

*Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón
Milan, May 22, 2019*

Reference text: L. Giussani, *Why the Church?* McGill-Queens University Press 2001, [Mary, you are the living fountain of hope](#),” and Conclusion, pp. 233-34. Julian Carrón “What Can Withstand the Test of Time?” Introduction to the 2019 Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation: <https://english.clonline.org/news/current-events/2019/05/09/fraternity-exercises-2019-friday-s-introduction>

- *Ballata del Potere [Ballad of Power]*
- *Come my Way, my Truth, my Life*

Glory Be

We begin our work on the Fraternity Exercises and on the flyer on the European elections. One person sent a question, “In the Introduction of the Fraternity Exercises, affection for oneself is defined as “attachment full of esteem, compassion, and mercy, toward yourself. I wanted to ask you how esteem, compassion, and mercy toward ourselves are played out in everyday life.” It is significant that this question is repeated or otherwise referred to in many ways, because it shows how much we, like everyone else, need this esteem, this affection in everyday life.

I am a university student, and I wanted to tell you what happened at our last School of Community. We started from the question of a friend of mine, “Recently I cannot participate in all the things that are proposed to me that promise to help me become more myself. Where can I live this proposal now?” Some people spoke and the questions became more pressing, “Why do I come here?” “What happens when I come to this place?” It seemed to me that the heart of the matter was not emerging until a friend of mine reread in the last pages of the introduction to the Exercises the conclusion of one contribution, “Well, then, why do I come [to the Exercises]? I believe I come for the one thing I think I can define as a constant: the ultimate indestructible attraction of something that lives in the Movement and from which I can’t detach myself. I come to search for the only thing I truly miss” (p. 7). My friend added, “I come for that gaze of ultimate preference that our being awaits. With that, I can go anywhere.” He nailed it. I, out of tiredness and because of how I felt in that moment, wanted to remain silent, but there was still one thing to say, something I had to tell my friends and myself. I had to talk about what happened to me in my life through the Movement, because through these faces, through the Movement, I have been able to experience this gaze of ultimate preference, which for me has been so correspondent and totalizing that little by little it came to determine the origin of my actions. It is something that took hold of me and gradually permeated my every aspect. The most important choices of my life came from that loving gaze, which meant choosing this course of studies four years ago, facing in a certain way my family’s dramas, and deciding a few years ago to live in an apartment with other students of the Movement. The incredible thing is that this gaze has become an origin and an end: it has in fact begun to generate me and, from this being generated, I constantly need to move and search again for His features. There is nothing I care more for than this: this Christ who has reached me and without whom I can no longer live. For this reason, if what we say here remains confined to this

room, to this occasion, to these faces, we run the risk of living in a glass bubble, and it is a waste of time. On the contrary, if we introduce the hypothesis that the text of the Exercises, the facts we tell each other about, the questions we have, can relate to our entire life, we can, with this way of looking at everything, go anywhere. While I was saying these things, I found myself moved by the fact that I have a heart that burns for the way in which it is continuously looked at. I believe we can't be together for less than that.

This is an example of an answer to the question the initial song asks: “How can a man hope?” A man can hope—as you say—can have an affection for himself, only because of the historical experience of an encounter with something that is able to reawaken a passion for himself, something that happens in a precise place and that is incarnated in a true gesture of friendship. To be able to answer all the questions that are urgent in our lives, we must pay attention to where this happens.

