

God needs men

On August 28, 1985, Fr. Giussani spoke at the Meeting. Here is his speech, compiled from the transcript of the audio recording (preserved in the Archives of the Fraternity of CL). The text has been edited by Julián Carrón.

[*Applause*] Thank you, that's enough. But you do well to applaud because I believe in what I say.

I.

“The greatest danger which today’s humanity need fear,” says Teilhard de Chardin, “is not a catastrophe which comes from out there somewhere, neither is it famine, or even disease; rather it is spiritual malady, which is the most terrible malady because the most directly human among the scourges is to remain without the taste for life.”¹ When I read this sentence by Teilhard de Chardin, what immediately came into my heart and memory was how interest in Christ must have come about, how it must have come about historically. Because, as sometimes reflected upon, meditated upon with some of you, people could have gone to hear Him saying to each other, “What is this man saying? He talks about the Trinity, God the Father, He talks about hell, He talks about the soul, the responsibility of man....” However, they could also ask another question, “Why is this man saying these things?” This question was answered within people’s hearts without them, the people, being aware of it. If one had formulated this question, they would have immediately heard the answer: “Because He loves man, because He has passion for man!”

“He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And He said: ‘If anyone causes one of these little ones to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.’”² He was not talking about causing them physical harm, because everyone there had some restraint, but He was talking about hurting the child in moral terms—a lack of attention or precaution—, of absolute respect for this little being who would be thrown away with a slap. Or when He makes way on a path as a funeral passes by, a woman sobbing behind the coffin, and He asks, “What is it?” “It is a widowed woman; her only son died.” He steps forward and says, “Do not weep!”³ Or when He says, “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”⁴ Thus entered the world the meaning—respect, veneration, attachment, love, trust, responsibility— of the person.

The person. Love for man. Without this, Christianity cannot be understood. But perhaps we ourselves do not even understand Christianity—while living it, while trying to live it—because we do not participate in this origin of it. Christianity was not born to found a religion; it was born as a passion for man. Then we can understand it: if Christ spoke of the Father, if He spoke of the child, if He tended his gaze with special care towards the sick, towards the poor, it was because the poor, the child, the sick were the most defenseless among all people, those who could least impose themselves; but for that very reason He asserted their presence, because their value was independent of their capacity for power or to serve power.

A passion for man: man, the son of his mother, the son of a woman, the concrete man, as John Paul II always insisted upon, sometimes recalling explicitly that concreteness in unforgettable terms; not the man à la Feuerbach or à la Marx, but man – I, you –, I repeat, the son of his

mother and his father; love for man, veneration for man, tenderness for man, passion for man, absolute esteem for man.

Teilhard de Chardin's phrase reminded me of a phrase from the Gospel: "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."⁵ Joy. It is the only—pardon me, but this is no exaggeration and I would gladly be open to any objection—, it is the only voice, the Christian voice, that can use the word "joy" without being obliged to forget or deny something.

II.

Man is great because he is relation to the Infinite. Jesus says this in biblical terms, "Their angels [the angels of the children] always see the face of my Father."⁶ Man is great because he is relation to the Infinite. But such a relationship could also be defined by that paradox: God needs men. God! Who is not afraid, whatever image they have of it, who is not afraid to use this word? I am very afraid, and in fact I rarely use this word: God, that "unfathomable mystery," as Einstein said three days before he died to the great mathematician Francesco Severi, "that unfathomable mystery that underlies every research"⁷; this "shadow that we cannot shake off," said Whitehead, this ultimate implication of reason, of reason understood as consciousness of reality according to the totality of its factors. "The whole law of human existence consists in nothing other than a man's always being able to bow before the immeasurably great," said Dostoevsky.⁸

Precisely because of this, however one conceives it—and it will be a formula I hope to remember to use often—, this "immeasurably great" is linked to our existence. Using a dramatic term, the Bible speaks of a "covenant," a substantial, essential or existential contract: it is the covenant of creation. This immeasurably great is bound to our existence by that wonder that ensures the thrill of newness without which life would be mortally boring—by which God imposes Himself on us through a heart-warming attraction, the heart-warming attraction of reality, of being—, by that thrill of reason by which God appears as the consistency that sustains us above the abyss of nothingness, by that inevitable dependence on events by which God determines us as Destiny.

