

**Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón  
via video connection from Milan, May 19, 2021**

Reference text: L. Giussani, S. Alberto, and J. Prades, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010, chapter 3, point 3, "A People Continually Destroyed and Rebuilt," pp. 99–106, and chapters 1 and 2 of the book by J. Carrón, *Is There Hope? The Fascination of the Discovery*" (in press), available on the CL website: <https://english.clonline.org/news/current-events/2021/05/20/is-there-hope-the-fascination-of-the-discovery>

- *Mare nostre (Our sea)*
- *Il mio volto (My face)*

*Glory Be*

Good evening everyone! While working on the first two chapters of the book that re-proposes the contents of the Fraternity Exercises many of you were amazed by how you felt they looked at your own humanity (marked by fear, uneasiness, and anguish), which surfaced big-time during the pandemic. But the very circumstance of the pandemic made us aware that fear, uneasiness, and anguish were part of the fabric of our "I." The Friday evening of the Exercises set in motion a journey that enabled those who accepted the provocation to discover a whole world.

A friend of ours who has been in the movement for twenty years wrote to me, "After the Exercises—a moment of great grace—I felt a deep sorrow. You started by addressing deep feelings, such as fear, uneasiness, uncertainty, anxiety. Feelings that "perhaps we have never truly admitted to ourselves that we feel them, or have done little to explore them." (*Is There Hope?* p. 4). In some groups of School of Community these feelings have now been accepted, given ample space, and treated with respect." And she wonders, "Why only now?! Showing a sense of uneasiness has been called 'immaturity' for too long. Sadness was called 'a step on your part' that you had to take. Did we need a 'go-ahead' to recognize them and choose them as a topic for discussion? This is the reason for my sorrow. I need my 'I' to be united, to be truly whole." She wants to know why these feelings are being proposed only now. I find this strange, because the experience of meeting the movement is exactly what allowed me to look at my whole humanity. This is what Fr. Giussani has always encouraged us to do: "We must not archive anything, [...] nor censor, forget, or deny anything" (*L'io rinasce in un incontro* [The "I" is reborn in an encounter], 1986–1987, Bur, Milan, 2010, p. 55). So, I am surprised that this difficulty in facing our humanity still remains. Already in one of the first texts of the movement, *Traces of Christian Experience*, Fr. Giussani wrote that a man truly committed to himself cannot avoid experiencing "a sense of powerlessness" that "generates solitude" (*The Journey to Truth is an Experience*, McGill-Queen's University Press, p. 55). The fifth chapter of *The Religious Sense* is a "festival" of this look at our humanity: it speaks, in fact, of sadness, solitude, expectancy, longing, and nostalgia. So it is a fact that Fr. Giussani's proposal contains a complete look at our humanity—a look that originates in Jesus. Fr. Giussani introduced us to it in 1998 in St. Peter's Square (we studied it in the School of Community) by quoting the famous phrase of Jesus, "What would it profit a man if he gain the world, and then lose himself?" And then he commented—with all his capacity for tenderness that we know well—"I was never asked a question that took my breath

away so much as this question of Christ's! No woman ever heard another voice speak of her son with such an original tenderness and an unquestionable valuing of the fruit of her womb [...] [if not] the Jew Jesus of Nazareth [...]. Only Christ takes my humanity so completely to heart" (*Generating Traces*, p. ix). Yet, from what our friend said and from what many of you have noticed when you started working on the Exercises, it is clear that it isn't enough to read it in the books for this way of looking to become ours. One must to discover it in one's own experience.

