

“WITH AGE-OLD LOVE I HAVE LOVED YOU; SO I HAVE KEPT MY MERCY TOWARD YOU” (Jeremiah 31:3)

Lesson

Father Fabio

Good morning! I hope all of your tired bodies have been well rested and restored! After yesterday's path, after the introduction and then the Mass of the Lord's Supper, today another journey awaits you, another step on the road. The day will proceed in two steps: morning and afternoon. Now there will be the meditation, the lesson, on the encounter of Jesus and the Samaritan woman,¹ in three acts. And then, in the afternoon, we will see and contemplate how that faithful and age-old Love made itself present in time, in history, ascending the cross, “to the point of the cross!”² out of love for each of us: he thirsts for our salvation! Let us keep in the background throughout the day the phrase from Giussani's invitation, proposed again in the video that was made by some of you, which you watched when you came in, which said: “What pushes me to tell you this? What interest do I have? Only one: passion for your happiness, as I have passion for my own happiness. I do not know you, but I love you like myself. This is the new humanity that must expand through each of us into the world. We have to carry this new humanity, by which man loves man, everywhere.”³ I am loved by an eternal Love, I am expected, my door is “knocked on” and someone is waiting for me, and the more I discover myself loved again, the more I begin to love those around me.⁴ “It is a lie to love if we do not love the destiny of the other. It is a lie to say to your girlfriend: ‘I love you,’ if you do not desire to affirm the destiny of your girlfriend.”⁵ Many of your contributions brought out this topic of, for example: “In the letter of invitation to this year's Triduum, I was struck by the second citation from Giussani, where he says that, affirming the destiny of one's girlfriend or boyfriend, of study, of our relationship with our parents and with our classmates, we reach a new humanity, one that is more pure, more human. I desire this to happen, I desire to affirm the destiny of the people I care about, I desire the new humanity which Giussani speaks about. I need, though, to understand what it means.” Or again: “I am coming to the Triduum with so many questions. What does it mean to love the other, to affirm his destiny? So many times it seems like a distant and almost ‘passive’ concept. What does it mean to love his mystery without being tempted to change him? To have a heart for his good? I feel the need to love my friends and my family in a pure and true way, entrusting myself more to the One who created and loved my friends and my family first with an eternal love.”

“I desire this to happen,” “I desire to affirm the destiny of the people I care about,” but—remember the letter from yesterday?—“if only I knew Him”...but “I do not know Him!” In order “to affirm destiny,” we need to begin to look for Him! Therefore, in order to know Him, first of all, we have to recognize that we are children of a tradition! We were born in 2006, 2007, 2008, but we have behind us a rich tradition, two thousand years of the Church's history, two thousand years of theological reflection, of artistic production, of literature, of philosophy, two thousand years of holiness, of a Gospel that has been lived, thought about, and handed down: Saint John, Saint Mark, Saint Luke, Saint Matthew first of all wrote »

¹ Cf. John 4:5-42.

² Antonio Anastasio, *Se tu sapessi* [If you knew], translation ours.

³ Luigi Giussani, *Realtà e giovinezza. La sfida* [Reality and youth. The challenge], Rizzoli, Milan 2018, p. 69, translation ours.

⁴ “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

⁵ Luigi Giussani, *Realtà e giovinezza. La sfida*, op. cit., p. 69, translation ours.

» down, in a trustworthy historical source, what their eyes saw, their ears heard, their minds understood, their hearts grasped, so that the following generations (meaning us!) could know the true traits of God's face revealed in Christ Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph the carpenter, and to recognize Him with certainty in the present: we are not "visionaries," but we can recognize the presence of Christ living and working today!⁶

Now, let us allow ourselves to be amazed by the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, so that we may rediscover the traits of this encounter that continue throughout history, even in our gathering today. There is a continuity: two thousand years ago, God made Himself present through a man, Jesus (true man and true God), today He makes Himself present through His body the Church⁷ (a divine-human reality), through the body of the companionship of CL, and for us, of Gioventù Studentesca. We cannot live without the food of Scripture. A father of the Church, Saint Jerome, said "*ignoratio Scripturarum ignoratio Christi est*": ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ...let us read the Gospel! How can we love someone if we do not know Him?

