

## WHAT CAN WITHSTAND THE TEST OF TIME?

### Introduction - 3

# A radical newness

by Pierluigi Banna\*

What lives up to our heart? When our own attempts to put together the pieces of what has fallen apart over time appear fragile and limited, what will be enough to satisfy our great need for a change that truly lasts?

“Something unforeseen / is the only hope”<sup>1</sup>: the unexpected, a radical newness that is not a product of our hands, of our thoughts. Something so new must happen that it marks our heart forever, more than just a tattoo on our skin.

Sören Kierkegaard establishes the criterion with which we can recognize this radical newness when it happens: “What really counts in life is that at some time one has seen something, felt something, which is so great, so matchless, that everything else is nothing by comparison, that even if he forgot everything he would never forget this.”<sup>2</sup> Has something like this ever happened to us?

When this newness happens, we can recognize it because it reawakens the hope in our heart, as a young poet writes: “Skillful hands / That draw out of the weeds / A heart / That had been dried up, forgotten.”<sup>3</sup> Only this radical newness can live up to our heart: a preference in front of which we cannot hide ourselves and can finally be ourselves, where all that is negative in us becomes positive. This preference is like saying to yourself: “You are precious in my eyes,”<sup>4</sup> you, not anyone else; you, now, just like you are, not when you change, when you are different. What a difference from the way we normally think about loving and being loved, reducing love to possession, to a reciprocal enjoyment, that we leave behind afterward.

This preference is infinite; it does not stop in front of our failure and betrayal: in front of betrayal, He keeps loving you, even more, until the end, until He gives His life for you. This is what Jesus did for his friends: seeing their limits and their betrayal, he “loved them to the end”, which meant giving His life for them.

Beyond our preconceptions and common opinions, Christianity is originally the announcement of this infinite preference, the coming of this radical newness which is beyond our thoughts, as Father Giussani writes: “A radical newness that I’ll say again, describe again with the terms ‘unforeseen’ and ‘unforeseeable’: it’s something that wasn’t and then is; it was something that could not be, and is there. Something that could not be and is here. [...] Christianity is a presence within your daily life, a presence that [...] guarantees an unimaginable change, unimaginable.”<sup>5</sup>

In front of the radical newness of this preference that has reached us, we do not have to be a believer already, we don’t need to pull back because we are not yet a believer.

\* Introduction to the Easter Triduum of Gioventù Studentesca, Rimini, 18-20 April 2019. For the passages cited here, cf. *CHE COSA REGGE L’URTO DEL TEMPO?*, pp. 8-10 of the booklet for the GS Triduum, [downloadable as pdf from the CL website](#).

<sup>1</sup> E. Montale, “Prima del viaggio [Before the trip]”, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> S. Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Vol. 1, transl. by H. V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967, p. 467.

<sup>3</sup> L. Bernardi, «Giacinto», p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Is* 43,4.

<sup>5</sup> L. Giussani, *Alive means present!*, p. 8, 11.