*Hello, good evening everyone. I was very impressed by Rilke's expression, "Distracted by expectation." In fact, although full of appointments and things to do, it is impossible to completely stifle my need, because events happen that provoke me and remind me that I am waiting. At school a few days ago I assigned my students an essay on loneliness and, after returning it to them with my corrections, a girl came to my desk with a sheet of paper in her hand and said to me, "Prof, I marked all the questions you asked me; I would like to talk about them." In fact, next to some statements she had made, such as, "I understood that loneliness can only be overcome if it is concealed, because I am afraid to talk about my weaknesses; I have always been betrayed," I had written, "But then are you happy? Why aren't you wearing a mask now and why are you opening up with me?" We left the classroom at the end of the lesson together and she confessed to me that she had never met anyone who took her wound seriously and that in middle school, when through an essay she had asked a teacher for help, he had lowered her grade because it was "too personal." Then she added, "Prof, I have been betrayed many times and my masks are used to defending myself, but I cannot solve my loneliness; since I met you I want to be loved and learn to love others more truly than how I love now." At that moment, all of my need resurfaced and I immediately told her, "I am like that too! Thanks for reminding me!" That is what I am waiting for in everything I do! A moment when the heart finds rest. But the next day some things happened and I immediately fell back into my thoughts and sadness. And what about what happened the day before? Where had it ended up? I ask myself: How does one learn from experience? What does it mean to experience a rest that "safeguards and exalts"? I feel like I still need to know this need of mine so as not to depend on whether the wind is blowing this way or that. But how?*

Wonderful! We may have seen it happen: your student is amazed by your way of looking at her and you feel a jolt inside yourself (because it was what you were waiting for), but a moment later you fall back "into my thoughts and sadness" and again you do not know how to look at yourself. This clearly identifies the difficulty we have. The only way that girl finds a way to overcome her need is to conceal the question, the expectation, the nostalgia, but what she really wants is to be herself! That is why she was waiting to be reached by a look like yours. Many times we stop at the realization that we are falling back into thoughts and sadness, but that is not the problem. I care that you learn from your experience; otherwise, the next day it is like nothing happened even though it did happen. That is why I understand what you are saying when you say, "I feel like I still need to know this need of mine." I hope that tonight we can help each other look at this need well.

A person who couldn't connect wrote to me that she had this difficulty too. She used to live nostalgia "like a curse," but now, after the work of School of Community during these years, she is learning to look at this nostalgia, first "with curiosity" and, second "as an invitation, a possibility of encounter with the Mystery that is the flesh of the events that I encounter." In order to discover, we have to look at our experience without censoring anything. But it takes time to understand how those moments when "the heart experiences turmoil" and shatters can be lived—this is the question our friend asks—"as a road and not as an obstacle to the journey."

*I have been a member of the Fraternity for three years, but I had not yet been able to participate in the Exercises in person (for one reason or another), so I really wanted to. On Friday evening I was very impressed as you spoke about our yearning, and on Saturday morning I really understood why: praying Morning Prayer, praying together, listening to those songs caused all the anticipation of happiness I had for that day to forcefully arise in me again, to the point that I said, “I really want to be happy today!” It was very clear that I actually always have that expectation in my heart, but that I need to allow the time and space for it to emerge every day without drowning it or suffocating it in daily worries. So, I am very grateful that our gestures always begin with prayers and songs just to help us become aware of this expectancy that lies in our hearts every morning. In addition to this, I was very impressed by the power of a gesture that I really experienced; as I said, I would have much preferred to be in Rimini to immerse myself in it, but being at home was a great opportunity. In fact, I was very surprised that even the free moments when we were not connected, working on the lessons or being with the friends with whom I followed the Exercises, were lived with a surprising new intensity. It was as if the whole day were lived within the event of the Exercises; everything was “Exercises,” so to speak. Everything was lived in front of that event that so clearly reminded me what I am made for and at the level of listening to my heart. Even the moments I wasted (this is what surprised me the most) were affected by this intensity. The example is simple and almost silly, but it stuck in my mind: in a moment of fatigue, I was there—as happens every day—wasting time on Instagram, with the fake pretense of “relaxing” when, between one thing and another, as I was scrolling down the screen, this thought came to me: “Ah, yes, in two hours I must connect for the Exercises.” I immediately recovered, put the phone away, and went back to work. This is a small example, but I felt exactly like the child in the example you gave: when he does something stupid, it is enough for his father to enter the room and he immediately understands the nonsense he is engaged in. The Exercises were a gesture that affected all the time I lived in those days because they reminded me of that Presence in front of which, like the child in front of the father, it is really easy to remember how I want to live.*