1. **An unforeseen and unforeseeable encounter**

We will focus in on the encounter, on the dialogue, between Jesus and the Samaritan woman,⁸ trying to identify ourselves with what happened, trying to enter with our mind and our heart, with our soul, with all our thirst to be loved, into the soul of that woman. Let us "travel," therefore, to that dusty and unpaved road of Palestine, which links Judea, in the South, where we find Bethlehem and Jerusalem, to Galilee, in the North, where we find Capernaum, Cana, Nazareth. I'm being so precise just to give you an idea! The encounter happens in a very specific city in Samaria, in Sychar, where pilgrims could find rest for the night, to restore themselves a bit, to grab some supplies, in order to continue on the road; the disciples, in fact, in that moment, are in the town to buy some food, while Jesus, tired, is seated by the famous well of Jacob. The evangelist John, as always very precise, lets us know that "it was about noon,"⁹ when the sun is at its maximum splendor; therefore, the heat is real and draining. But why does the Samaritan woman decide to go out with a jug that could not have been very light right at that hour? A bit strange, isn't it? In general, in fact, everyone goes to the well in the early morning, when the sun is "tepid," or in the evening, when the weather is cooler. In fact, some exegetes agree that there were other wells closer to which the Samaritan woman could have gone,¹⁰ but this was the one a little farther away; so, we can reasonably suppose that she wanted to avoid meeting people. As some of you say, "she liked to do her own thing." The Lord, instead, always surprises and, even when you distance yourself, finds the way to make Himself known to you again on the road! She, like always, seeks to avoid people, she "avoids" them, but that morning, in a day like all the others, in the banality of fulfilling the usual tasks, she is surprised by the presence of a man who, instead, does not avoid her, who in fact is there just for her! This also happens in our life: everything plays out in an encounter. We might go around in our shell, "closed up," but certain encounters happen, we find ourselves in front of someone who seeks us out, who is interested in us, invites us! As the letter yesterday evening said: "I opened the door of the »

⁶ "Ours is not a commemoration. It is the presence of Christ, our life, to be acknowledged. *It is not a commemoration that we engage in, but it is a Presence that we must acknowledge.* Faith is this: acknowledging a Presence, and that's all; acknowledging a Presence that is the meaning of the blood that circulates, of the child to whom one gives birth, of the husband or wife that one has. Faith is acknowledging an event that recurs anew every time we think about it" (Luigi Giussani, "Faith is acknowledging a Presence," *Traces*, n. 11/2000).

⁷ "The Church's function on the world scene is already implicit in its awareness that it is the protraction of Christ: this means that it has the same function as Jesus in history" (Luigi Giussani, *Why the Church?*, translated by John Zucchi, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal 2003, p. 147).

⁸ Cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John, Volume 1, Introduction and Chapters 1-4*, Crossroads, New York 1980.

⁹ John 4:6

¹⁰ Cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, op. cit.

» GS assembly and ...Seve was there speaking!" In the morning, the Samaritan woman did not know what would happen to her.¹¹ This girl knew that she had to go through the same actions as every day: wake up, school, exams, homework, sports. She did not know that that day, going to get the water, she would discover something else. She finds herself in front of this person who looks at her, who speaks to her, and says: "Give me a drink!"

The Samaritan woman, maybe somewhere between exhausted and surprised (maybe, a bit like when we find ourselves in a situation where we would not like to find ourselves, we give a half smile, but in reality we would rather be elsewhere!), she is taken aback, for at least two reasons: the first, because, given her reputation that causes her to go to the well at an unusual hour and to go to the one that is far away, she remains in awe that a man speaks to her; the second, because he is a Jew: between Samaritans and Jews at that time there was bad blood, for reasons that I am going to spare you for now! Anyway, caught a bit "flat-footed," the Samaritan woman responds to Jesus: "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" Jesus is thirsty, and he continues the dialogue right away: "If you knew—if you knew!—the gift of God"—and He says it turning to each of us, to the one who sent that contribution yesterday evening where he describe the boredom in just getting high, in drinking—if you only knew the gift of God, the certain promise enclosed in this gift, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." So many times, this happens to us as well, each of us can "list" the pitchers used to draw water from wells that do not quench our thirst and that say "farther on"¹² So, at this point of their dialogue, we can already say with certainty that both, in this encounter—the Samaritan woman and Jesus—are thirsty and, little by little, it will become clearer what this thirst of each of them, His and hers, is. Father Giussani, in 1998, invited by the Pope for a gathering at the Vatican of all the leaders of Associations and Ecclesial Movements, said it like this: "The real protagonist of history is the beggar: Christ who begs for man's heart, and man's heart that begs for Christ."¹³ Both of them—we were saying—are thirsty: Christ was thirsty for the happiness, for the salvation, He was begging for the heart and the faith of the Samaritan woman, and she was thirsty to discover the One who could truly quench her thirst for happiness, for salvation, for love!¹⁴ How exciting to discover and recognize God not as the "Prime Mover," or the "Unmoved Mover," but as the One who is love, Who loves you, Who came in search of »

¹¹ "If the Samaritan woman, instead of going to get water a half hour before, had gone a half hour later, she would not have seen Him! If, understanding that he was a Jew, she had not spoken to him out of pride, if she had not answered him, and had said: 'Go to that other town!', she would not have had that encounter: a contingency, circumstances, absolute fragility, the ephemeral, the ephemeral that is not anything, as the whole of human thought decides that it is, is so fragile. But, right through this contingency, the eternal, the consistent, being, meaning, that which makes life worth living, finally the object for which reason is made, for which consciousness is made, for which the I is made, makes itself present. The consistent, the permanent, the totality is a man! It is through a contingent reality, it is through a contingent humanity, such that it makes you dizzy sometimes, because it is so much like you, that this man reaches you now" (Luigi Giussani, *Qui e ora. 1984-1985* [Here and now], BUR, Milan 2009, p. 427), translation ours.

