

**Carrón: “In the darkness, if there is some light, it is seen better”
The Religious Sense. This evening the President of the Fraternity of Communion and
Liberation concludes a series of talks on the book by Fr. Giussani
CARLO DIGNOLA**

This evening Fr. Julián Carrón, President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, will speak at the conclusion of a series of gatherings dedicated to Fr. Luigi Giussani's book, *The Religious Sense*. The event, entitled “The task of reality: to reawaken the ultimate questions,” and organized by BergamoIncontra, will be held at the John XXIII Congress Center at 9 p.m. In the words of the German sociologist Ulrich Beck, “Most people today, on all continents, regardless of their various antagonisms, would agree in saying ‘I don't understand the world any more’.” In effect, it seems that all frames of reference have fallen apart. Families disintegrate. Political parties break up after a few years or change their name. The Church itself no longer seems to be a “a strong shelter.”

How can one live in this confusion?

“I think that the current confusion highlights all the difficulties of the time, but also causes to clearly emerge what is not confused at all: the human desire to find an answer to this confusion. A person recently described the boredom she perceived in her own life and that around her, but also said that at the same time, we are united by an almost childlike certainty of expecting something. This does not disappear. It is quite extraordinary. We are cultivating this expectancy in silence. We do not know what it is, where it comes from, how it will manifest itself, but we are awaiting something radically new. Also, the confusion itself makes it easier in some way to identify those who can offer an answer. A friend of mine who is sick in the hospital told me that some doctors, seeing the way he is facing his illness, asked him to go visit other patients who are much more depressed than he. Paradoxically, in today's darkness, it is easier to perceive the people who continue to cast light.”

The Notre Dame fire seemed like a baleful sign of the destiny of the Church in France and Europe. The data about religiosity in that country seem to confirm a debacle. And yet, even in that very secular and skeptical context, people viewed that church as “ours,” don't you think?

“Yes, it is a good example of our situation: there is a lack of interest in the Christian fact, a constitutive factor in Europe, and yet in front of a symbol like the Cathedral of Paris, everyone feels engaged. You can see this simply as a moment of nostalgia, or instead, you can ask why the possible destruction of that church tears at your heart. This is the crucial point. Do you want to pursue that sensation, follow it to its source, and ask what you are missing? Or do you just let it go, and stop there at the sentimental shock of the moment? This is the ambiguity of the moment in which we are living. It can be a beautiful opportunity to rediscover the tenderness towards yourself that revives with even more clarity your need for meaning. If you take it seriously, you begin to see before your eyes some signs of an answer.”

It is not as easy as it might seem to be truly, sincerely attached to yourself.

“This attachment is made possible by a gaze that comes from outside us. A child who is afraid and crying is comforted by his mother, who introduces him to a different experience of himself. Even as an adult, you can encounter a gaze that enables you to have a tenderness towards yourself that you never would have imagined before, as happened for Zacchaeus in the Gospel. The whole world around him wanted to see him punished, but Jesus passed and looked at him in a way not even Zacchaeus could have looked at himself. We are all in a sense rigid, and fail to find the right angle from which to see things, the appropriate perspective. We need someone to help us begin to look at our humanity just as it is. Then we also begin to change. It is not so easy to encounter people who are reconciled with their own humanity. This is what the Church is able to testify to, precisely because

of what constitutes her. The great opportunity for the Church today is this embrace of wounded people.”

Is this the Pope’s basic message? Not “debt reduction” on the moral level, a discount that resets the parameters of one’s personal debt on the basis of society’s current moral conditions, which have slid ever lower, but the invitation to rediscover the nature of the Church as the embrace of the human person.

“In fact. It is a gaze at us, full of tenderness. Today we need to see and experience personally the gaze of someone who is full of this mercy. Concrete, because Christianity always passes through the flesh. Emails or abstract messages do not suffice for the people of our times. Salvation can only reach us through a human gaze. Instead, we often look at ourselves with a view determined by the common mentality, which judges.”

Many believers today take refuge in lethargy or resentful attachment to the past. Is there the risk of a moralistic introversion of Catholicism?

“The risk is always there. We end up being victims of ourselves, of our own measure. Only Jesus could introduce a gaze so capable of valorizing the human person, of seeing all the hunger and thirst that constitutes our heart, and of responding to them.”

It used to be that the word “Catholic” was the *magna pars* of being Italian or Spanish. Today a “Catholic” seems to be someone who has particular inclinations that are a bit strange and very questionable. What has happened?

“Catholic is what is pertinent to the human. In the mix of our society, when people of any culture or origin encounter a gaze like this, they perceive it as appropriate: they want to be looked at and valorized this way. If you reduce it to something suffocating, Catholicism loses its nature, which is universal openness.”

I recently read some books that were defensive or argumentative, and that spoke of today’s Church almost without ever mentioning Jesus Christ. Isn’t this a bit strange?

“The common mentality also enters into the life of the Church in this way. We have reduced Jesus so much that we are almost ashamed of setting Him in front. But the historical personality of Jesus and His gaze are what continue today to be interesting for all people who find Him incarnate in a human figure. The Pope goes to Abu Dhabi and to Morocco because people want him; he is acknowledged. An incarnation of Christianity like his is perceived. He does not have to renounce Jesus in order to reach everyone. Rather, the opposite is the case. It is only because he lives in Jesus that he can be a human figure capable of interesting everyone.”

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