on the table and said, “You have to tell everyone that, always! Tell everyone because everyone thinks they are giving something important to Jesus, and so it's as if their whole lives, they're waiting for something in return; instead, it's really He who takes something that was nothing, and saves it.” After that, I started to tell him about my life and he said to me, “Look, Rose, even if you were the only person on the earth, God would come for you all the same, for the only person in the world.” Then, he paused for a moment and said, “No, He came for you, because in the eyes of God, every person is the only one, is like the firstborn, only child. He came for you. He died for you, that your nothingness would not be lost, and He will be with you every day up until the end of time.” For me, that is when everything was really turned on its head. It was like my life was... turned upside down, all of it, down to the way I thought of everything: how I thought of drinking, eating, how I thought of my friends; it was then that my life took on that beauty, that dignity, as “don Gius” said, with a capital “B.” It was then that things took on this value, this density, as if God had said to me, “You are mine.” Fr. Giussani didn't know me; it was the first time he met me and I thought, “But what could he see in me?” It was evident that I was still nothing, and yet I felt embraced and desired. It was as if his gaze told me, “I want to remain with you. You have an infinite value.” Everything was born from that gaze. It was in that gaze that I discovered that I am not defined by my limits, but by the personal relationship with God who is making me and makes me infinite desire for Him.

In that gaze, belonging to Christ and the Church became the experience of a bond that always defines me,

and that is manifested in all I am and all I do. I started to glimpse a meaning for my life. It was as if a light illuminated everything. I started to discover the truth of my life and from that there started to be an attraction, a tenderness for my own life and for the lives of other people. I started to live. I started to truly live and work, because I knew a concrete answer to the question, “Who do I belong to?” The answer to that question had particular faces, with first and last names. I became free. Paradoxically, I became free by belonging, by being tied to someone. When you are free, you can finally face all of reality without fear; you can face everything because you know whom you belong to. People who are free don’t make demands from others, because they already have everything. I felt free, I felt great; a protagonist in reality because Fr. Giussani revealed to me who I am. With his gaze, he fixed the content and the method for all my work: being moved and communicating that deep affection for the boundless greatness that is the existence of each person and offering that same companionship to destiny that embraces my life.

My work now is letting the value of each person come to light, become clear, so I can offer a precise friendship to which everyone can belong because an “I” that belongs, that has a tie, having a face to gaze upon, and receiving a unifying awareness of oneself and of reality, becomes a protagonist. If you become the lord of reality, it’s not because you possess reality, but because you acknowledge that you depend on Another and on a design that is not your own.

Yesterday, one of you asked me a question. It was like a wake-up call to me; let me tell you why. One time, I took some of my kids, about your age (about 60 of them), to go on safari. Don’t go thinking that we, walking out of our bedrooms, run into an elephant or a lion. We, too, have to go find them! So we went off (on an 8-hour trip) to go see lions and elephants, and finally, we found them. I was so happy, because we saw lots of lions, elephants and giraffes, so I thought, “A job well done!” As we returned, a girl named Michelle started to cry, and for the whole bus ride back she kept crying. I asked her, “Are you hungry?” “No.” “Did someone you know die?” “No.” “Are you sick?” “No. I’m sad. I see you who are happy, but I am sad.” She seemed totally humiliated. But I’d prepared everything to make everyone happy. She went on all night, she didn’t sleep, so I gave up and called Fr. Carrón. “Look, I prepared everything; we saw the elephants, the lions, we saw everything, but someone is here crying;” and he said to me, “Now, you didn’t really think you could fill a girl’s heart with an elephant, did you? An elephant may be huge, but not even it can fulfill the thirst of our heart.” In fact, this is why, where I work, we use the Matisse painting of *Icarus*. I wanted all the people who came to be able to fix their eyes on that red heart, a tiny spot, one that seems like almost nothing but, instead, as your teachers will have already explained to you, it’s the part that makes the whole painting great, it represents a part inside a man. Man seems like nothing; I seem like nothing in the face of my poverty, a person in the face of his or her sickness—like we have in Africa, but you have sickness here too—in the face of our wretchedness, in the face of our nothingness. Instead, that spot, that little spot that seems no more than a breath, that we don’t even pay attention to, is irremovable, in the image of the One who draws us into Himself.