¹² "The ephemeral appearance pushes us to a relationship with the infinite. 'Infinite': not reachable, a reality not reachable by the proper measure of man, by the capacity for measurement that is in me. But, then, why speak about it? Because in front of any encounter, in any encounter—whatever the nature of it is—I run through every measurement and end up surprised by its factors: but when I have gone all around, so to say, I feel, I perceive, I run into a dissatisfaction that says: 'Farther on!' Montale expresses it well in his poetry" (Luigi Giussani, *Il rischio educativo come creazione di personalità e di storia: un tentativo di verifica* [The risk of education as the creation of a personality and a history: an attempt at verification], supplement to *Litterae Communionis-Tracce*, n. 5/1996, pp. 14-15), translation ours.

¹³ "Fr. Luigi Giussani's testimony during the meeting of the Holy Father John Paul II with the ecclesial movements and the new communities," St. Peter's Square, Rome, 30 May 1998, in Luigi Giussani, Stefano Alberto and Javier Prades, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal 2010, p. xii.

¹⁴ "The natural thirst that never can be quenched / except with that water the woman Samaritan / begged to be given as a special grace" (Dante, *Purgatorio*, translated by Robert and Jean Hollander, Anchor Books, New York 2003, Canto XXI, vv. 1-3).

» you, Who loves you personally, Who is thirsty for your "Here I am!", thirsty for your "yes," just as He was thirsty that morning by the well!¹⁵

But again, the Samaritan woman—and we with her—seems not to understand completely and answers Jesus: "You do not even have a bucket and the well is deep; where then can you get this living water?" The gaze of the Samaritan woman is still fixed only on the material reality. She is "sick" with positivism: reality is only what she sees, hears, touches, the rest does not exist. And she increases the dose: "Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?" That is, the only crude reality that exists is this well in front of them, and that has never quenched her thirst. Therefore, we could put her question in other words: "Are you trying to fool me by saying that there is another reality, another path, that there is another gift? For me, till now, life has always been like this: the toughness of existence is one line of life and the religion of the Fathers is another parallel line" ...and "it just doesn't work," we continue to be thirsty! Like we said last night: two parallel lines that never overlap, that never meet!

Jesus starts again and tells her: "Everyone who drinks this water [from this well] will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." Here the Samaritan woman becomes—I think—astonished and in awe from the power of that affirmation, as if she was thinking in her head: "Not only is the water I will receive 'living' and will make it so I no longer thirst, but it will even begin to flow in me, stream through me, gush forth from me...but what kind of water are we talking about, what water could he ever 'sell me'?" The Samaritan woman has a "commercial-utilitarian" mentality, in fact, she says: "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water," as if she is saying: "Good, if this product eliminates my thirst, sell it to me, I will buy it, so I can spare the effort of always coming to this well and I will be all set!", somewhere between a business deal, magic, and comfort: "You sell it/I buy it, and no more effort!" This can also happen to us: instead of entering into a relationship with God, instead of putting ourselves into and discovering a relationship with Jesus and His Church, we try to avoid putting into motion our freedom, our reason, which are always called into play!

2. **My soul is thirsting for You**

So Jesus in that moment comes straight to the point, comes straight to the heart of the question and says to her: "Go call your husband and come back"; and she, maybe a bit red in the face, confesses to Jesus "I do not have a husband." Jesus responds to her: "You are right in saying, 'I do not have a husband.' For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true." From this we understand why her "reputation" led her to avoid people. So, let us try for an instant to enter into the heart of that woman who has sought—I think—in those five husbands to try to extinguish her own thirst, has begged for love, for a love that corresponded! Let us try to taste the bitterness, the disillusion, the skepticism of that woman who probably did not expect nor hope for any- »

¹⁵ "Certainly, the notion of creation is found elsewhere, yet only here does it become absolutely clear that it is not one god among many, but the one true God himself who is the source of all that exists; the whole world comes into existence by the power of his creative Word. Consequently, his creation is dear to him, for it was willed by him and 'made' by him. The second important element now emerges: this God loves man. The divine power that Aristotle at the height of Greek philosophy sought to grasp through reflection, is indeed for every being an object of desire and of love—and as the object of love this divinity moves the world—but in itself it lacks nothing and does not love: it is solely the object of love. The one God in whom Israel believes, on the other hand, loves with a personal love. His love, moreover, is an elective love: among all the nations he chooses Israel and loves her—but he does so precisely with a view to healing the whole human race. God loves, and his love may certainly be called *eros*, yet it is also totally *agape*" (Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 9).

