

Communication from Davide Prosperi
***interim* President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation**
to the Movement of Communion and Liberation
By video conference from Milan, November 29, 2021

Songs:

- *Canzone dell'ideale (Parsifal)*
- *La strada*

Good evening to everyone. Before all else, I would like to thank you all for joining me this evening, even on such short notice. I want to thank you also for the patience with which you have awaited a clarification on the prospective leadership of our Movement, after having received the news of the resignation of Fr. Julián.

I want to assure you that these thanks are not a matter of formality. I am profoundly persuaded that the respectful attitude, full of a positive outlook and of hope, that I have seen in so many of you in these weeks, is a precious fruit of the education to the faith that we have received in this companionship.

We sang, “The road is beautiful for the one who walks...” (C. Chieffo, “La Strada”, in *Canti*, Società Cooperativa Editoriale Nuovo Mondo, Milan 2014, p. 241). Let us continue, then, our journey without stopping: the road is beautiful and sure, and we do not need to fear anything because, as the Lord says, “I will be with you; I have placed a hand on your heart” (C. Chieffo, “Canzone dell'ideale (Parsifal)”, in *Canti*, op. cit., pp. 223–224). I had immediate evidence of all of this in the flood of messages and letters that came this weekend in response to the letter that I wrote to you all on Saturday evening. These messages are already a first testimony of the fact that we are on the journey. And that we are together on the journey. So, thank you, truly.

I proposed this meeting to share with you all certain decisions regarding the life of the Movement in this delicate stretch of our history.

In doing so, I am sharing the outcome of the meeting with Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, which was held last Thursday, 25th of November, in a brief summary of the contents of the letter I wrote you last Saturday.

In the first place, the Prefect confirmed that, according to art. 19 of the Statute of our Fraternity, in the event of the President’s resignation, the Vice-President fully takes over. Therefore, the Cardinal acknowledged to me the full powers as President, specifying that my mandate is *ad interim*, and will conclude with the election of the new President of the Fraternity, which will happen in compliance with the General Decree issued by the Dicastery on the 11th of June, 2021. The Prefect also specified that, following this Decree, which came into force with effect from last September 11th, the Central Diaconia in its current composition cannot proceed with the election of a new President, and added that this cannot reasonably happen earlier than twelve months since the start date of my assignment. This time will be, in fact, necessary to prepare the new elections, according to the steps that I will now briefly outline.

As I wrote to you, the first step of preparation will consist in the approval of new Statutes. In the revision process, consultations inside the Fraternity will also have to be included. The purpose of such consultations is to let the new rules most appropriately reflect the originality of our charism and thus the specific identity of the Fraternity of CL inside the church.

To this end, I will soon nominate a Commission, which will have a consultative role towards the Central Diaconia of the Fraternity. I will give notice of its composition as soon as possible. All those who so wish will be able to offer their own contribution to the Commission. The text of the Statutes that is currently in effect is available on the website reserved for those enrolled in the Fraternity.

During our conversation, I made known to the Prefect our desire to carry out this work in close collaboration with the Dicastery, periodically sharing the progress of the working document which will be submitted for final approval. Cardinal Farrell, who was greatly welcoming and cordial, paternally confirmed his availability to accompany us in this work, even through the help of his collaborators.

Once this process has come to an end, we will be able, at the proper time, to hold the elections of local and regional leaders, to form a new Diaconia, and, finally, to designate a new President of the Fraternity. I will allow myself to add that what awaits us is largely a new experience. For this reason, we must take the time necessary to acquire sufficient familiarity with the juridical instruments that will be prepared by the Diaconia. In order to get prepared, it will be necessary to become aware of the meaning that the Church gives to law within the experience of communion. We know well it is not from law that life is born and that it is not enough to count on electoral mechanisms to cultivate the continuity and the vitality of the Movement. Nevertheless, we must not feel that these aspects of our common life are irrelevant or even contradictory to the charismatic nature of our experience. Fr. Giussani, who was the first to include the method of election in the Statutes of the Fraternity, approved by the Holy See in 1982, has given us testimony of this. We must, for this reason, consider them evermore for what they are and utilize them as instruments for the preservation of freedom and for the valorization of our experience of the Fraternity. It is an additional step of maturity that the Church is asking us: that we live this moment as an occasion to grow in that which Carrón called our “ecclesial self-awareness” (J. Carrón, “Letter of Resignation”, November 15, 2021, *clonline.org*).

If each one of us will make ourselves available for this journey, we will arrive at the time of the elections in a conscious and serene way, in a fraternal confrontation among ourselves on the fundamental questions that concern the life of our Fraternity.