And so I’ve seen what happened to me happening again for others. For example, there was a woman who had escaped from the rebels who came to us physically and psychologically disfigured by the violence she endured. She rediscovered herself when I told her, “You are not the horrors that happened to you. You are the infinite value that comes from God, God who makes you and who loves you.” One day, we hosted 11 students from Eichstätt (Germany) with three of their teachers. We prepared a witness and dancing. I work in the “mud,” in the poorest parts of the city, and one of the teachers was wearing a nice, white linen shirt that day. I looked at her and thought, “Oh my!” When we entered the room with the women (after this, I’d like to show you the video), they pulled everyone into their dancing, with tambourines, and that teacher, forgetting his elegant attire, let herself get caught up in the wave of music and dancing. Then, all sweaty, we went out and sat and the women started to give their witness, to speak about themselves: we were almost done when a woman named Tina, one of my patients (I work with people sick with AIDS and their children), who wasn’t supposed to talk, at a certain point came up—a woman only this tall—and going right up to this well-dressed teacher, said

to him, “Excuse me, Sir, are you free?” And you could see that he didn’t understand; he was looking around, but she insisted, “Are you free?” And she threw out, as if issuing a challenge, her own affirmation: “I am. I am.” Then she said, “Look, I lost my husband two months ago to AIDS. I’m sick, too. I will die soon. See? The medicines aren’t working,” and she showed the wounds all over her body, “but I am free; I am free!” She said it like she was joking, but it couldn’t be a joke seeing how she showed her wounds. She went on, “My son went to Carrón’s exercises, and Carrón told him that I am the dwelling where the Mystery lives. That is my identity. I am free; I am free; I am free, and are you free?” I had gone to those Exercises, and with Fr. Nacho we were trying to translate them into English; looking at her I thought, “She beat me to it!” Talk about infuriating... The gentleman from Germany may not have understood, and didn’t understand what she said to him, but that question was meant for me. That morning, I went to Mass, did silence, and translated those words into English, but how in the world could that little, sick woman, who sleeps on a mat on the floor, eats one meal a day, beat me to it? And, in that moment, I wanted that same freedom, that identity where the Mystery lives, for me, because this Mystery, as Carrón says, is what makes us human. We are human, but even more human, because it’s He who makes us. That morning I wished I’d beat her to it.

Where I live, before discovering the value of their lives, my women didn’t take their medicine. They would say, “In the end, life is useless. Why should we take care of ourselves?” They were sick with AIDS and let themselves go. I would buy the medicines and find them still sitting on the shelf. But after discovering the value of their lives, the young people and adults for whom life had no meaning now know that their existence, and everyone’s, is infinitely great and they are forever tied to a companionship that helps them to live up to this dignity.

What I do is not an extra added on to my vocation as *Memores*, it comes from the fact that my affectivity is fulfilled. What I give to others is what overflows from my relationship with Christ, in a specific place. It is like the flower of my vocation, the overabundance of the fullness of my belonging to *Memores Domini*, which is an ongoing discovery of a paternity right in the daily happenings in my life.

One time, Fr. Giussani said to me, “If your relationship to Christ is true, if you remain true, your work will flow forth even from stones. They could shut you in a cage, but if you are true with Him, even the stones will begin to sing.” And he added, “But a person who doesn’t belong fills up his emptiness, that emptiness he can never fill, with frenetic activity. That unfulfilled affectivity is filled with activities, but then such a person is just a bundle of reactions. The original attraction fades into estrangement, pride and the presumption of measuring things himself, but all this leaves him confused and insecure. He loses the value of himself and everything else, putting his personality in crisis.” Then, he took me by the hand and said to me, “You know Rose, newness comes to the world if a person belongs, because in a belonging, everything changes. This is what generates a society, a new civilization.”

I could end here, because that says it all, but I’d like to tell you another small thing. In life, an existential search, measuring oneself, is not enough; neither is an instinctive reaction enough, because that doesn’t bring us out of the confusion that marks our days and keeps my face from shining through, your face. That spot we talked about, the heart of Icarus, is like a grain of salt, like dust, tiny; that little red spot Icarus has, this nothing that I am, cannot be itself without belonging. Without belonging, you grasp onto things at random, to what happens, to what you manage to take, but after a while, as Carrón says, it leaves a bitter taste in your mouth.