» thing good from life; most likely, her heart was dry, hardened, maybe she had a cynicism within or a resignation that had entered her heart and her veins, from husband to husband, from man to man. She had sought a unique, indissoluble, exclusive, definitive, forever love! And she found herself there, in front of that well, still thirsty. She had never encountered an infinite love that could correspond to her infinite thirst.¹⁶ Our human nature also pushes us gently toward a "beyond" that we often think we can never grasp!¹⁷

Who knows what happened with those men: why so many? Why had they "taken something and left"? Certainly those had not been joyful events... There is a song, sung by Mia Martini, that says: "I do not know what kind of smile true love has."¹⁸ Let us think about what a heartbreaking drama it is to live without love (for your whole life!) or with the anguish that, sooner or later, love will end! I said at the beginning to keep in mind that phrase of Father Giussani: "It is a lie to love if we do not love the destiny of the other. It is a lie to say to your girlfriend: 'I love you,' if you do not desire to affirm the destiny of your girlfriend!" Did any of those men look at her and treat her according to her destiny, and how do we treat each other...? There can be, even among us, a reductive way of being together, maybe using each other, instead of desiring to learn to love each other, affirming each other's destiny. With great delicacy I will read these lines that I think can help us: "It was a suffering for both of us. We kept doing certain things. We both ended up in a bad place. There was a feeling of guilt that we boxed up and put to the side. We were using each other. Mamma mia, what sadness! We always ended up doing that. It was a mutual use that made us forget reality for a moment and kept our thoughts at a distance. But the pain in my heart was huge! [...] We were aware that we were treating each other badly and that it could not continue like this, but we didn't know how to face the situation. [...] I looked at some pictures of my face during that time: I was destroyed. I don't know how I was able to live like that for so long. Now I realize that I want to understand the meaning of those gestures." We see, therefore, how pertinent what we read a few weeks ago in *The Religious Sense* is for us: "Normally, everything is broached from the perspective of the common mentality which, in turn, is publicized and sustained by whomever holds the reins of power in society. Consequently, family tradition or the tradition of the broader society in which we have grown up, obscures or hardens over our original needs and is like a large crust that alters the 'evidences' of those primary meanings [...]. For example, the way we conceive of the relationship between a man and a woman, although seen as something intimate and personal, is, in fact, widely determined by both our own instinctive disposition, which does not evaluate according to the original need of affection, and by the images of love created by public opinion. It is always necessary to cut through such images generated from within the cultural environment in which we are steeped, to reach down and grasp our own original needs and 'evidences' and to judge and evaluate accordingly every proposal, every existential suggestion. The use of elementary experience, or of one's own 'heart' is, therefore, unpopular especially when one comes face to face with oneself. The 'heart' is vulnerable, precisely the origin of that undefinable unease that overtakes us, when for example, we are treated as an object of another's interests or »

¹⁶ "And he says, 'I was hungry, you gave me to eat, I was naked, you clothed me, I was homeless, you took me in.' Hunger is not only for bread, hunger is for love, for the Word of God; nakedness is not only for a piece of cloth, nakedness is the loss of human dignity, that beautiful virtue, purity; homelessness is not only not having a home made of bricks, but being unwanted, unloved, a throwaway of society" ("[Testimony of Mother Teresa of Calcutta](#)," [Rimini Meeting, 29 August 1987](#)).

¹⁷ "Now it is true that the great poet Giacomo Leopardi exclaimed: 'O nature, nature / ... / why do you deceive your children so?' However, this was a burst of bitterness, of existential sadness. It cannot be considered to be the principle of a philosophical view. Our entire being rebels against such a stance. Certainly, nature could turn out to be irredeemably contradictory. But before settling upon such a conclusion, it is reasonable to search for some other solution. And it is toward just such a solution that we are setting out" (Luigi Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, translated by John Zucchi, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal 2023, p. 28).

¹⁸ Mia Martini, *Minuetto*, 1973, © Dischi Ricordi, translation ours.

» pleasure.¹⁹ What pain to reduces ourselves, to treat each other in an instinctive way, using each other like objects, to take and leave at our pleasure, without soul!