My contribution is above all a thank you for what happened on Friday evening at the Fraternity Exercises. My first reading of the introduction immediately gave rise to two reactions in me: on the one hand, the surprise of being given a clear picture of my daily life, marked by tiredness and discouragement about a life that overwhelms me like a flooding river, no longer allowing me to be a protagonist and without rest in any context (family, work, friendships, and acquaintances). On the other hand, I had the feeling that the subject being addressed was to some extent for “losers,” light years away from the show of certainty required of the “veteran” CL member—I have participated in the Movement for many years. Yet, in going over the introduction again, and above all in living my life, I realized something that was right before me but I wasn't seeing: that Friday night was a gesture of true friendship, the greatest I could expect. However, I noticed this only in the following weeks, when in the whirlwind and disappointments of everyday life, so many little things made me raise my head and, as it happens, they all had to do with the Movement. Nothing else, no other place, has affected me so deeply and decisively, so positively, however briefly, in the chaos of my life. Thus, one morning, as I was listening again to the audio of the introduction, every word said sounded like the invitation of a friend who understood everything about me (there wasn't a single quote or description that didn't somehow relate to me and to my life) and who was proposing a shared path to me. So I realized that that Friday in Rimini was not just a meeting of specialists about a modern malaise, offering remedies to overcome it. It was simply a place, a discreet, patient presence, as is the entire Movement, to which I remain mysteriously attached. I deeply need a friendship like that, with its flashes of a beautiful life, without which I would be desperate and probably cynical. Thank you.

What you say is striking, “Above all in living my life, I realized ...” Even if we experience only the tiredness and discomfort of daily life, it is only by living that a proposal can be understood: “I realized something that was right before me and I wasn't seeing.” We can understand only if we live, if we are present to our circumstances and get involved with what we are living; otherwise, despite having something before us, we don't see it. This always amazes me. The more we are involved with life, the more we perceive the proposals we offer each other, the gestures we live, as acts of true friendship, as you did. This happened not because we already knew each other—this is the first time you and I have seen each other. Why did you hear my words in Rimini as a gesture of friendship? Because a friend is someone who awakens you, who helps you walk toward the goal; and this help, as Fr. Giussani said, is perceived also or perhaps above all in what is said in

front of everyone. We don't need specific moments with each other. Obviously, if we can see each other it is better; I am happy to be able to look you in the face now, but this isn't always possible and, as you said, it is not necessary. The only necessary thing is that what reawakens me happens through someone and that I, caring for my life, can recognize it and tie my life to it, to the place where it happened: "No other place affected me so deeply and decisively; every word sounded like the invitation of a friend." This led you to an awareness: "I deeply need a friendship like that," which lasts over time and constantly supports you. Sometimes relationships don't last, as one of you writes: "There is a wound that I carry within me: in the past two years some relationships, through which the presence of Christ became flesh for me, have gradually faded away, to the point that we are no longer in touch. I took very seriously the fact that the first way in which I experience a preference for me is the fact that Christ took hold of me and so that relationships can change within simple, daily circumstances. I worked on understanding this, and in the meantime other unexpected relationships, given to me as a gift, were born. However, there was a cynicism inside me that led me to think that if those true relationships that lasted years had become formal, this can happen even in these new relationships, and I felt a huge dissatisfaction. The last Exercises brought everything to the surface, and the question they asked has become more insistent: 'What can last?' when not even relationships through which the presence of Christ became flesh for me last." He continues, "If true relationships end in nothing, what lasts? In fact, the flesh that I become attached to is not a shapeless mass, but is made up of specific faces, and when they fail everything doesn't remain the same? I try to not to get upset about it, but I can't help it because I need this preference in order to live. I realized that I lean on people and not on Christ. But I can't live differently." In the School of Community, we learned that our relationships, through the grace that has been given to us, pass through our freedom; consequently, even true relationships, relationships we have felt to be true, fail for the reasons we all understand. But this brings up the issue, that is, the challenge of recognition. As we said in the first lesson of the Exercises, the disciples also had to face this in their circumstances, had to recognize who Christ was. If in our true relationships we don't grasp the One who comes to meet us through them, then, when for any reason one friend or another no longer responds as he should or as we would like, our certainty about Christ is also lost. The liturgy of the Easter season has us read the Gospel of Saint John. It amazes me that Jesus says to the disciples, "Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the One who sent me" (Jn 12:44). It is crucial to grasp this, that in fact Jesus will not remain with them in the historical form in which they knew him. On the contrary, He says to them, "It is fitting that I go away, because if I don't go away, you will not realize what has happened" (see Jn 16:7). For this reason, we have a job to do, we must discover what lasts even in those relationships that may not last, what is inside the face of the other, in our bond with him, that lasts.

