

# “In what circumstances have you experienced a true unity with others?”

“TRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE”

## 13. The new community

by Luigi Giussani\*

Solitude, as we have described it, draws us closer to others and allows us to share with them the experience of universal need. The resulting community offers the only experience of shelter, temporary relief, and fixed certainty for those who are lost and confused.

Our attempts to make up for all we feel we lack constitute a worrisome and anxious undertaking. The results are ambiguous and fragile, and each generation feels painfully pressed to denounce and alter them, when, as often happens, “the wrath of searching in vain”<sup>1</sup> compels us to reckless impatience and intolerance, bitter violence, and tragic presumptions. Human civilization thus creates communities with such precarious and deceptive patterns that they smack of snares rather than of steps on the true path.

Overcoming solitude in the experience of the Spirit of Christ not only draws us near to others but also opens us to others to the very depths of their being.

Our true life is Christ. Christ is the meaning of the existence of each one of us. Our life, the meaning of our existence, is summed up in, indeed is, one sole reality: “I am the vine and you are the branches.”<sup>2</sup> The community becomes essential to each of us, to our lives. Human solidarity becomes the Church. “We” becomes the fullness of “I,” the law of the I’s fulfillment. “We have passed out of death and into life, and of this we can be sure because we love our brothers,” writes Saint John to the early Christians.<sup>3</sup>

Such a unity, as absolutely unforeseen as it is indissoluble, makes the Church the redemption of the human community, the ideal of the community. “May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.”<sup>4</sup>

The certainty of the journey and the power of the Spirit of Life generate an untiring awareness in a given community (“For every unfounded word men will answer on Judgement Day”)<sup>5</sup> and a ceaseless activity (meditate once again on the parable of the talents), with dedication to the death (the good shepherd gives his life for his flock). From the depths, a richness and intensity of works and a deep urgency impels the life of the community, which is born of the coming of the Spirit: “Before God and before Christ Jesus who is to be the judge of the living and the dead, I put this duty to you, in the name of His Appearing and »

<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Pascoli, “Il libro”, in *Primi poemetti*, in *Poesie*. Milan: Garzanti 1944, p. 329.

<sup>2</sup> John 15:5.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John 3:14.

<sup>4</sup> John 17:21.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 12:36.

\* Source: *The Journey to Truth Is an Experience*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal 2006, pp. 72-73.

» His Kingdom: proclaim the message, and welcome or unwelcome, insist on it. Refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience—but do all with patience and with the intention of teaching.<sup>6</sup> This vigilant passion for time, things, and people leads to a life shared (*convivenza*) among people and with the world around them. *The Christian community inevitably creates a new civilization.*

The more unerring the faithfulness to the Spirit of Christ, the more the paths of this civilization are experienced as ideal, definitive paths.

The encounter with any Christian community that seeks to live resolutely in the name of Christ inevitably attains a way to share life totally, an atmosphere, and such an unusual human rhythm that it cannot but strike the observer as something new, strange, and remarkable—a totally human ideal.

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<sup>6</sup> 2 Timothy 4:1–2.