This point—each of us has a thirst for love and only the relationship with the Mystery can satisfy it!—is decisive both for looking at the way we treat our friends and for looking at how we live romantic relationships: what pain to be reduced, no longer to be a mystery in front of which we are in awe, something to be contemplated, a mystery to be loved and cherished! The other “is ours-but he is not ours”! I hope that you picked up Seve’s article from last November in *La Repubblica*, it helps bring to light what is at play in the relationship between man and woman. You can come back to it later, now I’ll just quote a sentence: “The beloved is a ‘sign,’ they cannot respond exhaustively to the infinite desire to be loved that is present in the human heart.”²⁰ The Pope spoke about this explicitly during a recent Wednesday audience, just last January: “This beautiful dimension of our humanity – the sexual dimension, the dimension of love – is not without its dangers” because it can become defiled “by the demon of lust”: it is a love “in which chastity has been missing,” that is “the will never to possess the other. To love is to respect the other, to seek his or her happiness.” The mutual total gift of the one to the other in marriage, “sexual pleasure, which is a gift from God, is undermined by pornography: satisfaction without relationship that can generate forms of addiction. We have to defend love, the love of the heart, of the mind, of the body, pure love in the giving of oneself to the other. And this is the beauty of sexual intercourse.” And this is the beauty of the conjugal relationship, “this is the beauty of sexual intercourse.” “Winning the battle against lust, against the ‘objectification’ [of the self and] of the other, can be a lifelong endeavor.”²¹ There was a scene in a TV series where a young guy tried to persuade the girl by telling her a few common lines: “Everybody does it. If we love each other... what’s the problem?” Instead, it is exactly the opposite: precisely because we love each other we learn to wait, to understand the significance of certain gestures, to love each other with truth, according to destiny! Because that person is not yours, is not your toy, she belongs to Another, she belongs to God, she belongs to Christ, she is a relationship with Christ, and until this is clear even being together will suffer from it, not without consequences!²² Here’s the point: “It is a lie to love if we do not love the destiny of the other. It is a lie to say to your girlfriend: ‘I love you,’ if you do not desire to affirm to the destiny of your girlfriend.” The two songs we are about to hear help us focus in on a gaze like the one Jesus had for the Samaritan woman, a gaze that becomes possible to experience among ourselves. What does it mean, in fact, to say to the other: “I love you”? It means: “I want your good.” But the good, destiny, is Christ. »

¹⁹ Luigi Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, op. cit., p. 11.

²⁰ [Matteo Severgnini, “Trust in the Other,” La Repubblica, 28 November 2023.](#)

²¹ However, this beautiful dimension of our humanity – the sexual dimension, the dimension of love – is not without its dangers, so much so that Saint Paul already had to address the issue in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. He writes: ‘It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans’ (5:1). The Apostle’s reproach concerns precisely an unhealthy handling of sexuality by some Christians” (Francis, General Audience, 17 January 2024). “A document prepared on the eve of the Synod by three hundred young people worldwide pointed out that ‘online relationships can become inhuman. Digital spaces blind us to the vulnerability of another human being and prevent us from our own self-reflection. Problems like pornography distort a young person’s perception of human sexuality. Technology used in this way creates a delusional parallel reality that ignores human dignity’” (Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, n. 90).

²² “Without sacrifice there is no truth in a relationship. Try to think of when you are affectively attached to a person: it’s lie upon lie, if it isn’t continually controlled by sacrifice. Without sacrifice there is no true relationship, which means that the other—any object or person—is not valued according to its nature (in fact, the meaning of nature can even be inverted); it is affirmed by your liking, by your instinct, because you want to snatch it in the way that a miser snatches money. What a lie! ‘Because it is nice’: I think that’s the most normal adjective for a lie—a pretext, finally. We identify affirming something with snatching it. Affirming something is love, it is affirming the other; snatching it means bending it in your direction, making it a slave” (Luigi Giussani, *Is It Possible to Live This Way?*, Volume 3: *Charity*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal 2009, p. 78).

» So, to say to another "I love you," means to desire that he encounter Christ, it means having in your heart that he encounter Christ and to be for each other a help and a support in this, to accompany each other all the way to Paradise, to Him.²³ Christ saves me and saves the other, for eternity.²⁴ So, I will be able to give everything of myself, my whole self, soul and body, to you, after we have said "yes" in front of the altar, in front of God and man.²⁵ When I pronounce: "I take you as my husband/my wife, I promise to be true to you, in good times and bad, in sickness and in health, and to love you and honor you all the days of my life," when in life there is this total donation, then, that total gesture becomes an expression of that total donation. Before, it is a lie, in the sense that that gesture, which expresses a totality of love and donation, has not yet been actualized and lived between the two.²⁶ The two songs, we were saying: one is "Amica del mistero" [Friend of the Mystery]: just think that Adriana Mascagni had understood that the most adequate "definition" of herself was that of being a "friend of the mystery," how it changes our gaze if we recognize ourselves and others as "friends of the Mystery," of Another; then a "veneration" is born. And the second is sung by Mina, "Ma come hai fatto" [How did you do it], which expresses this explosion in saying "I love you!" that is, "I want your good!"