For the second year in a row my husband and I couldn't attend the Exercises. Unfortunately the numerous health problems affecting our family members are asking us to obey and not leave home, except only for a few hours at a time. When I received your question about what can withstand the test of time, I felt deeply provoked. I could look at the situation that my husband and I are living as a great misfortune that has happened to us, but instead we are experiencing firsthand what is essential; we are experiencing what preference means. We don't feel alone or abandoned in our daily hardships. The caress of the Father touches us constantly, and in everyday life there are always occasions in which we experience it, brought by a face, a message, a person. We are not

alone—we are in His hands and everything in this experience is saved. We thank you because all of this is possible thanks to our obedience to the work you have asked us to do, most especially the daily work of the School of Community.

What you say amazes me, because even in a circumstance like this (not being able to participate in certain gestures due to unavoidable circumstances), if one has made the journey to which Jesus invites the disciples, he doesn't find himself alone. That very circumstance, that moment, was an opportunity for you to experience a preference—"the caress of the Father"—in the faces of the people you have met. As Jesus says, "Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the One who sent me." You didn't make a comment on the quote from St. John that I read, but you discovered from within your experience the truth of those words, and this means that you don't feel alone: "We are not alone, we are in His hands and in this experience everything is saved."

The European elections concern us all. The fact that they are happening in conjunction with the beginning of our work on the Exercises is an opportunity for verifying how much what we said in Rimini has to do with life. We are all facing the electoral situation, and it is very significant that many have expressed gratitude for CL's flyer. "I wish to thank the movement because for the first time I find myself facing a political circumstance as a protagonist." This person writes that in the past she didn't feel like a protagonist, while this time she did. The CL website contains many experiences people shared about how they started moving again, how the hope mentioned earlier was reawakened in them.

I cannot hide from you that the question of the Exercises has in some way become an integral part of my breakfast, in a concrete sense, every morning. This is a different way to begin each day. Then the flyer on the elections came out. I read and reread it several times, always finding myself in full agreement with the judgments rendered and the questions asked. Yet, miserably, I found myself again in this position: it's all beautiful, and so? What box do I check when I go to vote? As if, somehow, everything that is said in the flyer were abstract theory, while the practical and concrete part of the elections, the vote, where is it? I found myself terribly divided between my experience and reality in its circumstances (in this case the elections, but it could have been any other circumstance). What does politics, and therefore these elections, have to do with the question asked by the Exercises? What does it mean to ask oneself, "What can withstand the test of time?" with respect to a political reality that seems to me to be exactly the opposite, so fluid and temporary? Wasn't it so even in Jesus's times? For three years the apostles expected him to take political action against the Romans and the Pharisees, while He was solely focused on building Christianity. I ask you for help in looking at my position, because I don't want to live this circumstance simply waiting for it to pass and then complain that society doesn't work and everything is falling apart.

We all have the chance to see whether and how the Exercises are relevant to the elections. You told us that you discovered this division within yourself, which can grow into an ever-greater indifference or cynicism. What helped us overcome this division?

I was very struck by a friend of mine who this year participated for the first time in the Fraternity Exercises for workers. With respect to the flyer on the European elections, he offered this observation to me, "The idea of the flyer, which is to help us look beyond internal and individual vicissitudes to recognize the link between our lives and political events in Europe, is very deep and fascinating." I was struck because he was telling me that he had lived a beautiful experience that

had broadened his way of looking at things, and that this experience was the criterion with which to judge even the European elections. Then I recognized the mistake I was making: I was going through the steps presented by the flyer as a nice little task to do, at the end of which there would be a precise answer. My friend, on the other hand, was doing something different: he was making a journey whose specific steps were marked by what had happened to him. That experience—which for him was embodied in the Exercises and then in the flyer—had broadened the way in which he was looking at everything. This was decisive for me because it challenged me to recognize what broadens my point of view. In fact, it isn't Europe that broadens my point of view, this or that politician, but rather the experience I have had—what I am living already has the dimensions of the world and can fill a person with a passion for everything. I was looking for a perfect logic that would lead me to be consistent in deciding who to vote for, while my friend witnessed to me a way of looking at things that was alive, awakened by an experience (the experience he was having) and striving to remain awake in every circumstance, including voting. The attraction of all this means that I too have begun to change because I have seen someone who doesn't repeat or explain the flyer, but rather lives it.