But, therefore, if it is related to us, *can* it be talked about? It *must* be talked about, in that it is impossible not to talk about it, however you conceive it. There is only one way not to talk about it: not to think about it. "Enclosed among mortal things / (Even the starry sky will end) / Why do I long for God?"⁹ And Ungaretti's impassioned questioning is thus explicated by Rainer Maria Rilke—forgive me for quoting—: "Extinguish Thou my eyes: I still can see Thee, / Deprive my ears of sound: I still can hear Thee. / and without feet I still can come to Thee, / and without voice I still can call to thee. / Sever my arms from me, I still will hold Thee / with all my heart as with a single hand, / arrest my heart, my brain will keep on beating, / and should Thy fire at last my brain consume, / the flowing of my blood will carry Thee."¹⁰

Therefore, because of this "physiological" implication, with fear and trembling, I repeat: God needs men. Thus He has revealed Himself to us.

The title of Delannoy's beautiful and forgotten film¹¹ is a paradox—of course—but it is true: God made Himself in need of man by the way He acted. We can only express ourselves with these formulas. Needing without having been needed is love, love in its purity; everyone perceives it as nostalgia because it is not our normal experience: it is gratuitousness, pure gratuitousness. Thus, God needs man, He made Himself needy of man because He created him free and, secondly, because He made Himself man, He entered history.

God made Himself needy of man because He created man free, He shared with man His supreme capacity of possession of man. He shared it. Forgive me again for reading. It is from Péguy's *Mystery of the Holy Innocents*, "Ask a father if his best moment / Is not when his sons

begin to love him like men/ Him as a man, / Freely, / Gratuitously, / Ask a father whose children are growing up. // Ask a father if his best moment/ Is not when his sons begin to love him like men/ Him as a man, / Freely, / Gratuitously, / Ask a father whose children are growing up. // Ask a father if there is not a chosen time above all / And if it is not / Precisely when submission ceases and when his sons become men / Love him (treat him) so to speak from knowledge, / As man to man, / Freely, / Gratuitously. Esteem him thus. / Ask a father if he does not know that nothing is equal/ To glance of a man meeting the glance of a man. // Well, I am their father, God says, and I know man's condition, / It is I who made him. / I do not ask too much of them. I only ask for their hearts. / When I have their hearts, I am satisfied. I am not hard to please. // All the slavish submissions in the world are not worth one frank look from a free man. / Or rather all the slavish submissions in the world repel me and I would give everything / For one frank look from a free man, / For one beautiful action of obedience and tenderness and devotion from a free man. / For a look from Saint Louis, / And even for a look from Joinville, / For Joinville is less saintly but he is no less free. Ask a father if there isn't a secret hour, / A secret moment, / And if it isn't / When his sons begin to become men, / Freely, / And he himself treated as a man, / Freely, / They love him as a man, / Freely, / Ask a father whose sons are growing up. // (And he is no less a Christian). // And he is no less gratuitous, // And my Son also died for Joinville. / To that liberty, to that gratuitousness I have sacrificed everything, God says, / to that taste I have for being love by free man, / Freely, / Gratuitously, / By real man, virile, adult, firm, / Noble, tender but with a firm tenderness. / To obtain that liberty, that gratuitousness I have sacrificed everything, / To create that liberty, that gratuitousness, / To create that liberty, that gratuitousness, / To set going that liberty, that gratuitousness. / To teach him liberty."¹²

III.

But this energetic capacity to adhere to being, in which freedom lies, has within it an incredible “mechanism,” as incredible as a mystery. Indeed, Péguy says, “mystery of mysteries.” Freedom is realized as a choice— as an option, Althusser would say in that terrible judgment of his: the difference between believing in the existence of God and Marxism does not lie in a reason, it is pure option. The choice of what? To accept or not accept Being. How I wish I could talk about this in a more immediate way, even if only with young people, because this is the choice to be made every morning. Every morning, we either get up and stand before reality with the wide-open, naive gaze of a child, ready to call bread, bread and wine, wine: “All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”¹³ Or we stand with our hands in front of our faces, guarding, on guard, to defend ourselves from reality. To accept or not accept Being, one's mother or God is the same, the position is identical; accepting or not accepting a flower or eternity is the same, the position is identical. We can even go against the evidence, naturally making excuses. And, if you make excuses, then it is not only denial, it is lying. The reasons, the fundamental excuses are, in my opinion, pain, in all senses, also the pain of one's own feeling of failure, and the claim to affirmation, man's will of affirmation; not—mind you—of one's own self, but of man, à la Feuerbach.