3. Faith is to recognize the presence of Christ

We, just like the Samaritan woman, can stumble sometimes in this misunderstanding, getting confused and pretending that the companionship can respond in an exhaustive way to our thirst, that it is the "sign" that responds exhaustively. We get jaded by this dynamic: "I would like to be loved, in a certain way, sought out in a certain way, and this does not happen in the form I want." This has happened to us, but in all honesty, we lack realism, because it is as if we demand from a "ray" that it be the "sun," we demand from man what only God can give us, because our infinite thirst can only be quenched by the Infinite. Father Giussani, years ago, corrected some friends, saying: "Everyone speaks about the companionship [...] »

²³ "These things that I told you now have to be discovered, we have to become aware of them, if we want to be free from the dominant mentality, if we want to be men who say bread is bread and wine is wine, with their heart and their mind. Otherwise it is a deception to say: 'I love you!' because saying to a woman or a man: 'I love you!' will be for all of you to repeat the mechanism ingrained in you by power through its instruments, it will not be yours, and, even if you think it is yours, it will not be free" (Luigi Giussani, *Uomini senza patria. 1982-1983* [Men without a homeland], BUR, Milan 2008, pp. 377-378), translation ours.

²⁴ "I ask only one thing from you: because everything is given by Christ and because Christ is the origin of all that is opening up between you, we love Jesus Christ. We do not love our wife, we do not love our children, if not for Christ. Thank you to all of you who bet your life on this, as I do" ("Father Giussani. Assembly with the leaders of CL. 5 February 2002," *Traces*, n. 2/2002, p. 95), translation ours.

²⁵ "Marriage requires preparation, and this calls for growing in self-knowledge, developing the greater virtues, particularly love, patience, openness to dialogue and helping others. It also involves maturing in your own sexuality, so that it can become less and less a means of using others, and increasingly a capacity to entrust yourself fully to another person in an exclusive and generous way" (Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, n. 265).

²⁶ "Here, we need to remember that God created us as sexual beings. He himself 'created sexuality, which is a marvelous gift to his creatures.' Within the vocation to marriage we should acknowledge and appreciate that 'sexuality, sex, is a gift from God. It is not taboo. It is a gift from God, a gift the Lord gives us. It has two purposes: to love and to generate life. It is passion, passionate love. True love is passionate. Love between a man and a woman, when it is passionate, always leads to giving life. Always. To give life with body and soul'" (Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*, n. 261). "Those who are engaged to marry are called to live chastity in continence. They should see in this time of testing a discovery of mutual respect, an apprenticeship in fidelity, and the hope of receiving one another from God. They should reserve for marriage the expressions of affection that belong to married love. They will help each other grow in chastity" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2350). "Sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is not something simply biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and woman commit themselves totally to one another until death" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2361).

» it seems [...] that we put our hope in the companionship [...]. We create a companionship not to hold onto a friendship, but to affirm a Presence, a Presence that is *in* this companionship.” And then—we see that he really gave this correction, like a father, from the heart—he concluded saying to them: “I don’t give a damn about your companionship [understood in this way].”²⁷ That is, if our companionship does not make “the sound of Christ’s steps” evident, if our companionship is not the vehicle for the face of Christ, who is the One I beg to quench my thirst, what, in the end, am I doing in this companionship? A contribution describes how His Presence emerges from within, from the presence of the companionship:²⁸ “After various experiences that were proposed to me, like the Triduum, the trip to Rome, the Meeting, something changed in me. I began to give a face and a name to the One, with a capital O, that was moving me. Above all, the thing that thrilled me most was not only recognizing Him, but beginning to discover that I could touch Him with my hands, see Him my own eyes.”

That is what happened to the Samaritan woman: she begins to recognize in that human presence a different gaze on herself, different from those other five, something divine hidden in the human:²⁹ “How can it be that this man knows better than me what I do not even dare to admit to myself, that is, that I sought love my whole life and have still not found it!” Therefore, a healthy, a holy seed begins to grow within her: “But could He really be the one, behind these carnal appearances, who can give me this living water? Could I, within the relationship with Him, begin to quench my thirst?” And so the Samaritan woman pursues Jesus with another question, very different from the “commercial” question at the beginning of the conversation: “So, help me understand: where should I worship God? On the mountain?”: because at the time there was also a “theological debate” on the topic, “Where do I enter into relationship with God? Where do I go to draw this water? On top of that mountain or in the Temple in Jerusalem? In this place or that one?”³⁰ And Jesus says: “Believe me, woman, [and he says it to each of us] the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. [...] We worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father [remember this!] in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father [the sound of whose steps we want to know] seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth.”³¹

It is not a question of place: when I am in church I worship (religious line), when I am outside of church I don’t worship (line of daily life); when I am in church, I am in relationship with God and when I am at school I am not. It is not a question of place but of relationship, communion of life. There is no longer on the one side the “sacred” and on the other side the “profane,” but everything is sacred, everything is within the relationship with Him, the relationship with your studies and with your girlfriend is sacred!³² Here is the coincidence of »

²⁷ Luigi Giussani, *Una presenza che cambia* [A presence that changes], BUR, Milan 2004, pp. 12-13, translation ours.