What you have discovered about the nature of our gestures is beautiful! This is the genius of Fr. Giussani: to have generated gestures through which we are introduced to a kind of experience that makes us understand what he wants to communicate to us. By immersing yourself in the Exercises, you sensed that the expectancy we were talking about was happening in you. The answer to our desire to live is not a theoretical explanation, however correct. Explanations are not enough—we need to immerse ourselves in a gesture that makes us experience the meaning of the words. It is astonishing when Fr. Giussani says, “A definition must reflect the experience of an acquisition. Otherwise, it would prove to be a schematic imposition” (*At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, McGill-Queen’s, 1998, p. 61). I will never tire of repeating this because we must conquer the meaning of words from within our experience. A gesture is the immersion in an experience that makes us understand things, so you were happy with what you experienced during the Exercises: “Everything was lived in front of that event.” Not only in front of the event, but starting from it you lived everything with the same expectation. You said, in fact, that in those days the Exercises affected all of your time because they reminded you of that Presence in front of which it is easy to remember how we want to live. The Exercises are a human experience that introduces us to meaning according to God’s method: to make us understand love, the Mystery makes us experience being loved. To enable us to understand our expectancy, the movement reawakens it in us through songs and what we say to each other.

So, how do we discover the value of the word “expectancy” in our daily lives? Let’s see how the method is the same in the Exercises and ordinary life.

*On Sunday, I went on a day trip along with some others to celebrate a friend’s birthday. The day went well: we saw beautiful things, ate together, and had fun. Despite this, the closer the day came to ending, the more a great nostalgia grew in me, a “hole,” I would say. In returning by train, I could really recognize myself in the verse of Ungaretti’s poem: “My heart / today / is nothing but a beat of longing.” The sadness was so strong that I felt like crying, and after minutes of trying to hold back my tears I had to give in and tell my boyfriend, who was there with me, about the sorrow I felt. That moment with him was the beginning of a change involving the presence of someone outside of me who forgives my mistakes, who truly loves me, and in front of whom I can say that I want more! I no longer felt alone because there was another who looked at me tenderly. During the day I was particularly hurt by the fact that I mistreated a friend in a certain moment. I immediately apologized, but the apology was not enough to stop me from measuring myself. Then a message came to me from that friend: she wrote to me that the “sorry” I had said to her had been the only time in the day when she had felt looked at. I was incredulous: she was saying this to me even as I felt so bad! After that message, we helped each other wonder what we had missed on that day. She told me that on the return trip in the car, everyone had expressed the same nostalgia as I did, and that from that sadness, a dialogue began among them. An enormous tenderness was born in my heart for all those who had spent that day with me. I felt a closer friendship with them than when we left. Thanks to this I was able to truly understand when the School of Community says, “The ultimate and constitutive questions [...] at the depths of our ‘I’ represent the point with which we compare every proposal, outlook and encounter” (Is There Hope? chapter 1, p. 6). I had experienced this involuntarily, and that is why I had found myself dissatisfied due to a lack of correspondence. But what really overturned everything in the end, and especially the gaze I had on my friends, was to realize—I also remembered the diakonia that we college students did with you—that the anxiety I felt, thanks to the company of those bold friends, really became the criterion for intercepting what my heart is made for, and it was no longer a condemnation or a measuring of me.*

Among the things you told us, I am amazed that your nostalgia, which could have ruined your day, is exactly what made it more intense, as it happened in a relationship between yourself and your friends. As we see, this is an experience that introduces us to the meaning of things that we find difficult to look at (sadness, expectancy, nostalgia). From the recognition of the sadness you experienced, a dialogue was born between you and your friend and an “enormous tenderness was born in my heart for all those who had spent that day with me. I felt a closer friendship with them.” Many times it seems to us that these human experiences (sadness, nostalgia, expectancy) ruin the day when they are actually what lends intensity to our relationship with everything! When we live this experience we begin to understand a little more why the Mystery has made us the way we are.