What broadened your friend's way of looking at things, what pulled him out of the reduction mentioned earlier was having participated in the Exercises and having read the flyer. This tells us about the resources we have to deal with any situation. Many times instead a dualism prevails—as we said—a terrible division between one aspect of life like politics (tomorrow it may be the family and the day after tomorrow something else, for example an illness or simply daily life, which can cripple us) and the fact that we have come here this evening or have gone to the Exercises. It always amazes me to see that sometimes the last person to join us gives us back what is right in front of our eyes and yet we aren't seeing. This is the way in which the Mystery reaches us, as it reached our friends in Perugia—you probably read about it on the CL website. Invited to a conversation about the flyer, facing the perplexities of some people in the Movement for its alleged lack of political incisiveness, the left-wing ex-mayor of an Umbrian town took the floor, brandishing the flyer, and passionately expressed the reasons why, in his opinion, it was an exceptional political breakthrough: “In these examples [those offered in the flyer, which to many people don't say anything] there is everything that politics should look at. [...] Do you really believe that whoever wrote this flyer had nothing else to say? Its content seems to me to present a very precise choice—we are asked to change the way we look at things. [...] CL wanted to stay at this level to show that politics is not primarily about strategy” (“Verso Le Europee: Un Cambio di Sguardo” [Toward the European elections: A change of view] (CL website, letters, May 17, 2019). This clarity is possible only if one lets himself be struck by what is happening.

For the past three years we have spent Easter with some families and other friends: we visit a city, we celebrate, we play soccer, and we sing. This year I was struck because there was a special harmony among us. Everyone responded to a beauty he saw for himself and wanted to be a part of. I couldn't stop thinking about the connection between those days and the European elections. Do you understand? He couldn't avoid wondering about the “connection.”

The flyer had been a big provocation for me, yet it became even more meaningful to me after what happened in those days. Before those days, I looked at the questions it poses by measuring myself, but afterward I became interested in the elections starting from what had happened in Padua. I paid more attention to the whole flyer, especially when it says that we need to “meet [...] a life

that has the strength to reopen us to hope, to rekindle in us an interest in our existence and those of our family, friends, colleagues, and fellow citizens.” The experience I have had is what is making possible for me to be interested in the elections, even at a time when I saw a rapidly increasing indifference toward this aspect of reality. I can describe what happened to me as experiencing a life that gives back to me the capacity to be attached to reality.

What do the flyer and the Exercises have to do with this indifference? If we don't have an answer to this question, we end up trying to fight only the consequences of the problem, such as indifference, without paying any attention to the origin of the answer to this indifference, which is a life, not a discourse. The answer is not an exhortation, it isn't the mere repetition of a formula, it is a life! This applies to everyone, starting with us. In fact, one of the many contributions sent to us for this evening says, “The ever more noticeable fading of interest in reality of which the flyer speaks is not primarily a judgment on society, but rather a judgment on me [many of us could agree with this], on how I normally look at reality.” That is why Fr. Giussani said about '68: “We don't counter the theory of the Student Movement with a theory that we believe to be more all-encompassing, more human. We counter it with a different life, from which we come to possess another way of knowing” (L. Giussani, “The Long March to Maturity,” *Traces*, No. 3/2008, <https://english.clonline.org/traces/page-one/the-long-march-to-maturit%C3%A0>). Only a different life is able to arouse interest in everything. This is what emerged during the CLU diaconia that we posted on the CL website and that you will find in the June issue of *Traces*. Responding to the contribution of a university student, I said that it is a new life, not something virtual, but rather a new life, real and new, superabundant, full of an overflowing wealth (like the one our friends lived during Easter) that allows us to raise our head again to look at things in a different way and become interested in everything. (see “The Political Value of an Experience,” *Traces*, n. 6/2019 <https://it.clonline.org/cm-files/2019/05/28/jc-diaconia-clu-290419-ing.pdf>)