I thus conclude this dutiful introduction, in which I have tried to explain to you as simply and precisely as possible the more technical side of the requests that the Church is making of us at this moment. My dialogue with the Prefect was not, however, limited to these themes. In fact, I was able to share with him the highlights of the life of the Movement, some of which were not yet known to him. It was a cordial and sincere meeting, in which the Cardinal repeatedly expressed his personal esteem for our Movement, as well as that of the Holy Father.

The Prefect concluded the meeting inviting me not to consider this time as if it were a parenthesis and exhorting that the life of the Fraternity and its activities not be suspended, so that it might continue to ensure for all of us a clear educational proposal. As I promised in the letter, I would now like to present you all the considerations that I see as most important at this time.

Thanks to Julián Carrón

Before any other consideration, I would like to express all of my gratitude to Julián Carrón. His last letter was, for me, a gesture of truth offered to our freedom, in order to push us “to personally take on the responsibility for the charism” (J. Carrón, “Letter of Resignation”, cit.). In these years, I have had the privilege of working closely with him, participating in hundreds of meetings and encounters with him or in his stead, visiting many communities throughout the world together, offering my contribution in judging situations or problems that we had to face. We have gone together through the most critical phases of our recent history and have helped each other do so, along with other leaders.

In these past years, Fr. Julián has worked with passion to constantly offer us a word that would help us to face the challenges of this time in which we are living. Speaking to the Movement and living it with us, he tirelessly recalled us to the event that has united our individual paths: the encounter with the living Christ, here and now, made possible by the fascinating person of Fr. Giussani, father and teacher, whose sanctity we hope the Church might recognize soon. Equally tirelessly, Fr. Julián led us to work on ourselves, seeking to favor for each one of us an itinerary of maturation in our faith, which we are called to increasingly recognize as a free and certain adhesion to Christ and to the Church.

For all of this, together with all of you and in your name, I would like to, therefore, thank him.

A Call to Responsibility

I come now to the central part of my intervention, which I will articulate in two points. I entitled them in the following way: *A call to responsibility* and *Communion as the criterion of leading*.

The central phrase of Fr. Carrón's letter communicating his resignation calls each one of us into question. "This," Fr. Carrón claims after having given the motivation for his resignation, "will lead each one to personally take on the responsibility for the charism" (J. Carrón, "Letter of Resignation", cit.).

It is very important that we make our own this invitation before God, who has raised up in his Church the person of Fr. Giussani, and before the Church, to which every charismatic gift is ultimately entrusted and of which it is the guarantor. I know that you are aware of this fact, not least because so many of you in these past few days asked me to help us to go more deeply into the meaning of this claim of Fr. Julián.

In this spirit, I would like to specify three ways to live out the personal responsibility that is being asked of us, so that we may contribute concretely to this important moment in our history.

Above all, each one of us is responsible for himself and for his personal fidelity to the gift he has received. We studied this in the School of Community, going deeper into the unequivocal invitation of Fr. Giussani: "Everyone bears responsibility for the charism he has encountered. Everyone is the cause of the decline or increase of the charism, is terrain upon which the charism is wasted or bears fruit. It is a very serious matter for each one to become aware of this responsibility, as urgency, as loyalty and faithfulness. To obscure or diminish this responsibility means to obscure and diminish the intensity of the effect that the history of our charism has on the Church of God and on society" (*Generating Traces in the History of the World*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2010, p. 83). Each one of us is, therefore, above all called to intensify his commitment to adhere to Christ in daily life. We can make this commitment by continuing to take seriously the educative proposal that the Movement makes to us in all its dimensions. In particular, I want to underline the work on the texts of School of Community; the contribution to the life of the community to which we belong, beginning with our Fraternity group; faithfulness to the common fund, as a gesture of participation in the necessities of all of our body and as an education to conceive of all that we possess as in service of the mission of the Church; and, finally, charitable work.

Perhaps some of us are experiencing fear and a certain unease about the changes that are happening. We must not be scandalized with ourselves for feeling such sentiments. Let us help each other to respond to the circumstance, that is, to make good use of the time that is given to us, day by day, to put to good use the grace with which God has saved our lives, in gladness and gratitude for all that we have received in these years.

In second place, each one of us is responsible for the unity of the Movement. Allow me to insist in depth on this point, which I consider to be the most decisive one at the moment.

What did we catch a glimpse of when we encountered the Movement? What fascinated us about this encounter, to the point of ripping us out of our indifference and pushing us to follow this companionship? It was an announcement, the announcement that life, our life just as it is, has a meaning, a good destiny. An announcement that brought forth in us a foretaste of the truth. And this announcement, the announcement of a meaning that brings with itself the certainty of a good destiny, revealed itself to our heart in the form of a friendship. It is a friendship that brims with affection for our life, for the fundamental needs of our humanity. It is a friendship that, as Fr. Giussani loved to say, is "a companionship guided towards Destiny" (*Generating Traces in the History of the World*, op. cit., 49). And we know that Destiny is no longer just the final destination of our existence, but is a God who walks with us here and now. The Word became flesh and became a companion, a friend to men and women, to me, to you, through the great companionship of the Church and the Movement.

