

*Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón
Milan, June 19, 2019*

Reference text: Julian Carrón, *What Can Withstand the Test of Time?* 2019 Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, First Meditation and Assembly, pp. 17–36 and 64–82 <https://english.clonline.org/cm-files/2019/06/19/esercizi-2019-ing-web-1.pdf>

- *Tu sei venuto dal buio [You came from darkness]*
- *Favola*

Glory Be

“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.” [S. Kierkegaard, note 1068, in *Soren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, Volume 1, A-E, trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1967)]. What have we seen that we can no longer forget?

I began hearing about the movement when I began working in the hospital in 2011—before that, I didn't know about it. Unfortunately the comments were often negative and for this reason I got a completely wrong impression about it, until at the end of 2013 I fell in love with the man who is now my husband. He has always belonged to the movement and I told myself, “If I fell in love with this man who comes from the history of the movement, it means that I have seen a beauty that exists and has something to do with his story!” We had been working together for a year, but I had never noticed him until we really met; that is, when I saw him looking at me as a person, in a way I had never been looked at before. In 2014 he became my boyfriend and I began to attend School of Community with him, accepting his invitation with great curiosity. I immediately understood that it was something beautiful that I needed to follow! I started getting to know his friends in the movement and even in them I noticed a beauty and a depth in their relationships that I had never seen before. I felt loved. In my encounter with his way of looking at me, full of goodness, I encountered Christ. I never left. I started to really live, living everything profoundly, not holding myself back, being more interested in others, not overlooking anything, and looking at things more deeply. We got married in 2016 and our relationships have grown in number and depth. We met new friends whose companionship for our life's journey is essential. My son was born in 2017, the greatest gift that Jesus has given us. His birth brought with it my illness, for which I am still under treatment today. This is an immense contradiction between joy and pain. Many times I wondered, “Why? Why to me, to us?” After a year-and-a-half of treatment I feel better and I am sure that this circumstance has been given to us for our growth. I am moved when I think about my husband's and my son's gaze on me. I am moved when I think of our friends who walk with us even in this circumstance. It is this being moved that made me decide to enroll in the Fraternity.

Thank you, dearest friend. The latest arrival among us reminds us of what we have encountered; namely, that Christianity is not a doctrine to be applied or rules to be followed, but a different humanity that strikes us and cannot leave us indifferent. “I noticed a beauty and a depth in their relationships that I had never seen before,” a gaze unknown to me before. We can all identify with

you in your description of your encounter with the movement, with this human reality in which we all participate. For this reason, as we repeated at the Exercises, “The beginning of everything was “*an encounter* with an objective fact [...]. The existential reality of this fact is a tangible community as with every wholly human reality”” (p. 19). What you saw was so decisive that—as you said—you never left it. “I started to really live, living everything profoundly, not holding myself back, being more interested in others, not overlooking anything, and looking at things more deeply.” I say these words again not simply to repeat them, but to make a comparison with the initial repercussion that has occurred in each of us. Whatever the form in which it is lived now, Christianity is only this, the experience of growth in everything, even in the way one faces the contradiction of an illness. It will always be like that; when Christianity happens it will always be an event. Then, as we saw, we can lapse. In listening to the words of our friend, someone will have perceived them as the recounting of something beautiful, but in the past. That is why we must understand clearly why, after having lived B, we return to A. It is important to help us understand that this isn’t simply due to our fragility, because this fragility—present in each of us—has not prevented us from having that absolutely amazing experience of the beginning, which we all have inscribed forever in our DNA. “The cause [of our lapsing] is not our weakness: it is a lack of recognition” we said at the Exercises (p. 26). So let us help each other understand the problem.