Perhaps the most striking example of the first reason, man's pain, is a famous poem by Montale, which I take the liberty of reciting: “Perhaps one morning, as I walk in the glassy, dry air / I will turn and see the miracle take place: / nothingness at my back, emptiness behind me/ and I will feel the terror of the drunken man / Then, as though on a screen, trees, houses and hills / will suddenly reappear – the usual deception. / But it will be too late; and I will go silently on my way / bearing my secret among the men who do not look back.”¹⁴ When I read this poem by Montale, suddenly, immediately, I seemed to understand. Because this is the position in which intuition and mystical experience are kindled: this nothingness of things, this immediate

perception of the nothingness of things, of the inconsistency of everything, of the ephemeral—that I was talking about before—is also the beginning of the experience of the Being of which everything consists and which sustains everything. *Rerum Deus, tenax vigor*, “O God, the world’s sustaining force.”¹⁵ This, however, in the exact same experience, becomes nihilism: it is pure option. Péguy rightly speaks of the “mystery of mysteries”: freedom. Undoubtedly, from an abstract point of view, Montale fails to explain one thing (the error is always forced to forget or deny something), because things are ephemeral—“illusory” is already an evaluation—, but they *are*.

Whereas, an incredible example of the affirmation of self—but, in the affirmation of self, it is the affirmation of man’s freedom—is in a well-known passage by Nietzsche from *The Gay Science*: “One day the wanderer shut a door behind him, stood still, and wept. Then he said: ‘Oh, this inclination and impulse towards the true, the real, the non-apparent, the certain! How I detest it!’”¹⁶ And I go no further.

All the grandeur of the mystery of reality, if man does not recognize it, comes to nothing. “The emptiness behind / me.” It is like nothingness, not because it is not there, but because it is not recognized. And in this sense Tischner, commenting on Pope Wojtyła’s poems, says that for Pope Wojtyła it is man that allows God to be God.

God, in order to be recognized as God, must in a certain sense wait for this choice. But the denial cannot fail, in my view, to correspond to an ultimate attitude of wrath, subtle or resounding wrath, to a wrathful, deaf or patented affirmation. But within this wrath the emphasis is not on the affirmation of self—I emphasize again—, of one’s personal humanity; the emphasis is on the rejection of something that is given, it is on the rejection of the act of an Other. And therefore it is a rejection of one’s own human condition because it is given, a rejection of one’s own nature as given, the rejection of an original gratuitousness. The emphasis is not—let me stress—on the will of self-affirmation; strangely enough, it does not seem to me to be primarily about pride; the emphasis is not on the will of self-affirmation: man in the concreteness of his person, man as such, rather dissolves. “He who no longer believes in God,” Claudel said in his *Great Odes*, “no longer believes in Being, and he who hates Being hates his own existence.”¹⁷

I so enjoyed reading this observation in *A Man* by Oriana Fallaci: “The bitter discovery that God does not exist has destroyed the concept of fate. But to deny fate is arrogance, to declare that we are the sole shapers of our existence is madness.”¹⁸ Madness! It is the madness with which Sartre said, “My hands, what are my hands? The immense distance that separates me from the world of objects, and separates me from them forever.”¹⁹ The more you clench and grasp, the more you perceive; you are condemned to perceive and experience a distance: no connection is possible. It is the self that dissolves; the self that is the center of relationships and embraces, of affirmation and collaboration. This is why the dissolution reaches the point described by Moravia in *La noia* [Boredom], speaking of the absurdity of a reality that is “insufficient, or anyhow unable, to convince me of its own effective existence.”²⁰