On day, I was going to Madrid to give a witness for Beginning Day: “Living the Real Intensely.” I went to the Italian embassy, and they gave me a travel visa. Some friends had bought my ticket for me: from Uganda to Amsterdam, Amsterdam to Malpensa [Milan], Malpensa to Paris and Paris to Madrid. I was mad, so mad! Have you ever been angry? I found everything irritating. I didn’t want to be with anyone; I was bent in on myself. Early in the morning at Malpensa, it was cold. I was playing with my phone and then I thought, “I’ll see if Carrón is awake.” I called. He answered, “How’s it going?” I said, “I’m so angry. Every little thing is irritating me. I’m confused.” I went on, “You told us at the Beginning Day to, ‘Live the Real Intensely,’ but what am I living right now?” He answered me, “Look at reality with the eyes of Christ.” I said, “I told you that I’m

mad. Everything I see irritates me. I am not looking at reality; maybe He is looking at it, but I'm not;" and he said, "Exactly. Christ's eyes that are looking at reality are also looking at you." "Of course!" You know how sometimes a light comes on? I got up and said, "Now I just lived the real intensely," even if I was in the same situation, angry as I was. It's not that I look at reality with Christ's eyes, I just have to recognize that His eyes which are looking at reality are also looking at me. After that discover, I stepped onto the airplane to Paris like a princess. Thank you.

Banna. Thank you, Rose! You're right to applaud even when you're set straight, because each of you has a heart as great as Rose's. Even if it doesn't seem like it sometimes, or if it seems to hurt, it's possible for everyone to live like her, with a heart as great as Rose's. Carrón said it in his message: each of us has this *detector* inside, the heart. It's because of this heart that a person reads an article and runs to talk about it with a friend; he's angry and calls to ask for help; he discovers something and goes to ask about it; he discovers her nothingness and asks, "Is there someone who will come take my nothingness?"

Thanks to Rose, we understand what it means to use the heart without cheating it. If you're angry you say, "I'm angry," without being afraid to say so; if you saw an elephant and are sad, you're not afraid to say so. We can look to the eyes of Peter and John, too: they took off running to the tomb because a woman said, "Look, the tomb is empty," and they want to go and see.

Many of you have witnessed to us what it means to use your heart. Our friends from Le Marche, for example, prepared an evening in which each person presented a passion he or she had: a rap song, a painting, a poem. They were all in silence for the night, listening. There is a place, and this is it, where you can bring out your heart, that "almost nothing," that little red spot from Matisse's *Icarus*, which is what makes us great. And there aren't many places in the world where you can bring out your heart without cheating.

We all know our objections, "Ok, but it hurts, why do you say the heart is a resource?" or "But I'm alone, I've been abandoned, I'm [the cartoon character] Calimero, small and black." Fine, fine. Still, no matter what objections we might have, you can't turn it off! This is the most amazing part: It's always there! And no matter how much you try to turn it off, it's still there. There is also a place that makes you look as Peter and John did, for the rest of your life you can never forget it again; it's there! This faithfulness to your heart, to see and to discover, is the first great thing we hope for each other.

The second thing, the second great hope I have for you this Easter goes back to what Rose said about belonging. We said it in many ways the last few days: what's the risk? That the second you don't understand something, the second you're afraid of the heart, you run away. Let's watch the video of Rose's women.

[Viewing of the video on Rose's women]

Busingye: The woman was saying that, when her parents abandoned her, she thought that no one would ever embrace her again, and instead when she came, someone said to her, "Welcome. You are home. You have an infinite value;" but she didn't trust them and said, "All my relatives abandoned me, too. Who are these people who can embrace me?" Now, instead, she doesn't even seem sick; when she arrived she started over, like a plane that takes off. Now she's the one that welcomes others and gives witnesses of how she was before; she says about herself that she's greater than the sickness, greater than the virus; in fact, she says that her value chased out the virus, it defeated it.

Banna: Just think, you too, like this woman, could look at your math teacher and say to him, "I may have a bad grade, but I can say to you, based on what I've lived, that you, too have a value. Don't worry, you are not reduced to your being a poor math teacher, there's hope for you, too, that comes from what I have encountered." What can help us look at our classmates, our teachers, and our parents like this, the way that woman looked at the German teacher?

Busingye: These women want their children, in learning math or history, to discover their value, and they were saying, “Our children are going to other schools, but they aren’t discovering what we have discovered.” So, one day they told me, “We want a school for our children.” I answered, “Look, if I’m going to build something, I’m going to build a clinic or a hospital,” and they said, “No, you would educate a doctor, you would also educate a nurse; we want a school.” I said, “No, I don’t have any money.” They said, “Fine, don’t worry about it.” They started chipping stone for gravel and making necklaces; AVSI helped us, they sold 48,000 necklaces here in Italy and they built the first part of the school and said to me, “We want our children, in learning math, to discover their value.” I said, “Who’s going to do it?” But, little by little, we’re discovering that it’s working. Now we have 600 students at the high school, who are your age, and another 450 in the elementary school.