²⁸ “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

²⁹ “You know it well: / you are not able to manage, you are tired / you can’t do it anymore. And all of a sudden / you encounter in the crowd the gaze of someone / --a human gaze-- / and it is as if you were approaching / a hidden divinity. / And everything becomes suddenly / more simple” (A. Tarkovsky, from the film *Andrei Rublev*), translation ours.

³⁰ Cf. John 4:19-20.

³¹ John 4:21-24.

³² “Now, it is true that up until then, that is, up until Jesus came, the sacrifices and religious rights commanded by the Lord in the history of the Hebrew people had to be done in the great temple at Jerusalem. But since Jesus came everything has been explained in a clear way and everything has been made more simple; the true place where God is adored is the heart of man; the heart of man that God Himself illuminates with His Spirit, making it understand that God is everything for man, wherever he is and in all his actions. Therefore, if it is right that there are places where the devotion toward the Lord can be particularly expressed even in the most solemn way (like now in the churches), man can recognize God, can think about Him, can offer all his actions, that is,

» faith and life, the abolition of the dualism we spoke about last night! Wherever I am, in the morning at 7:50, when I find myself saying the Angelus with my friends from GS at school, or praying Lauds outside of school, and then two hours later, when I am in class, or when we find ourselves together in between classes, when I speak in class because I hear something that clashes with the truth.³³ And then when we go together to lunch. And then later, when we get together to study. And then when we help each other take our questions seriously, those questions that daily reality, hitting us, brings out of us, when we go to charitable work. That is, faith—Jesus says to the Samaritan woman—coincides with life, is the Life of our life!³⁴ While you are “opening the door” of the circumstance you are entering, pray: “Let it happen to me according to Your word,”³⁵ this circumstance is within the relationship with You!³⁶ It seems more realistic to us to change the circumstances, and instead, it is more essential and real to focus on the relationship with Him in order to live the circumstances! Jesus reveals, therefore, a revolutionary, unthinkable truth: “You see, the temple where you must worship God, where God comes to make His home is not a ‘delimited area,’ is not Jerusalem or on top of the mount, but the temple where you worship Me, where I comes to dwell, is you! You are My home, I make you My home, like the Virgin Mary, you are the Temple of God!”³⁷ Saint Paul defines our body like this: “temple of the Holy Spirit.”³⁸ God is thirsting for your salvation, and knocks on your heart, as we said at the *Angelus* before, remembering the words of that girl: “The choice, the decision for existence, to open my heart to Him, was the best choice I ever made.” So, the true worshippers will worship God in Spirit and truth. “Without the Spirit, Christ is in the past, because without the Spirit, Christ is empty of His divinity. The Spirit is the divine energy with which Christ penetrates history and reaches us,”³⁹ the Spirit is that living water that begins to bubble up in you and to gush forth, from the depths of the person, overflowing and embracing anyone. “In Spirit and truth,” that is, begging and praying to see everything according to the Truth, according to its origin and destiny.

4. Prayer, Mass, Confession

Each of us, from the day of our Baptism, is reborn as a child of God by means of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ Because the living water wells up in us and by means of us, Jesus indicated »

can adore Him, wherever he finds himself and whatever he is doing!” (Luigi Giussani, *Pregare* [Prayer], Jaca Book, Milan 1984, p. 36), translation ours.

³³ “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

³⁴ “Christ bumped into my life, my life bumped into Christ, precisely so that I should learn to understand that He is the central point of everything, of the whole of my life. *Christ is the life of my life*: in Him is summed up all that I would desire, all that I look for, all that I sacrifice, all that develops in me out of love for the person with whom He has put me” (Luigi Giussani, *To Give One’s Life for the Work of Another*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal 2022, p. 37).

³⁵ “...it is true that apparently in a new and different context one could make a certain interior change. But the question is the relationship with God. Which needs time. This is true and we have to touch it. From here, the humanity of charity becomes possible. We will speak about it again. I wanted to write to greet you. Milan, 16 January 1977” (Various Authors, *Maria Paolo Piraccini*, Memor Domini, Editore Stiligraf, Cesena 2004, p. 43), translation ours.

³⁶ “I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me” (Galatians 2:19-20).

³⁷ “All that has been said is made existential in a place that is not a place, in a spiritual place, in a place, though, made of earth, made of flesh, a spiritual place because made also of soul: it is the I. It is in the I that all that has been said become existentially real” (Luigi Giussani, *Il tempo e il tempio. Dio e l’uomo* [Time and the temple. God and man], BUR, Milan 1995, p. 102), translation ours.