I will tell you something that happened at our School of Community with respect to this dynamic of the transition from situation A to B and then back to A. First we asked ourselves whether we had recognized this dynamic in our week. I was very impressed by a friend of mine who recounted how the previous week, during School of Community, he had experienced this passage from A to B; in particular, he told us that he had come and had not made a contribution, but when a young woman had asked a question about a difficulty she was having, he had felt that it captured his situation thoroughly, since he was experiencing the same difficulty, was in the same position. In the conversation we had during that School of Community, the hypothesis of a different way of looking at that situation and facing that moment of difficulty emerged. My friend was very struck by this hypothesis, so much so that—he told us—he left totally different from the way he had arrived. My friend said, “After finishing School of Community I was really curious to see what would happen the next day, what was waiting for me in my life and what I might discover.” In his contribution he recounted that starting from that moment when the change took place and in the following weeks he became aware of many events—which we described as “points of light”—that happened every day. He added that he realized that it wasn’t enough for these events to just happen and that the thing that was most useful to him was to take a moment every evening to look at them, day after day. It was exactly that, he told us, that helped him stay in situation B and made him wake up in the morning “always with that curiosity with which I woke up the day after that School of Community.”

It is striking: one arrives at School of Community and the dynamics you have just described can be unleashed. In this sense, we are like the disciples who, in being with Jesus, saw things happening one after another; these things now take place in our community, as ragtag as it may be. We are not talking about a community other than our own, here or in other places, a community different from the one we all know, with all the limits we are aware of. Yet, none of this frailty or weakness can prevent us from living like this! Your friend recognized something in a young woman who spoke because he saw a different hypothesis incarnated in her that made him change. In fact he left the School of Community feeling different. What is the method he learned at the School of

Community and what shows that he learned it? First, he went away changed and began to see. The change didn't consist in the fact that before he was wrong and now he does things in the right way, but rather in the fact that he began to see, to see points of light, and he couldn't prevent this from becoming more and more a way of living, so much so that he takes time in the evening to look at the points of light in his day. What does it mean to observe the points of light that keep happening? It means living memory, and that is the second factor of the method that he learned. Memory is not a mere memory of the past, but a recognition of what He makes happen. Only if we stop to treasure these facts can we get up in the morning—as we always do when a beautiful thing happens in our life and when we have them clear in our mind. If you fall in love, how are you able to see that something significant happened? Can anyone imagine getting up in the morning without that event being the first thing that comes to mind? It is impossible, and not because one “must” do it, but because it is something one cannot avoid. So memory is looking at something new that happens; it is not simply making a list of things that are not working, but rather it is looking at what is happening, something that documents—as we sang at the beginning—that we are not alone, that He is at work in our midst, as a father told me when his daughter talked to him about her vocation (she had begun the novitiate in the *Memores Domini*). He was so struck that he couldn't help telling her, “If you have chosen this path, it means that I am missing something that I don't see,” and since then he has begun to look at what his daughter has been living. Words like those give all of us another opportunity to look at what that father was looking at, something that so often slips away from us. That is why in the Exercises we said that “It is not enough for the event to happen. We have to recognize its meaning” (p. 21). We said, “The important point is to understand the content and the origin of the differentness we have come across that causes us to be here today. Maybe in other moments [of history, less challenging for faith] we could have gotten by without reaching this point, without the need to recognize the nature of this unassailable evidence that has come into our lives, but in today's chaos in which everything is in doubt [as we often see happening in ourselves too], we will not be able to remain Christians for long if we do not have evidence whose permanent meaning we recognize” (p. 26); that is, if we don't give ourselves time to recognize the content and the origin of what happened to us, and to remember it. We do not immediately grasp what this “becoming aware” means, as can be seen in the question someone asked me, “What does it mean to discover the meaning of what happened to me? I want to understand, I want to recognize in my life what Fr. Giussani understood through the episode of *La Favorita*, because I would say that he had a great sensitivity and I don't have it!” But then what we are saying applies only to Fr. Giussani? Is it impossible for poor wretches like us? Is it just a sensitivity issue?