What a terrible death that of “reason as the measure of all things,” which has not accepted to be the admired and amazed consciousness of a reality that is not its own, which becomes its own to the extent of its obedience, of its yearning, eager gaze, wide-open in continuous acceptance! There is an alternative to the denial of God, there is an alternative to the denial of responsibility in the face of the demand, the expressed need of God towards us: within the mystery of freedom, the alternative to forgetting and denying God (I read this in the breviary yesterday morning), says the prophet Jeremiah, is “in worshiping what their hands have made”²¹, to worship something that we create ourselves. But, in today’s society, because of the powerful organicity, because of the powerful mechanism in which everything is articulated and organized, it is inevitable that this worshiping the work of our own hands becomes worshiping power. The less we are aware of it, the more we are subject to it. “One has succeeded in making

man understand,” says last year’s great Nobel laureate for poetry Miłosz, “one has succeeded in making man understand / that if he lives, it is only by the grace of the powerful./ Let him take care, then, of drinking coffee and chasing butterflies. / Whoever loves the res publica will have his hand cut off.”²²

Evil, which philosophy and literature define and describe, is refracted in us, in our thousand every day actions: totally or partially they are torn from the Mystery’s design, from the ultimate order, out of anxiety not to lose a satisfaction or out of the refusal of gratuitousness. This negativity, this inability of perfection is the most tragic existential event for the self-conscious man. Again and again I remind my young friends of the most tragic literary expression of this awareness, the finale of Ibsen’s *Brand*, when he who had been searching for the perfect moment all his life, the wholly human act, standing by his hut, as the thunder of the avalanche resounds—the avalanche would overwhelm him within seconds—, cries out, “Answer me, O God above! In death’s jaws: Can human will, summed, avail no fraction of salvation?”²³, that is, only a human gesture. That is why I recall with emotion, and also with paradoxical gratitude, when a person I deeply esteem said—we were discussing sin—“Maybe I am sin?”

IV.

The statement then seems to be reversed: does man therefore need God to be man? As an answer, God becomes man, He involves Himself. For those who have a very dramatic sense of life and are very close to Christianity, this is much easier to understand. As an answer, God becomes man, He involves Himself with man as a real companion on the journey, totally familiar. He ignites an immediate dialogue without long, lonely and ambiguous room for interpretation. Thus God makes Himself in need of man precisely as man. As man, God made Himself in need of man.

It is at this point that the option plays out most drastically and becomes historical drama and tragedy of thought, in the development of thought. In the name of the autonomy of human truth, in the name, that is, of its way of conceiving the ultimate—because the implication of the latter in the dynamism of reason is inevitable—, in the name of the autonomy of human truth, that is, of its way of conceiving the ultimate, man violently rejects what we call “God” with nausea; man rejects this loving presence, this loving presence that needs man, but asks him to love Him with all his mind, with all his heart, with all his strength, as the Gospel says.

Thus, from the “honesty” of the Pharisees to the rejection of the rich young man, to the scandal of Judas, the abolition of Christ from the memory that establishes and guides life, individual and collective, becomes a social sin. It is a cliché of the dominant culture: Christ is a great man—great here, great there—; anything can be said except that Christ is the Christ. This abolition of Christ from memory becomes a social sin and becomes the renunciation of the supreme category of reason, the category of possibility: it is absurd, it is inconceivable, it is impossible that Christ is the Christ. I recall Graham Greene’s *The End of the Affair* when the protagonist, a “freethinker,” goes to his friend’s house late at night, whose wife had died, and find’s his wife’s confessor there—a skinny, small, frail little brother, whom he tries to debunk with a long tirade against the Christian religious image of life and man. And that poor little brother—I thought I could see him disappearing under that blizzard and storm of words—, taking advantage of the breath that the free-thinking artist takes at certain point, shyly exclaims, “Isn’t it more sensible to believe that *anything* may happen than...?”²⁴ Indeed, it is precisely from the abolition of Christ, from the abolition of the memory of Christ as God-man, that the hysterical lucidity with which so much modern culture—thank God, not all of it—denies God becomes possible. But Nietzsche said it: if we remove Christ, we must remove God.

But Christ is an irreversible commitment of the Mystery; He is a commitment of the Mystery within human time; the Bible calls Him the “Everlasting Covenant.”²⁵ God is true to Himself;

Christ is the unveiling of the nature of the Mystery towards man. What is the Mystery towards man? Mercy. The initial, original gratuitousness whereby man is, fully reveals itself in his heart, in his emotional depth: it is mercy. Man's negative response does not "solve" the great question of love.