The encounter that brought us together created a deeply profound unity among us. And for this reason, we feel the need for the esteem of the persons who are with us on the same path. And we are amazed when another encounters the same story that we feel to be ours—as happened recently with our friend from Spain, Mikel Azurmendi. For this reason, we often find ourselves spontaneously sharing one common way of judging things. On the other hand, the suffering of those who feel marginalized or judged by others, as unfortunately has happened and still happens among us, is also a sign of the depth of our mutual bond. Let us not allow the charism that has united us to become an excuse to divide us. Our mutual belonging is the most precious good we possess, because it is in it that all other gifts are given to us and preserved. We therefore have the task of preserving and nurturing it, seeking together that truth that Father Giussani taught us to love more than ourselves, that is, more than the attachment to our opinions and projects.

In this regard, there is a text known to many, entitled, “The Greatest Sacrifice Is to Give Your Life for an Other’s Work”, in which, right at the beginning, Fr. Giussani says: “In one of the hymns at Morning Prayer, we sing, ‘When into one body we gather [*concord*], a new Guest appears in our midst.’ One body: only a people in unity is a true protagonist of history. The term ‘one body’ has a metaphysical, ontological value and an ethical, moral value.” And he immediately explains that “the metaphysical and ontological value of our unity draws from the great presence of Christ, which is the only thing we know. We have received such a grace [...] that, whoever and however we are, we can sincerely and naively repeat that we know nothing but Christ. For our unity knows nothing but Christ. From this ontological value of the company springs its moral value: it is the fruit of freedom. Its root is Christ’s presence, but in its acknowledgement and consent it is the fruit of our freedom” (“The Greatest Sacrifice Is to Give Your Life for an Other’s Work”, *Litterae Communionis–Traces*, 4 (2005): pp. 5-11).

This word is beautiful: concord. *Concord* means having one heart. We have been made into one thing by Christ, and it is only in looking to Him that we can rediscover our unity, only by affirming His presence as the only thing to which we are truly attached. What, in fact, do we hold most dear? Our responsibility for the unity of the Movement is played out first and foremost in this act of freedom. Responsibility for the charism and responsibility for the unity of the Movement are, therefore, intimately related one to the other. As Fr. Giussani says in the same text: “The essence of our charism can be summed up in two things: First of all, the announcement that God has become man (the astonishment and enthusiasm for this). Secondly, that this man is present in a ‘sign’ of concord, of communion, of unity of a community, of a people in unity” (“The Greatest Sacrifice”, op. cit., p. 8).

Let us avoid, then, as much as possible, sterile criticisms and reciprocal condemnations. When it is necessary to speak of others, let us do it with the respect that is born from the awareness that Christ has chosen them and called them together with us. As to the particular responsibility that has been entrusted to me, as I wrote to you all, I desire to listen to all and that all feel listened to.

In third place, in order to be responsible for the charism, we must cultivate in ourselves and among ourselves an attitude of trust towards the Church and its authority. Fr. Giussani taught us that, through the men to whom He entrusted the leadership of the Church, we are obedient to God Himself. Belonging to the Movement is the way in which God called us to belong to the Church. Obedience to the Church, even when it is difficult for us, is, therefore, the only path that we know to be truly faithful to the particular history that we have encountered.

For my part, as I mentioned earlier, together with the other members of the Diaconia, I wish to intensify the dialogue with the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life, in order to follow up on the requests that the Holy Father has made to us. Each of you can support us in this work in the ways that I specified at the beginning, but above all by nurturing in yourselves an attitude of esteem toward the persons whom the Church indicates to us as authoritative references. Again, I invite you to avoid purely reactive and superficial discourse among us that helps no one. We must not be afraid that in the confrontation with the authority of the Church the originality of our face will be diminished.

Communion as the criterion for leading

When I communicated to Cardinal Farrell my willingness to take on the responsibility that was being asked of me, I was well aware that the moment we are going through is a delicate one.

In this regard, I want to repeat again tonight what I wrote to you last Saturday. I accepted the office I hold as an act of obedience to the Holy Father; and my only interest is to serve the Movement and the life of each of you, for the time that has been assigned to me, seeking above all to complete the tasks that the Dicastery requires of us.

More specifically, in order to carry out my responsibility, I desire to entrust myself to the friendship and to the collaboration with some of you, as a particular help. I am thinking above all of the current members of the Central Diaconia of the Fraternity. I am also thinking of competent and authoritative persons who, thanks be to God, are among us in large numbers. Finally, I think of the many people I respect and have met over the years while visiting many communities in and outside Italy.

