

Religion

“In front of the European crisis, Christians are called to give witness”

On the eve of the European elections, Father Julian Carrón, president of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, a Catholic movement born in Italy, will be at the Collège des Bernardins on Friday, May 24 for an evening about the challenges that have been raised to the Christian proclamation concerning a Europe in crisis. On this occasion, he answered a few questions from *La Croix*.

Interview by Marie Malzac,
05/24/2019 at 2:33 p.m.

La Croix: How would you describe the current crisis in Europe?

Father Julián Carrón: The points of reference that were established and consolidated over the course of centuries are questioned today at a deep level. Shared values having to do with the family, with relationships between generations, with the way we work: all this is up for grabs and no longer forms a common basis around which Europeans can meet each other. Even just a few years ago, it would have been unthinkable to build walls to protect ourselves from outsiders, after having just fought to bring down the Berlin Wall.

Whether we are looking at the relationship between parents and children, students and professors, or any other type of relationship, we are in the presence of misunderstandings and, at times, a radicalization of positions. These upheavals cause concern. For one part of the population and in its political expression, the temptation to withdraw is a reality. It is the sign of an incapacity to propose a positive response to the new situation we are facing.

In front of this crisis and leading up to the European elections, what is the principal challenge for Christians?

J.C.: As Hannah Arendt pointed out, a crisis is always an occasion to ask questions and therefore make changes. A crisis puts us in front of questions that challenge us. This is what we are all facing. Even Christians are called to give an answer, by drawing on the faith they have received that illumines their life, and to give witness to a way of living that is not negative, but, on the contrary, capable of attracting others. Therefore, in front of this crisis, Christians are called to give witness.

In a multicultural society like ours, it is not a matter, then, of proposing values that can be shared by everyone, but rather sharing an experience of an inspiring life, a certain way of positioning ourselves in front of reality. Christianity is not a series of principles, but the religion of the Word who made Himself flesh. It is a life that we transmit to others.

As the theologian Henri de Lubac said, the great values of liberty, fraternity, truth, and even justice, which were founded on Christianity, become “unreal as soon as they are

no longer seen as emanating from God.” It is the expression of this emanation that comes first.

How do we repropose the faith in this context?

J.C.: Christ, in His time, fascinated the disciples, who left everything to follow Him. Today, the faith can have this same force of attraction if we truly live what we believe.

In the 18th century, after the wars of religion that followed the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment thinkers wanted to reconstitute a basis for coexistence that put Christianity and the idea of transcendence to the side.

We recognize today that this basis no longer holds. Social cohesion is breaking apart on every side, like a crumbling house of cards. Of course, it is not a question of returning to what existed before, but of exploring new ways of living together.

The Collège des Bernardins and Communion and Liberation organized a panel discussion on the evening of Friday, May 24 at 8 p.m. based on Father Carrón’s book, *La beauté désarmée* [*Disarming Beauty*] (Parole et Silence, 308 p., 22 €), on the topic: “In front of the collapse of certainties, is an ‘unheard-of newness’ still possible in Europe?”

Father Carrón, president of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, will speak alongside the political scientist Oliver Roy and the business leader Frédéric Van Heems, the general director of Véolia in France.