This year at our School of Community some new friends arrived, people of my own age. Some have met the Movement now, others have met it again after a very long time. One evening, after School of Community, we stopped with some of them to talk about politics, about how we can make a contribution to our city and our country. From our conversation emerged a disappointment and a basic cynicism, similar to what we almost always feel when we listen to television talk shows. It was an unattractive discussion, which immediately left me unsatisfied.

This cynicism and this disappointment are present in us, not just in others.

A few weeks later was the Exercises for workers and we decided to go with some of our new friends. We spent three days of an incredibly great fullness of life, including those who were there for the first time, those who had returned after 25 years, and me who saw their faces slowly become more and more happy and free. Back home, the following week at School of Community we decided to discuss the flyer “Present to the Need of the World” [<https://english.clonline.org/cm-files/2019/05/03/uk-cl-europee2019.pdf>]. Both our new and old friends talked about how those days in Rimini had transformed their lives and their daily choices at work with their coworkers and with their families. Everyone witnessed to their change, linking it to the beauty experienced a few days before. “It is this,” said one of them, “that the world needs and nothing else; this is the only thing that can change social life.” I report two episodes. One of them, who works in a factory, told us that he had been appointed by his coworkers to go and talk to the owner to solve some work-related problems. Feeling uncomfortable, he had decided to take a day of sick leave to avoid

this confrontation. However, after he returned from Rimini, instead of staying home, he preferred to face his boss with serenity. He was happy with what had happened to him and he felt free to talk to anyone. Another friend told us that after seeing a coworker who had had financial difficulties for some time, she decided to help her. She knew she couldn't do much because she too has very little money and decided to talk to her husband to understand how much they could give her. She told us that she had been working with that person for almost eight years, but only after the Exercises did she feel the need to stop avoiding her circumstances and instead help her. To my question, "Why did you do it?" she replied, "I don't know why, but it certainly had something to do with what we saw and lived together in Rimini." It seems to me that these brief examples document what the flyer says: "What we need is something that can change our gaze, that can make us savor the joy of living, reawakening our will to act." (Present to the Need of the World, p. 2).

Does this affect politics or not? Does participating in the Exercises in this way have an impact on politics or not? Fr. Giussani told us often that if we participate in this new life, if we don't empty the "historical and social importance of the Christian fact" (L. Giussani, "The Long March to Maturity"), we discover in us a different way of looking at everything, a way of looking that made the factory worker become interested in what is happening at his company and our other friend in her coworker's financial situation. What makes us become interested in everything has to do with Christianity lived as an event of faith.

In many meetings that were organized about the elections I saw what is described in the first example of the flyer happen again, that is, that the reading of reality changes during the meeting itself. A great economist lucidly told us in a meeting that the problem of Europe and the modern economy is not economic or political, but cultural: the absence of what is human. His analysis was pessimistic and skeptical. I then spoke, pointing out that a lack of desire keeps us from seeing the many advantages Europe provides and that those who are educated to this desire have already changed: referring to the flyer, I said that in the social friendships present in so many parts of Europe, we can see a change taking place. The speaker's countenance changed, and he turned to me and said, "Yes, that is also how it works in macropolitics: we start from something that already exists." The same experience happened in another meeting I was involved in with a great entrepreneur, who said that only by experiencing an affective fulfillment can a new politics and economy be built. In yet another city, a well-known politician said, "I left politics disappointed and despite being against the sovereign state, I am so embittered that I think they may be right with their negativity." This led to a flurry of contributions documenting a newness in action right at that moment, a foretaste of something greater, and he too changed his position. Before another meeting, we went to a lunch where the president of an Italian-Arab association was present. We started talking about the collapse of communism and he was struck by one thing, which he then repeated in public: John Paul II understood that for a real change to happen the collapse of communism was not enough; what was needed was an educational renewal. There was also a strange meeting: a friend of ours, a city councilor, gathered the whole city council together to discuss the flyer. It was a beautiful discussion in a friendly atmosphere, and everyone began from their ideal position. Amazed, I exclaimed, "You are truly an unusual group!" The city councilor replied, "No, no, look, usually it isn't like that, usually the climate is very rough. This evening was strange, exceptional, because we started from the contents of the flyer." I could recount many other examples. What have these facts taught me? What I saw, also in our friends, during the