In rereading your words, the first thing that emerged in me was to ask myself: What in my life has withstood and withstands over time? Does it exist? I am by nature a person who gets annoyed and quickly tired of things; how many things have I started in my life that I gave up! It would be naïve not to note that many things, even very fascinating ones, had an expiration date for me, even things I believed to be indispensable. Yet, I realize that there is also something different in me, that “something” happened of a different nature that has marked me in a way that changed me deeply. “Why did we choose to adhere to and follow the encounter [...]? Because the presence encountered corresponded uniquely to the deep needs of our heart” (p. 25). This seems to be the essence of my life. My bond to what I encountered is based on this overwhelming experience: “When I met Christ I discovered myself a man” (Mario Vittorino); the vital experience of this profound correspondence happened in me. This experience was and is impossible to overlook, and

it seems that over time it has given rise in me to the realization that, apart from this correspondence, everything in me is subhuman. It seems that within all the vicissitudes of life this experience has become ever-more unmistakable. When we speak about the transition from A to B and then the return to A, if I think of myself, I see that the return to A has happened countless times, but only in ethical terms, because deep down this bond between me and this mysterious presence remains. It is something so constitutive of who I am that not having it would be like seeing a cake in front of you and wanting to take it back to each individual ingredient: it is no longer possible. “When we don’t recognize this ‘something’ that has the unmistakable accent of truth, we return to A after having seen B. The cause is not our weakness: it is a lack of recognition. Our fragility has nothing to do with it. The problem I set forth is not one of ethical coherence. It is a problem of reason, of simplicity of heart. ‘It is in you that things must become clear’” (p. 26). If I look at myself while I am living, it isn’t like I am thinking intensely about how to get the encounter with Jesus into my life, or how to maintain the attraction of B. I can’t explain it differently: while I am living, in my relationships, in events, it is as if the point of comparison with everything is this correspondence, which is a point of no return. All this is not without drama; it isn’t a fact and that’s that because the story that impacted my life has gradually become more and more familiar. What I live doesn’t challenge this experience, but it is this experience that makes me enter into everything and live what I live. For me the problem of preserving things so that they don’t end is felt more deeply in the affective experience. But I cannot fail to recognize this: when I truly love, when I truly become attached, it is because what I love inspires in me first of all a fascination and an interest, it binds me, but what impresses the character of “forever” in these things for me is that this correspondence becomes flesh. That is why the more I love a person (that is, the more the experience of correspondence becomes flesh in that person) the more the anxiety and despair over losing that person cease. The more I love, the more the presence of that person becomes me, and I have the experience of taking a breath, an experience of peace. My inner struggle, my agony in separation or in sacrifice, must account for this unmistakable experience. I would, however, like to ask you for help to be able to go a little deeper into all of this. I feel my heart tearing, I experience the sense of lack till all is dark, but I can’t help noticing that today I look, I touch, I think within a relationship with the Presence that lives within the time and space of my life. The more I love, the more I can say to a person I love, “I could no longer live without you.” And it is only for that that I am willing to leave that person, to live without the fear of losing him.

It is living that makes us more and more convinced that we have seen something so great, so magnificent that everything else is nothing compared to it, and we can no longer forget it. As you said, it is by living that we see what can withstand the test of time—whether what we have encountered remains—and not because I am good, but because of that deep bond between myself and the mysterious presence I experienced. It is in life that we really see the difference, as sometimes people show us who, after having moved away from the movement for years, return out of the nostalgia they have for something that has marked them forever. This is the proof that the event of the beginning remains. Therefore it is very important and decisive that we experience all the events of this time in history, so that we can see what resists the chaos. That is why I say that we are fortunate to live in this moment in which nothing holds, seemingly even Christ. It is here, in this age of ours, that everyone is challenged to look at his experience, not the experience of his ability, but of a point of no return, of something that a person cannot shed. It is only this that allows our friend to look at everything, even at what she thought she was losing, with the ultimate peace that Christ brings into our life. It isn’t that you miss things only when they move away from

you, friend—you miss them even when they are present! As I have already said on other occasions, it amazes me that Jesus told his disciples, “Whoever believes in me [he said it to them while they had Him before him!] does not believe in me, but in the One [the Father] who sent me” (Jn 12:44). The very presence of Christ present refers elsewhere. If we realize that this is crucial in defining the nature of what has happened to us, we can truly not be afraid of losing anything. Is there anyone who has discovered this?