Banna: There’s hope for everyone! If a person takes his heart seriously, you notice people with whom you can build something new, it’s not because you get more talented. A person is still sick, poor, but if he applies that little he has, he can discover that the little or nothing he possesses has an infinite value. If think about it, all of us who are here can experience a true “new school,” the true hope for our life and that of our classmates, because, as Rose was saying before, when a person finds a place to belong, then he is free. For Peter and John, too, life was transformed by this belonging. I was struck, on a related note, rereading an episode in the Acts of the Apostles⁷⁰ in which Peter and John, after Jesus’ resurrection, walk in front of a poor, crippled man laid at the gate and look at him. He expects to get money, because they look at him like they want to do something for him but, instead, as Rose described to us today, they say to him, “Look, we’re poor like you, we can’t give you anything.” In the same way, we can go back to our classmates and our parents saying, “After the three days of the Triduum, it’s not like I’m better than you, I’m as poor as you are, but I have something to tell you (the same thing Peter said to that poor man): ‘Come with us, in the name of Jesus Christ, rise and walk, walk and come with me.’”⁷¹ This is what you can say to everyone, just as Rose’s women said it to the teacher from Germany, you can say to your teachers and your friends, “Look, I’m worse off than you, but I found a place that’s what I was looking for. Get up and walk.” Using our heart, we can come to recognize a place that makes us free, free to go out to meet everyone and everything, and where we can invite everyone, because there’s a richness that throws open the doors, throws open the tombs. It’s the power of the risen Christ.

Listening to Rose talk about this belonging that frees us made me think about the fact that each of us has to respond to the question, “Who do I belong to?” When you find out who you belong to, you won’t be more talented, but in answering the question, “Who do I belong to?” you can conquer the world. In Sicily (where my family is from) there’s a common way of saying, in the midst of a heated argument where you have to assert yourself, “Don’t you know who I am?” as if to say, “You don’t know to whom you are speaking. You better show some respect.” This is, to some extent, the attitude we often have with each other: “You don’t know who I am!” Remember your place, you’re 19, you can’t enter *Memores Domini*—they told Rose; remember your place: you’re full of psychological issues—adults say to you; remember your place: you’re not doing well in school; remember your place: you’re as ugly as death; remember your place, don’t you know who I am?

I’d say this way of acting is fairly common. The resurrection offers a response to that mentality: even the noth-

⁷⁰ Cf. Acts 3:3-8,12,15-16: “When [a man crippled from birth] saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. But Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, ‘Look at us.’ He paid attention to them, expecting to receive something from them. Peter said, ‘I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, [rise and] walk.’ Then Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles grew strong. He leaped up, stood, and walked around, and went into the temple with them, walking and jumping and praising God. When Peter saw this, he addressed the people, ‘You Israelites, why are you amazed at this, and why do you look so intently at us as if we had made him walk by our own power or piety? The author of life you put to death, but God raised him from the dead; of this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, this man, whom you see and know, his name has made strong, and the faith that comes through it has given him this perfect health, in the presence of all of you.’” Cf. *Triduum Booklet*, pp. 89-90.

⁷¹ Cf. *Triduum Booklet*, pp. 89-90.

ing that you are, full of problems, even though you're doing poorly in school, despite all that, you can lift your head and answer, "But, instead, you don't know to Whom I belong." This is the real newness. You think you already know who I am, but you don't know to Whom I belong. It's this belonging that brings a richness, a hope, brings life into my life. Because of this, I won't let you push me around, even if you can blackmail me for a grade, for a kiss, for a friendship. I'll even challenge you, "You don't know to Whom I belong, so come with me, because maybe you, too, could need a little of this freedom."

Our life goes on and do you know what the "misfortune" for all you out there is? That it goes on. You think that it ends here on earth, but we have been here for 2,000 years, not cutting your heart any slack. We're still here to tell you, "Do you want to be one of us? Come and see. Use your heart and see if this makes you freer."⁷² This challenge goes on, and we continue not cutting you any slack. Christ has continued to do so since the day He rose from the dead. So let's say goodbye singing, *Cristo Risusciti [Christ Be Resurrected]*.⁷³ This is the life that has manifested itself, this freedom to invite the whole world to experience.

Cristo Risusciti

Now, we have to go home. The choir prepared a gift for us. This morning, they practiced the *Regina Caeli*,⁷⁴ which the Church sings throughout the Easter season. The power it expresses is the one that comes to tear down the walls we use to isolate ourselves and stretches its hand out to us, as Rose was saying.

Regina Caeli

Happy Easter to you and to your families, and safe travels!

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⁷² Cf. *Jn* 1:39.

⁷³ G. Stefani–Anonymous, "Cristo risusciti [Christ Be Resurrected]," in *Triduum Booklet*, p. 91.

⁷⁴ "Regina Caeli," in *Triduum Booklet*, p. 95.