*Hello everyone. I had just finished writing my contribution for this School of Community, in which I said that at the high point of my first sixty-one years, I can finally sing my liberation when I realized that in fact, accepting the challenge of reality by risking that criterion, not mine and yet mine, is the only thing that allows me to say “I,” and to answer the question, “Is there hope?” I mentioned two experiences: one tragic (a few days ago a nineteen-year-old kid, shouting, ‘I am God,’ entered his former school shooting and massacring people), the other of incredible beauty (something that brought me peace at work, which I usually experience as a privileged treadmill*

on the way to my destiny). There was the discovery that both experiences generate infinite nostalgia, the only criterion for recognizing Christ and begging that He be there in the present moment. Well, I had just finished writing, when I unexpectedly came across a breathtaking passage by Fr. Giussani on sadness: “The fact that life is sad is the most compelling occasion for making us understand that our destiny is something greater, it’s the greater mystery. And when this Mystery comes to us [...] this becomes a hundred times more compelling.” Beautiful! But immediately afterwards he continues by saying that this Mystery “doesn’t take away the sadness,” from us, just as it didn’t from the apostles. First jolt: I thought He took it away and I justified thinking this because Fr. Giussani’s had talked about “more joy, less sense of lack”! Instead no, Fr. Giussani’s thought is very different: “Sadness is the condition that God has placed at the core of human existence so that man never calmly deludes himself into thinking that what he has can be enough for him. [...] Sadness is an integral part not of the nature of man’s destiny, but of man’s existence, that is, of the journey towards destiny—and it is present every step of the way. The more you love this step, the more this step is beautiful for you, the more it’s enchanting for you, the more it’s yours, the more you’ll understand that you’re missing the thing that you’re waiting for most. (Is It Possible to Live This Way? Vol. 3 Charity, McGill-Queen’s, 2009, p. 89). Another world! Which is exactly what I miss! Which is to understand the role of sadness, lack, and nostalgia in our journey to destiny. Since I find it difficult to understand the place of these things in God’s design, I endure them or ignore them, instead of loving them because they lead us to our destiny. The text you read confirms once again what I said at the beginning by quoting those pieces from Fr. Giussani, who always had a look full of attention to the fundamental aspects of the human being, those that make up his fabric. The fact that at a very young age he read Leopardi for a whole summer tells us how much he felt that the human experiences he saw documented in Leopardi were decisive for his own life. Why is sadness so important? Because for Fr. Giussani it is “a meaningful tool in God’s plan” (*Is It Possible to Live This Way? Vol. 3*, p. 88) to enable us to understand what we are and what we expect. Our lack, our nostalgia, is to be loved precisely because in His design it is made part of our journey to destiny. But this sadness, which we can understand theoretically or repeat verbally (we have all “studied” *The Religious Sense*), often seem to disturb us because we do not know its place in our lives. Fr. Giussani says that if we erase something from reality, we cannot give an adequate explanation of all of the factors of experience. That is why he does not erase anything, but instead he discovers—this is the work that we too must do—the place of everything in God’s design. This makes everything different, makes everything yours, mine, as we were saying before. It is this look of tenderness on our humanity that we often lack. I was always amazed by a phrase of Fr. Giussani’s that identifies what we modern Christians lack: “We Christians in the contemporary environment have not been directly cut off from Christian formulas, [...] from Christian rituals [...], from the laws of the Christian Decalogue. We have been cut off from our human foundations, from the religious sense. We have a faith that is no longer religiousness. We have a faith that no longer responds as it should to the religious sentiment. We have a faith, that is, [pay attention!] that is not aware of, and is no longer intelligent about itself” (L. Giussani, *La Coscienza Religiosa dell’Uomo Moderno* [Religious awareness in modern man], Chieti 1986, quoted in A. Savorana, *The Life of Luigi Giussani*, McGill-Queen’s, 2018, p. xii). That’s why so many times, as the first contribution I read said, we find it difficult to talk about fear, uneasiness, and anxiety, or we want to erase them because we don’t know where to place them. On the contrary, our humanity is fundamental for the way in which Giussani perceives Christianity and faith! Therefore, we are really interested in understanding the place that all these very human experiences have in God’s design.