meetings was a skeptical beginning and a change in front of a presence, in front of the recounting of experiences, as if one had seen something that he wasn't seeing at the beginning. Then I realized that experience is not a premise, but it changes the way you analyze things, making you perceive particular facts you didn't previously see and therefore bringing you to a different position on every aspect of reality, including political life. This extends all the way to casting your vote: How do you choose the candidates? You choose by looking at those who help desire, social connections, and friendships grow, who share and discuss solutions for the good of Europe.

During a dinner, referring to the examples in the flyer, some of those present said, "But what does this have to do with Europe?" Friends, let's not forget that contemporary Europe, the one we are talking about today, was born of a test, an agreement on coal and steel signed between countries that had fought each other during World War II, starting with Germany and France. Faced with a destroyed Europe, anyone could have looked at that particular fact with the same skepticism with which we treat the events we have heard about, because we don't see their scope. Instead, whoever is a realist, like Europe's fathers, knows that nothing can be built unless it is through real events: thus they put in place a real event and over time they built Europe. Since we have forgotten the origin, we think of building something—in our life or in Europe—by starting from abstractions and not from real facts. We want everything immediately, here and now, ignoring what Fr. Giussani saw very clearly: "The impatience [that characterizes us] isn't the final trap, but the first. Christian experience will change the world; however, in order to change the world, the entire trajectory of history is required." (L. Giussani, "The Long March to Maturity"). The apparently small fact of the coal and steel agreement took time to develop into something else. Who in 1952 (the year in which the treaty became effective) would have thought that we would have reached the point of having a single currency? "You are out of your mind!" we would have commented. Think also of the many other forms of cooperation in the European Union. If we don't start from transformations already in place, thinking about change is an abstraction. Starting from something that already exists is the only possibility for building. When one begins to give value to the facts, he begins to see things he didn't see before and to realize that an inversion of method is necessary: this is what we must learn. Fr. Giussani told us already in the early seventies (how much time we need to understand!), "We don't counter the theory [...] with a theory [...] We counter it with a different life." And what is this life? Where does this life show itself? How is it expressed? "Maturity [...] is expressed [...] in our passionate desire that the Church of God live visibly here where we are [...] [and] may bring good to the neighborhood, university, work, parish... bring good to the world, as an incarnate presence, incarnate! (Ibid.) Here is the possibility for everyone to change, piece by piece, the reality we inhabit. No one is excluded from this task in the environment in which he lives, in the piece of reality he touches, in the circumstances in which he finds himself living, the neighborhood, university, school, work, up to politics. However, as we said at the beginning, only those who are involved in an experience like this understand it and can begin to see the change taking place.