Thus, alongside man, Christ involves Himself in the totality of man's very existentiality; Christ involves Himself with the totality of my own existentiality, that of man. What amazement invades me when I think that Christian salvation, that is, the positive meaning of the world, is tied to an infinitesimal point that is the "yes" of a girl who was 15, 16 or 17 at most, who lived in a remote village in Palestine! Such a thing would be enough for me to realize that it is divine! And when I think, on the other hand, that a man was kissed on that night and exclaimed, "Friend, do what you came for. Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"²⁶ Christ involved Himself in human existence, therefore in the play of man's freedom, according to its normal, everyday movement. Involved in the totality of human existence as man, Christ makes Himself in need of the tangible, visible things that man uses: water in Baptism, oil in Confirmation, bread, wine in the Eucharist, the word in Confession; the gesture, everywhere.

V.

But the historical reality Christ needs in order to fulfil His presence on man's journey towards destiny, the total historical reality Christ totally needs is the unity among all those the Father has given Him, says Chapter XVII of Saint John. The beginning of the total unity of humanity is the unity among all those the Father has given Him, that is, the ecclesial community, this "environment of the redemptive existence of man," John Paul II told us on September 29, 1984. The ecclesial community is the "environment of the redemptive existence of man." I will now mention what I will reemphasize later: it is the environment of the redemptive existence, therefore not perfect—or the concept of perfection is something else!—of man. A "fascinating environment [this sounds humorous or ironic, and it is not: a fascinating environment] where every man finds the answer to the question of meaning for his life: Christ, center of the cosmos and of history."²⁷ For there is no greater fascination in life than the sharp burst of meaning. Fascination is the attraction of truth, *pulchrum splendor veri*, said Saint Thomas.²⁸ Fascination is the attraction of truth. Thus, in a certain sense, the Christian beginning is not the beginning of a religion or even of an ethics, but of an aesthetic, because ethics will come as a consequence and will be a love, a consequence of an awakened love, and love is awakened by the beauty that is the attraction of truth.

The ecclesial community is the reality where all temperaments, all histories, that is, all movements, associations, spring from the one demand for that meaning and together, without any possibility of domination, complementing and helping each other as a great and passionate companionship, flow towards the one source: the testimony of Christ who died and rose again to the whole human world.

This ecclesial community is a people or, as Paul VI said (July 23, 1975), "an ethnic entity *sui generis*"²⁹; it is a people, a people of men. God does not need "saints," he needs men. Thus, Eliot describes the journey of this people in the VII Chorus from *the Rock*: from that moment "it seemed as if men must proceed from light to light, in the light of the Word, / Through the Passion and Sacrifice saved in spite of their negative being; / Bestial as always before, carnal, self-seeking as always before, selfish and purblind as ever before, / Yet always struggling, always reaffirming, always resuming their march on the way that was lit by the light; / Often halting, wasting time, straying, delaying, returning, yet following no other way."³⁰ This is what Christ introduced into our lives by making Himself our companion: human life, the dignity of man's life, the dignity of freedom as a tension towards the Infinite. If man is relation to the Infinite, the only worthy dynamic is tension towards it. Like a child who once born has to learn

to walk, and he falls and picks himself up a thousand times, but everything in him is tension towards the path and towards life.

Eliot continues: “But it seems that something has happened that has never happened before: though we know not just when, or why, or how, or where./ Men have left GOD not for other gods, they say, but for no god; and this had never happened before / That men both deny the gods and worship gods/professing first Reason / And then Money, and Power, and what they call Life, or Race, or Dialectic. / The Church disowned, the tower overthrow, the bells upturned, what have we to do [...] Waste and void. Waste and void [for waste and void is the world where there is no search for meaning]. And darkness on the face of the deep. / Has the Church failed mankind, or has mankind failed the Church? [Both] / When the Church is no longer regarded, not even opposed, and men have forgotten / All gods except Usury, Lust and Power.”³¹

Man’s god is what man is; what man is, is his god. But man is not lust, money and power. These dynamisms continually claim to define man, and man can become, especially theoretically, a slave, a prisoner of them; but man is defined by something more—more!—, where calculation is swept away. In spite of everything, in spite of being crossed continually by the hunger and thirst for lust, money and power, to affirm this “more,” to strive for this “more,” to live this struggle and, in one’s frailty, to beg like the poor along the streets, is the human way of living gratuitousness, that is, of living one’s true nature, the image of God, of living that relationship with the Infinite, creator by grace. Such capacity for gratuitousness, this outburst beyond calculation, towards the “infinitely great one” who gives us existence and who has made Himself in need of our existence, this capacity for gratuitousness, this outburst is the test of life. “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full,”³² a life that is not obliged to forget or deny anything.