*About two weeks ago I received some very nice invitations. I must say that when they invite me somewhere to give a witness or even meet new people I am always very happy. But this time I found myself having to deal with everything was being asked of me, that is, my last exam, my thesis, etc., so I was in doubt about whether I could accept the invitations. One evening I was with you, so I took advantage of this and asked you, “How do you choose?” I was hoping you would tell me what I should do. Instead, what you said was greater than the ready-to-apply answer I expected. You said me two things to me that really took me by surprise. The first: “When these overlapping circumstances occur, you have to know that they never happen by chance, but that they are an opportunity for you to rediscover what vocation is, to Whom you must say yes now.” The second was that, speaking about yourself, you told me, “Saying no to the many invitations I receive is difficult for me; the sacrifice for me is often to say no, but the point is to look at how the Mystery approaches you, because it is to Him that we must say yes.” I was impressed—not at all the pat answer!—because I had before me a man who didn’t think of Christ as the final step (as the School of Community says): “Ah yes yes, I organize everything, fit everything together, then there is Him;” but rather, as you told us, a man who was putting Him before everything. “Don’t assume His presence but rather put Him before everything!” (H.U. von Balthasar, quoted in Benedict XVI, “Abuse scandal. Where Can the Church Start Again,” III, 1, *corriere.it*, April 11, 2019), you told us. It was your starting point: to observe how the Mystery approaches us. It was easy to recognize Him there. That meeting with you opened my eyes wide. The next day I did the exact same things I always do, like working on my thesis, which is now asking me to go to the lab, but I woke up differently in the morning. What an enormous difference to wake up in the morning knowing that going to the lab, obeying the professor, is the way in which I respond to what the Lord is giving me! Before I went to the lab because “I have to work on my thesis,” “I must graduate.” Very simple! Now I go because it is the way in which the Mystery is approaching me. But this is evident only thanks to my conversation with you on Monday: a Presence occurs that reminds me of who I am, that I am not made to fix everything with my strategies, but to say yes, to obey Him. It is really true that the first thing I need is not to plan and make everything work, but to meet a way of life that opens my eyes (as the flyer on the European elections also said), to continually meet a presence that opens my eyes and that even in the face of certain more or less important decisions like the ones I had to make puts you in a position, in an attitude of clarity with respect to where the Mystery is calling you.*

The question is whether what we live—the normal things of life—simply involves things that we “must” do. You said it: first your attitude was dictated by a duty to do things, now everything is an occasion through which “the Mystery is approaching me.” Now it is evident to you that a Presence is happening and is calling you. As Fr. Giussani has always explained to us, life is vocation, it is an answer to One who calls you through a given circumstance. How different it is to endure life, to endure circumstances, to endure being faithful to what one must do, and to

respond to Someone present who calls you not in a generic way, but very concretely! As a young parent told me a little while ago, struggling with his daughter who calls on him for many specific things, “This begins to give to what I live a depth that makes everything different, because I begin to understand what it means to become aware.” Becoming aware cannot happen unless the awareness reaches Him. This is something from which one cannot turn back. But when we lapse, when we go from B to A because of a lack of awareness, what allows us to return?

More and more often in this period I have the impression, the feeling, that everything is slipping away, that everything must pass, remaining attached—and this is already a lot for me—only by the thin thread of memory. Yet, recently I realized that this is not true, that this impression is not the truth.