*Hello, good evening everyone. Working on the first two chapters of the book of the Exercises reopened a wound in me because it reposed forcefully something that—I must admit—perhaps always existed as an unresolved point. The unexpected thing I have begun to glimpse is that this unresolved point is a resource and not an objection to a journey. It is the opportunity for reawakening my awareness, reason, and affection; that is, an opportunity to be available to the Mystery in everyday things, and not something to overcome once and for all. I can say that the day begins, and then resumes several times, with intensity, from this taking myself seriously: nothing is taken away from the restlessness that doesn't allow me to feel calm and settled, but step by step it leads me to a relationship with reality, a relationship with the present, a connection. I recognize that responsibility as a decision of freedom is always possible, and at times I savor all of its power, but it is also the most fragile thing because it is in my hands. What is the secret to not losing this position in living everyday things? If the companionship does not replace me in this decision, what is the value of it?*

The first thing to note is that it is this companionship that is getting you to look at all these human experiences not as an objection, but as a resource. This is the least you would expect from a gesture like the Exercises! This is the value of the companionship, the help it gives you: it introduces you, as Jesus introduced the disciples, to looking at the whole abyss of your humanity: “What would it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and then lose himself?” Christ, as Fr. Giussani taught us, looks tenderly at all of our humanity. No one cared about our humanity like Jesus. Therefore, our companionship has the purpose of introducing us to looking at that part of our humanity that we would like—as our friend’s student said—to “mask,” that we would like to constantly put aside, that we perceive as an obstacle. It helps us change the way we look at our humanity. We may have participated in the life of the movement “for centuries” and yet still look at our humanity as an obstacle, as something to be set aside, as a sign of “immaturity,” as if we expected to get rid of it little by little. Instead, Jesus awakens our humanity. As you said: He reawakens your “I” with all its needs and therefore with all its nostalgia, with all its lack—“What is this lack lacking, heart?” said Luzi (*Sotto specie umana* [Under the human species], Garzanti, Milano, 1999, p. 190)—because without this you will not be able to intercept in every step of your path the One who comes to answer them. The contribution we can offer today to the many people we meet (with their wounds and attempts to hide—to “mask”—the uneasiness they feel) is this: to look at them in a different way.

*I was very impressed by something you said at the very beginning of the Exercises: the impact of circumstances is inevitable but it is not obvious that this impact will become a provocation. It is true that it is really another thing to live the circumstances as a provocation. Looking at myself in action, I realize that in my life everything is a dialogue, always: I am never the same, the reality that comes to me is never the same. Recognizing a dialogue, accepting the provocation of reality, has its origin in me. The greatest thing that happened to me is precisely this gift, this grace: to be able to lift the veil of reality, to be able to see what is inside, that is, to be able to always ask in any circumstance, in front of any fact, about any aspect of me, about any question of meaning. My hope lies in this, in the certainty of this ineliminable and always possible question, which opens a breach in reality and puts me in dialogue, puts me back in front of the certainty of a Presence that is in dialogue with me. There are times when I would go to the end of the world based only on this certainty and times when I can only defend myself from the intensity of the reality that comes my way, and that I have a crazy fear of living for what it is, as it presents itself to me. In these cases,*

*I try to buffer this intensity, to manipulate it; I superimpose my ideas on it to save myself from dizziness, from the waiting that I cannot face. It is a struggle of every moment between my own idea (and getting busy to achieve it) and this pure waiting! A few days ago, on a beautiful sunny Sunday, I really had to fight between my idea of what makes me happy and staying with what was presented to me, which was not the trip to the mountains that I would have wanted. I again asked the question of what is an adequate meaning. I did not hide this struggle, I sought every trace of Him to rediscover that He awaits me right where I am, so as not to lose this day following thoughts that tear me away from the present. What a struggle! I often think of my sister, who has recently become a mother: for her, who has a restless heart almost as much as me, it is not an effort to have to stay with what is in front of her because what is there is that child that is entrusted to her and that only she can protect. I imagine that some of her days are absolutely normal, devoid of the fireworks that I often confuse with meaning, with the value of my days. And how is it for me who follows the path of a vocation in the Memores Domini? Don't I have something to safeguard too, to which I answer, which asks something of me? I do have it, and it is this living relationship that I can decide to help grow or to neglect. It is a dialogue with the Beloved who comes to reawaken me through a thousand moments that are His reverberation. Thank you because your "yes," like that of a true friend, to this relationship with Him, is the greatest help I can receive.*