VI.

Let me quote this passage from Kierkegaard’s *Diary*: “The relationship of polemical negativity which Paganism wedged between present and future life was well represented by the images of souls who, before arriving at the Elysian Fields, fulfilled their obligation to drink the water of the River Lete.”³³ To enter their paradise, the pagans believed that souls had to first drink the water of the River Lete (Greek word for “to forget”): to be happy in the afterlife, in the Elysian Fields, one had to forget everything. But—forgive me— this is the norm for every ideology, theorized or implied in a way of life. Christianity, on the other hand, teaches that we must realize that even a word said in jest has eternal value. This means, among other things, the total presence of our past, even if another Lete must take away the excruciating pain of it; and this other Lete is mercy, it is the profound change, the profound conversion of the meaning of my evil itself. Nothing, nothing is excluded. The Gospel says, “Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”³⁴ It is a life that becomes itself, that becomes more and more life, as St. Augustine said: life must literally pass from youth to old age, but it is youth that must grow more and more. What St. Augustine defined from personal experience is testified to us by a seventy-year-old poet, great though of course forgotten today, Ada Negri, in her beautiful poem *Mia giovinezza* [My Youth]: “I have not lost you. You have remained, at the base of being. You are yourself, but you are another: someone more beautiful. You love, and don’t think that you are loved: with the blossoming of each flower or blushing of each fruit, you give thanks in your heart to the God of the fields and of all generations.”³⁵ You do not love the flower because you pick it and smell it, but because it is; you do not love the fruit because you bite it, but because it is; you do not love the child because it is yours, but because it is. This is gratuitousness made daily life, reverberating in your gaze to those who live nearby, reverberating in thought and in the labor of unknown people who live far away.

What a reverberation of mission! After all, Christianity truly realizes the image that Victor Hugo describes in a beautiful passage from his *Les contemplations*, entitled *The Hermit*.³⁶ One imagines this hermit, who rises early in the morning, at dawn, and tries to begin to read and meditate on his text by candlelight. And as he reads, the sun rises and grows, and so, at the same time, it becomes light in his soul. We do not pass from youth to old age, but it is youth that must always grow.

Do not trust love: this was Paul Valéry's last reminder to his friends. "We have put our trust in love" is the message of Saint John. "I well know that he [God] doesn't love me. How could he love me? And yet there is something deep in me, some point of myself, which cannot prevent itself from thinking, with fear and trembling, that perhaps, in spite of everything, he does love me" (Simone Weil's first notebook).³⁷ This is what our humanity cannot fail to attest to, for what little purity it retains.

There is only one true crime; there is only one true crime: forgetfulness, forgetfulness of the God who needed us, who needs us. Forgetfulness, that is the crime. "I feel that this ship of mine," says a good Spanish poet, Juan Ramón Jiménez, "I feel that this ship of mine/ has struck, down in the depths, against something vast." Our ship, which is sailing through the ocean of life or the sea of life, has struck there, down in the depths, into something vast: God who is present. "And nothing / happens! Nothing ... All still ... Waves ... [everything is as it was before]. Nothing happens? Or has everything already happened, / and are we now, tranquil, within the new?"³⁸ Have we already resigned ourselves, as if it were not so?

I wish for me and you to never be tranquil, never to be tranquil again!

Thank you.