Many people in the Movement who do not necessarily have a knack for politics have sought election, especially in other countries. This helped me understand the political value of the fact of Christ and the Movement. In fact, some of these people ran as candidates in countries where the Movement is not even physically present. Perhaps there is only a husband and wife or a couple of families. Yet, the community is there because—I say this by looking at the stories they told me,

specific stories—it is the place that generates a great availability in them and supports them. Perhaps the most striking episode took place in a country where a young man from the community sought election. There are a handful of seniors who belong to the Movement, who have been involved for years in the life of the country. One of them was supposed to be the candidate; he was a passionate man and one could say that his time had come. However, as soon as he heard about the young man he was so excited that he stepped aside and is now campaigning with and for him. The young man, in addition to his amazement at how he has been accompanied by these adults, has been struck by the importance this group of older people has in the country: they haven't gained important political roles and yet several of them are well known and esteemed. I am amazed by the many and new provocations that have emerged from the flyer's questions (tough provocations!), which are received with a certain resistance even by the people we have invited to public meetings, and which are really challenging and have given rise to other questions. We found ourselves working together question after question, in particular on the text "The Long March to Maturity" from 1972. There was a good discussion beginning from the question of a friend that arose out of the mayoral election in the place where some of us live; the people of the community have different positions about the election. The question was brought up by this passage: "Only a cultural expression that has sprung from a unified experience can make people capable of a unified judgment on the situation. Instead [...] in the GS and GL [Giovani Lavoratori: Young Workers] of the time, some members came to exalt as normal a disparity in their various stances, and yet, since they had the power to do so, they imposed a specific position at the organizational level." (Ibid.) In front of the different positions I mentioned, which were often weak on both sides, the path that during the discussion seemed most interesting to us, rather than approaching and reconciling with each other—looking for a "horizontal" unity—was the path toward the truth, toward Christ. All of this has to do first and foremost with the unity of the person and, the experience we have together, but it still happens within the person. So the question that came up is this: What does it mean that "a unified experience can make people capable of a unified judgment"? While we were discussing among ourselves, it was as if there were two levels of unity: personal unity and then the unity of the community.

Try to explain the connection between the unity of the person and that of the community.

For me the answer is easy, looking above all at our friends I told you about: what made it possible for them to work together (even those who were candidates and then stepped aside) is that they are people in love with Christ, in love with the fact of Christ.

I am very struck by this contribution. We are faced with two situations. The second described a situation in which the people of the community have different positions and one asks, "How can we resolve this division? We should reach a unity." In order to reach this unity, since arguing doesn't get us anywhere, what should happen? Should the Movement intervene to bring order? But this would lead, as Fr. Giussani said, to an organizational decision on the part of those in power. That is why I was so amazed by the first episode you recounted. What made the senior candidate, who was "the" candidate, give way to a young man? What can fill the heart to the point of a person giving up his place on the list to someone else, to the point of starting to work for and with him, when instead we normally argue, we discuss in order to "put the cat into the water"—as we say in Spain—that is, in order to make things work to our own advantage? Here we are surprised because something absolutely unique has happened. You spoke of being in love with Christ. I say that precisely because of the fullness they live due to the encounter they had, some