"Looking at myself in action, I realize": this is the method to which Giussani constantly introduces us. When one lives the human experience intensely, when one lives reality intensely, one discovers how things happen and what their meaning is. What do we discover if we always start from experience, observing ourselves in action? That all that we say to each other is true: it is something else to live the circumstances as a provocation, so much so that when you live like that—as you said—you would go "to the end of the world based only on this certainty," on this way of living reality. When that fails, you defend yourself from a reality that you have a "crazy fear" of. Fr. Giussani wants us to enjoy all of reality, but for this to happen we have to take risks in our reality by living it as a provocation. To what? To a dialogue with the mystery who makes reality, who is at the core of reality, "a dialogue with the Beloved [...] through a thousand moments that are His reverberation." Everything becomes an opportunity for dialogue with this presence. Without experiences like the ones you recounted, the dialogue with this presence remains something formal, and so we cannot see how faith is the exhaustive answer to our need, to the need for dialogue with the Mystery. This is the struggle we embark upon every morning, a struggle that never ends.

*I have belonged to the Fraternity with all my heart, certain of this precious path that God has given me, since I was fifteen years old. Now I am fifty-seven, and the gusto I experience in living daily life is incomparable to that of my youth.*

Do you understand? The best is yet to come!

*In recent years, especially after my father's death, the Lord has been attracting me with a hunger and a thirst for Him that have always been present but have become ever greater. I experience in my "I" this loving company (I say it in a whisper, full of trepidation) that is other than me, which accompanies me in the banal things of daily life, that with Him are transformed (sometimes) into small miracles, in which He tells me: "I am here!" I will get to the point... At the Exercises I experienced a great contradiction in myself. On Saturday evening I went to bed feeling an endless sadness. I said to myself, "It is you who are pulling away..." I miss that level of faith—which I seem to intuit—that happens in the "I" after (not in a temporal sense) having seen Him in a changed humanity and in a "place." I feel like I am squeezed between steel bars. One step I took*

*was to acknowledge that this contradiction of my heart—which, I can't deny, sometimes feels tight—is not an objection, and that I can love the movement and this strange path of mine.*

Perfect. See? As you move on, advancing along the way, the gusto you experience in living daily life is incomparable to your youth. Why? Because you are more and more attracted to the Lord “with a hunger and a thirst for Him” who has called you to live in His company. But this struggle never ends, and it can happen that one feels a nostalgia, a sadness, even at the Exercises; and then it seems to you to be a contradiction, when instead it is He who makes you experience that sadness, even during the Exercises, in order to ask you, “But don't you miss Me?” so that you will be attracted even more to Himself. It is not a contradiction. Yet, after experiencing all the growing gusto, we still think that it is in contradiction with our hunger and thirst. No, it is a way by which, precisely in the gesture of the Exercises, the Lord calls you even more powerfully: “But don't you miss Me?” He has you take a step of awareness during the Exercises, saying to you, “I am here.” He is here waiting for you.

*Hello. During a house meeting, a friend asked a question that I found very interesting. In the second chapter of the Fraternity Exercises, you quote Simone Weil: “The most precious things need not be sought; we should just wait for them expectantly.” My friend asked, “But how can one seek without waiting? It seems to me that the two things cannot be separated, what do you think?” This question was a great provocation for me and immediately reminded me of a phrase that my mother always said to me when I was little: “Nothing is ever enough for you, you are never satisfied and you are always searching, always looking.” What she was saying to me was very true. I was and still am a restless person, but for me today there is a huge difference compared to then. I used to look for something or someone (since she was referring mainly to my affections) in a confused and desperate way. Today I wait because what I was looking for when I was younger today has a name for me, a face. After the encounter with Christ, I no longer search confusedly, but I wait and look for Him in everything that happens around me. For me the encounter with Christ is a point from which one can never go back: it is He who puts in my heart this expectation of always being able to meet Him. I am no longer alone, and I feel like a privileged researcher with the greatest treasure of life in my hand and in my heart.*