Endnotes

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- ¹ P. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. B. Wall, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York 1959, pp. 230-1.
- ² Cf. Mt 18:2-6.
- ³ Lk 7:13.
- ⁴ Cf. Mt 16:26; Mk 8:36-37.
- ⁵ Jn 15:11.
- ⁶ Mt 18:10.
- ⁷ Cf. A. Savorana, *The Life of Luigi Giussani* trans. C. Bacich and M. C. Sullivan, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal 2018, p. 678.
- ⁸ F. Dostyevsky, *Demons*, trans. R. Pevear and L. Volokhonsky, Everyman's Library, New York 2000, p. 664.
- ⁹ G. Ungaretti, "Damnation", in *A major selection of the poetry of Giuseppe Ungaretti*, trans. D. Bastianutti, Exile Editions, Toronto 1997, p. 243.
- ¹⁰ R. M. Rilke, "Extinguish thou my eyes", in *Selected Poems*, trans., A. E. Flemming, Routledge, New York 1986, p. 53.
- ¹¹ J. Delannoy, *God needs Men* (Original title: *Dieu a besoin des hommes*: France-1950).
- ¹² C. Péguy, *The Mystery of the Holy Innocents, and other poems*, trans. P. Pakenham, Harper, New York 1956, pp. 119-121.
- ¹³ Mt 5:37.
- ¹⁴ E. Montale, "Perhaps one morning, as I walk in the glassy ...", in J. Becker, *Eugenio Montale*, Twayne Publishers, Boston 1986, p. 30.
- ¹⁵ "Rerum Deus, tenax vigor, immotus in Te permanens, lucis diuturnae tempora successibus determinans..." (Midday Hymn, Ninth, in *Ambrosian Missal. From the XVII to the XXXII week of Ordinary Time*, Marietti, Milan 1984, vol. V, p. 47).
- ¹⁶ Cf. F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Scientist*, trans. T. Common, Dover Publications, New York 2006, p. 136.
- ¹⁷ "Qui ne croit plus en Dieu, il ne croit plus en l'Être, et qui hait l'Être, il hait sa propre existence" (P. Claudel, « Troisième Ode – Magnificat », in *Cinq grandes odes. Suivies d'un processionnal pour saluer le siècle nouveau*, Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française, 35 & 37, Paris 1913, p. 92) (Our translation).
- ¹⁸ O. Fallaci, *A Man*, trans. W. Weaver, Simon and Schuster, New York 1980, p. 141.
- ¹⁹ Cf. J.-P. Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. L. Alexander, New Directions, New York 2007, p. 122.
- ²⁰ Cf. A. Moravia, *Boredom*, trans. W. Weaver, New York Review Books, New York 1999, p. 5.
- ²¹ Jer 1:16.
- ²² C. Miłosz, "Consigli", vv. 18-21, in Id., *Poesie*, Adelphi, Milan 1983, p. 116 (Our translation).
- ²³ H. Ibsen, *Brand: A Dramatic Poem*, trans. E. E. Garrett, J. M. Dent and Sons, London & Toronto 1917, p. 223.
- ²⁴ Cf. G. Greene, *The End of the Affair*, Vintage Classics, London, 1951, p. 215.
- ²⁵ Ps 105:10.
- ²⁶ Cf. Mt 26:50, Lk 22:48.

²⁷ John Paul II, *Address to the movement of Communion and Liberation on the XXX anniversary of its foundation*, September 29, 1984.

²⁸ “Beauty is the splendor of truth” (Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super sententiis*, I, d. 3, q. 2, art. 3).

²⁹ Paul VI, *General Audience*, July 23, 1975.

³⁰ T. S. Eliot, *The Rock*, Harcourt, New York 1924, p. 50.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

³² Cf. Jn 10:10.

³³ S. Kierkegaard, *Diario. I (1834-1849)*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1962, p. 359 (Our translation).

³⁴ Cf. Lk 12:7.

³⁵ A. Negri, *Mia giovinezza* in A. Savorana, *The Life of Luigi Giussani* trans. C. Bacich and M. C. Sullivan, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal 2018, p. 1088.

³⁶ Cf. V. Hugo, « Heureux l’homme, occupé de l’éternel destin », in Id., *Les contemplations*, Garnier Frères, Paris 1969, p. 61.

³⁷ S. Weil, *First and Last Notebooks*, trans. R. Rees, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1970, p. 66.

³⁸ J.R. Jiménez, “Waves”, in *Juan Ramón Jiménez: Selected Poems*, ed. and trans. S. Ortiz-Carboneres, Aris & Phillips, Oxford 2006, p. 49.