It is necessary to look because so many times we succumb to the impression we have of things, as if it were the truth, but it isn't.

In particular, I am thinking of the period of the university election campaign, with the frenzy of the days, the whirlwind of all the things to do. It seemed to me that in the end nothing remained in my hands. I was surprised that, on one of those days, a friend (his name is Luca), who had gone to visit some university students in another city, came back feeling moved, changed by what he had seen, enthusiastic, bursting with life, with a liveliness that took hold of me and changed me. I remember almost nothing of those days of the election campaign, but I can't forget meeting him. When I told you about it, you said, “See? All the distortions of the world that surrounds us, forgetfulness, distraction, reduction, all of this happens also to us. Yet, everyone has his own Luca who comes back to find him.” This phrase—“Everyone always has his own Luca who comes back to find him”—has carved itself into my heart. After the elections, life has returned to normal, and slowly even that powerful encounter has come to seem like a nice memory, but is unable to change anything, to change me now. I thought, “I am becoming cynical again, like before.” But the day after my meeting with you, to which I had arrived immersed in these thoughts, it was easy to start over, it was enough to follow those people, those friends who by their presence—by their presence alone, not by many speeches—made me do this work, provoked me to do this work: the work that you have us do, the work of looking at the points of light. Right there everything started again. I began to realize that not a day goes by without some Luca, my Luca, coming back to see me, which is obviously not always the same friend, but always a new face, a different friend, a different episode; every day I could say that there was at least an instant in which I was picked up again. Last week I went to study for a few days with some high school seniors, and on the last day one of them said to me, “I am a person of few words, but I want to tell you one thing: what struck me about you university students who came to stay with us has been your radical approach to everything; radical, that is, in the sense that what you have encountered has taken root in you.” After this brief conversation I went to bed, but I couldn't sleep because I was thinking, “Wow, I am the first to notice all my forgetfulness, my mistakes, my distraction, and yet I can no longer shake off this encounter, this companionship that reaches me every day, that on one day is Luca and on another someone else. I also began to understand more when, at Beginning Day, Fr. Giussani spoke of the event, which is not a word, a speech, or a gesture, but everything together as a whole, a single entity, and is how hope begins to be present in us, because we, as petty as we are, have something new within us that we can no longer tear away from ourselves. These words

of Fr. Giussani are now a little more my own after this continuously insistent succession of events, of the things that continue to happen in everyday life.

After a year, at the end of the year, one can grasp with even more clarity the truth of the proposal of Beginning Day. It amazes me that a guy like you, after the journey you have made during this year, ends up recognizing things more acutely because of the roots that have sunk into your being of the truth of those words. “The words I heard from Fr. Giussani are now a little more my own”—they have become more yours and you have understood the importance and the value of the hope that is in you. Those words did not run away from you, disappearing and fading away from the horizon of your life! Actually, they have become more and more rooted in you, to the point that you are able to say, “I can no longer shake off this encounter.” Has anyone else seen that the words of Beginning Day have become his own?

A few weeks ago something happened that made me very sad. The next morning I had to go to the university; I was in bed and I had zero desire to get up. Yet, I realized that the more I thought this way, that I didn't want to go, the sadder I was and the more I felt the urgent need to stay attached to what was present, with the hope that something might happen for me that day. This was the first glimmer of light; that is, the desire that something might happen in my life that very morning. I went to the university, but obviously I had a face that showed that I wasn't happy. I had a meeting with some friends and I told them what I am saying to you now. After the meeting a friend said to me, “I don't know if you noticed it, but the way in which we worked today was dictated by how you were feeling; it wasn't how you felt that struck me, but where you were looking, because that is what I want to follow.” I said to myself, “It is not me, but it is something else that is happening in me and in these faces.” I wondered, “What brought this judgment into my life?” During these days, in reading the School of Community, I was moved when at a certain point it said, “We risk living such a great grace as this house [as this companionship] assuming the final step [...], admitting the final step, acknowledging the final step, which is for Christ, but not living it [...]. You can live your companionship in such a way that you are kind to each other, attentive to each other, that you enjoy living in such an environment” (p. 31). I too often say, “I am fine here, I have my friends, I am happy and all the rest.” But since what happened to me on that day, since that friend made me see the adequate reason, the real factor that first of all put us together, I have understood the struggle between living for Christ and affirming that Jesus is present here. The more I stay inside my mind, in my feelings, the more I sink. On the contrary, the more I follow my urgent need to live, the more I realize who my friends are. I have to say that for me the clear judgment that He is among us is not just a thought, but something inside me that allows me to live. This urgency to live, to be attached to this, makes me move in a certain way and doesn't allow me to be stuck in my mind.