Beyond this, I desire to also share a unified gaze with the persons who lead the other realities that refer themselves to the charism of Fr. Giussani, some of whom, by the way, are also represented in the Diaconia of the Fraternity of CL, which valorizes the polyphony of the various expressions of our great companionship. In particular, the *Memores Domini*, that in this moment are being led—as you all know—by Msgr. Filippo Santoro as the Special Delegate of Pope Francis; I desire to work closely with him and with the persons he will indicate to us. I am also referring to the Fraternity of St. Joseph, which can be said to be a rib of the same Fraternity of CL and includes many persons who live a witness that is often as humble as it is precious in our communities; I am thinking of the Sisters of Charity of the Assumption, who are familiarly called “Little Sisters” and who live a vocation of closeness to the suffering and the marginalized, and who have always been a great witness for all of us; I am thinking of the Benedictine monks of the Cascinazza, whom Don Giussani always saw as the contemplative heart of the Movement, because it is by their prayer that our entire people is silently sustained; I am referring to the Fraternity and to the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo, who live their missionary vocation in priesthood and in consecrated life, announcing Christ throughout the world according to our charism. Finally, I do not want to forget the Trappist Monastery of Vitorchiano, with all of its foundations, knowing well that these monasteries are places of reference for many persons in the Movement and that the vocation of many of the sisters among them came to maturity in our very communities.

For all of these realities, I have—and would like all of us to have—a profound esteem. The persons who belong to them have found in them the fulfillment of their encounter with the Movement, in which they were educated to the faith. Responding to their vocation, each in his or her specific form, these friends of ours give witness that the meaning of life is Christ. Those of us, like myself and many of you, who have been called to marriage and carry out the responsibilities of family life, can find sustaining help through closeness to the persons who have dedicated their lives to God in these specific vocations.

Among these are the priests, diocesan or religious, who belong to the Fraternity of CL and follow the movement. We all feel how precious their presence is in our communities, especially at a time when vocations are scarce.

The Unity of the Movement and the Mission

Finally, I want to say a final word about the call to mission that is closely linked to our unity as a people.

From our people have sprung many educational and charitable works, non-profit and service organizations, cultural centers and associations that support the lives of families, the professional work of teachers, doctors, university professors and researchers, professionals, entrepreneurs and other categories, and the social and political commitment of those who devote themselves to them. In all this variegated world our free and gratuitous dedication to the common good finds its expression and

concreteness. This is the fruit of what can be considered the beating heart of the proposal made to us through the encounter with the movement: education. From here everything is born.

Our people are generous, they have been able to build places where the confused and wounded “I” of today’s people can find acceptance, light and support. I feel the urgency, today more than ever, that all possible resources and energies be placed at the service of this creativity, which stems from the faith in which we have been educated. I therefore thank from now on all those who live the daily sacrifice that is required of them so that a new world may already be visible in the midst of the contradictions of this world.

We have a season of creativity and mission ahead of us. Let us therefore set to work. God is calling us to live with freedom and courage in a world that awaits the announcement of His presence. And we will respond to this call if we are credible witnesses to the beauty of what we have encountered.

“The work of the Fraternity,” Fr. Giussani taught us, “is the increase of the Movement in service to the Church” (*Christ is Everything in Everyone*, Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, 1999, p. 68). The Movement and its increase are, therefore, the work that the Church has re-entrusted to our hands even at this time.

For this reason, after concluding our work on the texts of Beginning Day and as we continue to work on *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, I suggest you read again, during the month of December, the letter that Fr. Giussani wrote to the Fraternity on the 22nd of February, 2002, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of pontifical recognition. In fact, it can help us in this step as well.

The Church is inviting us in the coming months to a work “entrusted to the special intercession of the Servant of God, Fr. Luigi Giussani,” as the Prefect wrote to me in his letter with which he confirmed my assignment. The moment we are living in, Cardinal Farrell continues, “requires work inspired by prayer, reflection, and sharing at the various levels of the Movement.” Therefore, I ask you to devote a moment of your day to recite, individually or together with others, the *Angelus* and Dante’s *Hymn to the Virgin* (so dear to our founder), asking that this time be useful in illuminating a sure path before us, that we may experience the embrace of Holy Mother Church, to bring to maturity the fruits of our journey in the world for “the human glory of Christ.”

As a goodbye, I would like to say together with you all a prayer to St. Joseph; this is the special year dedicated to him, to whom I am greatly devoted, and so I would like to conclude this way:

*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.*

*Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.*

(Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde*, Saint John Lateran, 8 December 2020, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary).

Veni Sancte Spiritus