found themselves having such an experience of the unity of their own person and of unity with others who had been taken hold of by the same encounter, that even without the intervention of an external power, a common judgment arose in them and from that unitary experience a united cultural expression arose, even in politics. For years we didn't believe that this could happen, so we thought that in order to resolve disputes and arguments an authority needed to intervene and organize. We had to wait decades to see how we can arrive at a unitary expression even in politics, which is the most complicated area possible. *"Only a cultural expression that has sprung from a unified experience [and therefore from the fullness that one lives] can make people capable of a unified judgment on the situation,"* a judgment not imposed by a power or organization because it arises from experience. We are surprised to see this unified judgment happening when we thought it couldn't happen. Only if we follow God's method, taking seriously the question we have posed to ourselves and the proposal of faith as the answer to this question, can we create a unitary experience so radical and profound that we can even express it politically in a visible unity. The episode of the two candidates—the older man and the young man—leaves me speechless because for decades we thought something like this impossible. This unique unity bears witness to Christ because the only thing that makes it possible is Christ present, alive: it is generated by that experience of fullness that Christ gives us if we welcome Him. This is the only way to reach this unity. Only this presence allows a person to give up his place to another: by living a fullness in the present, he doesn't need that position to fill a void. On the contrary, he can begin serving the last to arrive. It is this unity that truly bears witness to Christ, while division erases the capacity to witness to the Christian fact. The fact that power, the organization, the person who guides, must intervene to "unite" is a sign that we cannot succeed in being united as an experience; it is the recognition of dualism, it is the victory of dualism. Instead we can talk about the Exercises and then the elections, as we have seen this evening. For this reason, immediately after the sentence that was quoted by the last person who spoke, Fr. Giussani goes on to say, "There was a division in the face of the world [...]; a terrible division that [...] annuls the capacity of the Christian fact to witness to the world itself. In fact, the testimony of the Christian fact to the world lies in its presence [that united, responds to] the needs of the world" (Ibid.) So when a victory over dualism and division occurs, one wonders: How did an older person manage to make that gesture toward a young person? Only out of an experience of faith. Without an experience of faith, and therefore without delving deeply to the bottom of the question posed by the Exercises, it is impossible for us to bear public witness to unity, especially at the level of politics. A unity like that cannot be imposed from outside. It must come from the unity of the "I," from the lived unity of my "I" with the "I" of those who have been taken hold of by the same gesture of Christ ("All of you who have been baptized have identified yourselves with Christ, [...] and you are one in Christ Jesus"—Gal 3: 26–28). It is this that generates a unitary movement which is expressed in everything, even politics. This is the challenge we are facing, which is why the elections are a privileged opportunity for the verification of faith, as we have said to each other, to verify what the Exercises mean, what it means "politically" to have come here this evening, as one bishop has recognized. To those who told him a story about hospitality, he said, "Yours seems a very small and insignificant thing, and yet it is the answer to all the darkness that is around us in the world."

The next School of Community will be held on Wednesday, June 19 at 9:00 p.m. We will begin to go over the first lesson of the Fraternity Exercises, together with the parts of the assembly that relate to the theme of the first lesson.

The Italian text of the Exercises will be available beginning tomorrow on the CL website. The Italian booklet will be attached to the June issue of Traces. Moreover, on the website you can also find the audio of the first lesson. Many have already downloaded the audio of the introduction because it is useful when traveling by car.

The May issue of Traces, entitled *America, Americas*, documents how Fr. Giussani's charism is seen and lived by those who meet him today in the American continents from Canada to Argentina. It is a life that broadens life, as witnessed by the letters, articles, and interviews contained in the issue.

We propose some books for the summer:

- *La Verita` Nasce dalla Carne* [The truth is born of the flesh], by Luigi Giussani (volume 3 of the Bur Rizzoli series "*Cristianesimo alla Prova*" [Christianity put to the test], which contains the text of the Fraternity Exercises held from 1988 to 1990.
- *Choruses from the Rock*, by T.S. Eliot

And two novels that can accompany our work on the Exercises:

- *Barabbas*, by Pär Lagerkvist (Jaca Book)
- *La Casa degli Sguardi* [The house of many gazes], by Daniele Mencarelli (Mondadori)

Volunteer work at the Rimini Meeting. The participation of adults is particularly necessary also this year, both during the pre-Meeting and the Meeting.

For information write to this email address: volontari@meetingrimini.org

I also bring to your attention that the Meet the Meeting event will be held on Saturday, June 1 in many public squares in Italy in order to support the Meeting and invite people to attend.

The Jubilee Year dedicated to Saint Riccardo Pampuri opened on May 1st, on the 30th anniversary of his canonization. As many of you know, Fr. Giussani always spoke to us about Saint Riccardo as the saint "close to us," initially because of the healing of a friend and then many other miracles. He recommended that we pray to Saint Riccardo, telling us that "devotion to the saints has a special significance because they are our contemporaries: they remind us that the mystery of Christ is present to us" (*L'attrattiva Gesù* [The attraction of Jesus], Bur, Milano 1999, p. 11). The Jubilee will last one year. It is possible to obtain the plenary indulgence by participating in the jubilee celebrations and praying before the remains of the saint in the parish church of Trivolzio.

For information: www.giubileosanriccardopampuri.it

Veni Sancte Spiritus

Good evening everyone!