Here is the discovery of why we have this expectancy even after we have had the Christian encounter! Who awakens it in us? Christ himself! We always tell ourselves that the “I” of each of us reawakens in an encounter. While power seeks to reduce desire and empty our questions, Christ exalts desire, exalts nostalgia, exalts the sense of lack. This is the difference between then and now. The point is that now, as when you fall in love, you have a name and a face in front of which to live nostalgia: “After the encounter with Christ, I no longer search confusedly, but I wait and look for Him in everything that happens around me. For me the encounter with Christ is a point from which one can never go back.” This is a faith that has not lost its religious sense, a faith that has not been cut off, as we said before, from its religious foundation. A faith that does not have this religiousness, this religious foundation, that does not respond as it should to the religious sentiment (as we see today) does not interest anyone! That is why it is crucial to understand what is happening inside us. Many times we wait for Christ to erase the nostalgia, the sadness, or the lack that constitute us. But if He did that, He would behave like a power that reduces our “I” and empties us of what is human within us. Instead, so that no one will fool us, He exalts it and frees us from any attempt by power to take all of ourselves. The only one who can take us is the One who corresponds to the expectation of the heart, with a faith that has religiousness inside it.

*Decades have passed since in meeting the movement I discovered (thanks to the School of Community) that I am waiting. And today? Today waiting is my real daily job. Over time—thanks to all the history lived here—I discovered that every time I made a list of “real things,” those “really concrete “things that I was waiting for and I wanted, there was always something else that I was waiting for, something inexhaustible whose boundaries I could not set. There was and there is a You. All the waiting has become work, and not in the end after becoming exhausted due to all those questions, , but rather while living all those questions , What happens now? Now, it is You. Today the waiting consists precisely of that question, that question in the heart of the dawn of every day: “Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down.” And I live searching my day for the almost imperceptible rustle of His breath.*

This leaves one speechless! Every morning is “waiting [...] in the heart of the dawn of every day,” and from that moment on, the day is spent “searching [...] for the almost imperceptible rustle of His breath.” What intensity every moment acquires then! If we erase this waiting, we can forget about a witness like the one we just heard, and the days become flat, unbearable. Instead, “a breath” is enough, as we have seen in other moments of the School of Community, for everything to be revived and for life to become in every moment a search for “the almost imperceptible rustle of His breath.” Who wouldn’t want to live every moment like that?

School of Community. The next School of Community via video connection will be held on Wednesday, June 16, at 9:00 pm.

During this period we will work on the third chapter of the book of the Exercises *Is there hope?* The pdf file of the chapter will be available beginning tomorrow on the CL website in Italian and in the other main languages. The audio version will be available as well.

Starting June 3, the book *Is There Hope? The Fascination of the Discovery* will be available in bookstores and major online stores, in print and e-book formats.

Summer vacations. Many communities are already organizing, or intend to organize, in order to propose vacation periods this summer. Before deciding “Do we do it or not?” and under what conditions, etc., I find important that everyone compares himself fully to the experience lived during this time so that the criteria for the vacations emerge from that comparison.

As we saw tonight, we must look at the experience we have had so as not to lose it also in the way we live the vacation. Take for example the recent Exercises of the Fraternity. I have received many letters from people who witness to the experience of unity and companionship, and to being part of a people, that resulted from the Exercises. We all know the conditions in which we lived the Exercises, and this shows what a deep root the experience of companionship (as we heard tonight) in the movement offers to us; we also lived this during the period of the pandemic! Who knows how many of us can witness to having experienced the companionship deeply in this year, whatever the form in which we have accompanied each other (through Fraternity groups, friends, Schools of Community, etc.). Anyone who has experienced the “deep root” of the companionship, the “rustle of His breath,” has noticed this from the great freedom it has generated and is generating, and also from the creativity it has aroused in the circumstances in which each one has found himself living. It is with this awareness that we can face the vacations in the situation in which we find ourselves. Our consistency, in short, is not in “doing” or “not doing,” but in discovering what is the true companionship we need (as we said before), which derives from the recognition of a presence called “faith.” Only this recognition creates true community.