What was the turning point for you, before anything else that happened after it, when you were still in bed without wanting to get up? Why can we recognize that what happened to you is rooted in you even when you have “zero desire” to get up? To understand this we have to look there: just when it seemed that nothing was left, you spoke of a glimmer of something that made you get up. In this age of nihilism, in which it seems that everything disappears, even within us, something slowly begins to take root—as we are seeing—which resists any passage of time: it is an ultimate loyalty to that glimmer. It introduces a struggle in you so that even if you have “zero desire” to get up, you do so anyway, and when you arrive at the meeting with your friends everyone is amazed at what happens: everything changes because of your position. This is what Fr. Giussani tells us:

we risk living such a great grace, a unique way of being together, without really realizing it, as if we were “assuming the final step [...], admitting the final step [it is not that we deny it, but we take it for granted] [...], which is for Christ but not living it [as if He were truly present]” (p. 31). If we do not arrive at this recognition of and amazement at what your friend saw in you while you were down in the dumps we miss reality, because we don’t recognize the ultimate aspect that makes it totally different. Having acknowledged that glimmer, even and especially when you were in the dark, you could see what happened. Only those who acknowledge this glimmer can verify the things that happen to them. The struggle occurs within myself, between recognizing this glimmer that even in my nothingness remains, or surrendering to the nothingness. This glimmer is the sign of His victory, which has its roots deep within us and that no one can tear away from us, even in these times. In this way, we realize the grace that has happened to us. Yet, it is possible for us not realize it, thinking that nothing has or will happen to us. However, someone always appears who by his presence makes us aware of what happened to us.

I never had much to do with the Church until 2008. That year a new priest arrived in my town and he seemed different from the others. The rectory, always closed until then, began to be frequented by kids who sang, played, read, and spent time together. Since my son had to be confirmed, I too became curious and began to visit it. In that small town, where nothing ever happens and everyone knows each other, something disruptive had arrived. Following that priest, my life and my wife’s life changed completely. Our meeting with a companionship of friends, which has expanded over time, has accompanied me over the last ten years through the vicissitudes, whether happy or difficult, of life. Today the community to which I belong is very lively, but sometimes I feel a bit uncomfortable: in fact, everyone talks about episodes in their lives, everyone shares the surprise that Christ is happening in their day in small and big things. To me—or so it seemed—nothing ever happened! These thoughts never left me until a fateful Friday in March. That day I left work early—not an irrelevant detail because it is clear to me that the series of apparently random occurrences that guided me on that extraordinary day was willed by an Other. Leaving the factory where I work, I decided to take a walk to a Marian shrine about 50 minutes away. During the journey I got the umpteenth message from my group of friends on WhatsApp, in which someone shared something that had happened to him. I didn’t know how to answer. When I got to the square of the sanctuary, I saw a single, well-maintained white car, and a single person at the edge of the parapet, looking at the view. At first glance, he seemed to me a somewhat strange guy, but I went toward him and passing near him I said “good evening” and kept going. I stopped for a few minutes in front of the church which, unfortunately, was already closed at that time of day. I was about to start back, but the young man I had greeted with reluctance approached me. I said to myself, “What does this guy want?” The young man asked me, “Can I disturb you?” and I answered, “sure.” “I wanted to thank you,” he said. “I came here with the intention of ending my life, of throwing myself over the parapet, but your greeting and the way you looked at me stopped me. I had never met anyone who greeted me like that. You saved my life. Can I hug you?” We hugged each other in the middle of that square. I was petrified. And to think that nothing ever happened to me! What did I carry in my eyes without even realizing it? What did that young man who was struggling with his great need immediately notice? From that day on he started to spend time with me and my friends. He felt like a loser, but that look and that greeting, who knows how or why, had made him intuit that there could be hope. Unthinkable. Meeting him was a real shock for me.

It made me become aware of the enormous scope of what I had met years earlier, just as unexpectedly, an event that didn't happen long ago but that continues to happen now when you least expect it.

Nothing was ever happening to you! “Nothing ever happens to me!” you said. This is the impression we often have despite the encounter we have had. What did you carry in your eyes without even realizing it that gave hope to someone who wanted to end his life? We discover what the Mystery does with our “yes” only in this way, friend, within the circumstances. We are restored to an awareness of what we carry, of what Christ introduced into life, when things like this happen to us. What happened to you is for all of us, so that it may be easier for us to recognize the One who has happened to each of us, as you said, “an event that didn't happen long ago but that continues to happen now when you least expect it.”

Summer is a privileged opportunity to see how the Mystery will surprise us, how He will answer the question, “What can withstand the test of time?” In September we will recount to each other how He has done so.

The work of School of Community will continue during the summer on the text of the Fraternity Exercises:

- from now until the end of July we will continue the work on the first lesson (pp. 17–36) and on the parts of the assembly corresponding to the theme of the first lesson.
- in August and September we will work on the second lesson (pp. 42–63) and the corresponding parts of the assembly.

Community Vacations. The theme we propose for the vacations is “The journey to truth is an experience.” With this title we wish to emphasize that the originality of the movement is in the method we have seen and documented this evening; it is not a repetition of words, but an experience that introduces us to the true meaning of words, until they become ours and become deeply rooted in our depths, when everything changes. That is why we want summer and our vacations to help us become aware of the method that allows us to discover the truth, allowing it to become our own: an experience that makes us grow.

Visiting the CL website and reading Traces is above all in response to a desire to see the events and signs of His presence acting within history and reality, and within our companionship. I hope that we never get used to hearing what we heard tonight. If a person was able to regain hope only because of a greeting full of that emotion that Christ introduced into history, imagine what can happen to us, who hear these things every time we come together. A work is necessary so that our being together doesn't become a habit or simply something that is already known. An acknowledgment is needed, because in order to explain what has happened in each of these events it is necessary that the Word became flesh and continues to live among us. This is not the outcome of a strategy or something that we produce—nothing we have heard is a product of our energy. We certainly don't read Traces to discover how good we are, but rather to recognize His action as the only answer to the pessimism that is spreading in society and often even to us.

This year the Rimini Meeting celebrates its 40th anniversary. It will be held from Sunday to Saturday, August 18–24 under the title, “Your Name Was Born from What You Gazed Upon.” What we heard this evening is a beautiful documentation of this title: we are what our eyes are fixed on. It is our presence that makes the Meeting and makes it a meeting place for the most diverse personalities and experiences, so that they can feel at home. Everyone asks, “How can I contribute to building this place? What experience can I have while participating in the Meeting?” One way is to be a volunteer. I bring to your attention that they still need adult volunteers during the week of the Meeting and to disassemble afterwards. For those who are available for this volunteer work, the deadline to enroll has been extended to June 30.

Beginning Day will be held on Saturday, September 28 in Milan and in video connection with many cities in Lombardy and Italy.

Veni Sancte Spiritus

I wish everyone a good summer!