Each person, comparing himself with this experience, will assess in full freedom and responsibility whether and how it will be possible to get together this summer. It is only in starting from the verification we have made of our experience of real satisfaction that we will be free with respect to how to live the vacations in a situation that, objectively speaking, is still complex. We all would like the situation to be clarified, to have clearer perspectives, and for the conditions to give us a one hundred percent certainty regarding the possibility or not of planning certain types of initiatives. We want first of all to stand by the facts—not to resist them but to look them in the face. And the facts reveal a general improvement in the health situation: fortunately there are more and more signs of an improvement, of a way out. We will see, and like everyone else, we all hope that things will be resolved as soon as possible. Restrictions are loosening, but with cautions, and it would be irresponsible and superficial to think of summer as a period of “go ahead and do whatever you like.” Next month will be crucial for understanding how the situation will evolve. You need to use reason and your responsibility fully.

Based on these criteria, each of us can assess whether to propose or adhere to the vacations of individuals and families, a decision taken in light of our responsibility and in compliance with all current regulations. These indications apply to everyone—adults, CLU, GS, and Knights.

So that it is really a vacation, that is, a moment of rest and true companionship to destiny, I suggest that first of all you take seriously the proposals we make to each other; for example, to go deeply into the content of the suggested books and to meet people who can better witness to the journey of the School of Community we made this year.

In the coming days you will find on the CL website the text that we know but that is always useful to reread: “Vacations, the Time of Freedom,” which offers a summary of what Fr. Giussani thought and always indicated to us, about living this time. “The vacation must be as free as possible. The criterion of the vacation is to breathe, possibly with full lungs,” he said in 1997. The promise is an increase of our self-awareness: we bet on what we really care about and when we return we will relate to each other what happened.

Books for the summer. For this summer we propose these texts, all available also in e-book format. You can find the presentations of each of them in the June issue of *Tracce*.

- The first book we suggest is *Attraverso la compagnia dei credenti* [Through the companionship of the believers], by Fr. Giussani, BUR editions, which collects the lessons and dialogues of Fr. Giussani at the Exercises of the Fraternity from 1994 to 1996.

- *Ho Fatto Tutto per Essere Felice: Enzo Piccinini, Storia Di Un Insolito Chirurgo* [I did everything to be happy: Enzo Piccinini, the story of an unusual surgeon], by Marco Bardazzi, BUR editions.

In addition, following the suggestion that Fr. Giussani gave to us so many times, we thought of re-proposing two “classic” literary texts:

- *Il mestiere di vivere* [*This Business of Living: diaries, 1935-1950*], Cesare Pavese, BUR editions.

- *The Diary of a Country Priest* by Georges Bernanos.

As you heard at the Exercises, in which I re-proposed some passages of these books, the authors are two examples of men who, because of their sincerity in describing the human experience, help us to deal with our humanity and not to give in to torpor.

Rimini Meeting. I remind you that registrations for volunteer work are open from May 15 to June 15. For all the information, check the website of the Meeting for Friendship between Peoples or contact the volunteer office at: [volontari@meetingrimini.org](mailto:volontari@meetingrimini.org).

Centenary of the birth of Fr. Giussani and Call for Academic Applications. First of all, I invite you to reread the article published on the CL website summarizing what we said at the Exercises in presenting the centenary of the birth of Fr. Giussani. I also announce that, between the end of May and the beginning of June, an International Call for Academic Applications will be issued, promoted by the Fraternity of CL, for two degree awards, a master's and a doctorate, on the figure and work of Fr. Giussani. Especially for those of us who work in the university, this is a great opportunity to arouse interest in Fr. Giussani and promote his study. The call for applications is international, so it can be proposed at universities all over the world.

*Veni Sancte Spiritus*

Good evening everyone.