³⁸ “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

³⁹ Luigi Giussani, *La convenienza umana della fede* [The human advantage of faith], BUR, Milan 2018, p. 254, translation ours.

⁴⁰ “Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to *life in the Spirit* (“vitae spiritualis inania”), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and

» Himself (the Trinity!) as the fountain from which to draw today through the "channels" of Grace:⁴¹ I will just mention them, then you will have your whole life to revisit them, together with those who are more mature.

First. *Prayer*, which—Saint Augustine says—begins with your desire: "For it is not before men who cannot see the heart, but it is before You that all my desire is open! Let your desire be before Him; and the Father, who sees in secret, shall reward you. For it is your heart's desire that is your prayer; and if your desire continues uninterrupted, your prayer continues also. For not without a meaning did the Apostle say, 'Pray without ceasing.' Are we to be without ceasing bending the knee, prostrating the body, or lifting up our hands, that he says, 'Pray without ceasing'? Or if it is in this sense that we say that we pray, this, I believe, we cannot do without ceasing. There is another inward kind of prayer without ceasing, which is the desire of the heart. Whatever else you are doing, if you do but long for that Sabbath, you do not cease to pray. If you would never cease to pray, never cease to long after it."⁴² Every aspect of life is worthy to be lived within the relationship with the Father, like a child who trusts completely no matter the circumstances. Father Giussani always invited us to repeat an "essential" prayer: *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, that is, Holy Spirit enter into me, take my flesh, *Veni per Mariam*, just like Mary said her "Fiat," may I say it too, use me too.⁴³

Second. *The Mass*.⁴⁴ I do not want us to go away from this particular page of John's Gospel, where the Evangelist refers to the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, noting that "it was about noon"⁴⁵ and it is also "about noon" when Jesus is on the Cross⁴⁶ and the words that he says in His pain are: "I thirst."⁴⁷ Jesus, lifted up on the Cross, has one last and only desire, which He had for his whole earthly life: thirst for the salvation of Peter, John, Andrew, Thomas, Zacchaeus, the paralytic, the man born blind, the Samaritan woman, and now He continues to thirst for our faith, for our salvation. And the Mass is precisely this: the sacrifice of the Cross that is made present in the mystery of the Eucharist.⁴⁸ While He is »

reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: 'Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water and in the word'" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1213).

⁴¹ "The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1131).

⁴² [Saint Augustine, Expositions on the Psalms, Psalm 38, 13.](#)

⁴³ "Repeat this formula every day, at all hours, when the Lord chooses you to make Himself heard: it is a moment in which everything is reconnected and reconquered, everything is made a unique and beautiful thing. *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, because *Spiritus est Dominus, Spiritus est Deus* (God is Spirit, the Spirit is God). The Spirit is God, to Whom we belong. Because the Spirit is consciousness of self; and if this is applied properly in us it makes us understand: man understands that he belongs, that he is belonging to Another. It is belonging to a Presence, to a Presence, here too, that is mysterious (mysterious because it is not ours, this Presence, in a certain sense it is not; because it comes from another source, it is not from our source). 'Come, Holy Spirit' into my every action, 'Come, Holy Spirit' into my every moment" (Luigi Giussani. *To Give One's Life for the Work of Another*, op. cit., p. 126).

⁴⁴ "The most important gesture in the entire history of the world is the death and resurrection of Christ. In our life, this gesture is the sacrifice of the Mass. It should be at the center of our day, its most important, privileged moment. It should have an influence on our day." "There is no other scheme for this change in our personality than that of the sacramental gesture" (Luigi Giussani, *Living the Liturgy: A Witness*, Slant Books, Seattle, WA 2024, pp. 1, 2).

⁴⁵ John 4:6.

⁴⁶ "It was preparation day for Passover, and it was about noon. And Pilate said to the Jews, 'Behold, your king!' They cried out, 'Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!' [...] Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle" (John 19:14-18).

⁴⁷ "After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I thirst'" (John 19:28).

⁴⁸ "Because it is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of

» on the Cross, His side is pierced with the lance under His rib, and there flow out "blood and water," and when the priest celebrates the Eucharist, in an undertone, *submissa voce*, he says this, while he pours the wine and the water into the chalice, to himself: "from the open side of Christ there flowed out blood and water,"⁴⁹ the blood and the body of Christ are then given to us who receive Communion, receive Him.⁵⁰ In the Mass, Christ thirsts for an encounter with you, to give Himself to you! How can I desert this "weekly meeting," or even a daily meeting, with Destiny!?

Third. *Confession*. I am moved by what this girl writes us: "After a Raggio, I spoke a moment with one of my friends with whom a really beautiful relationship is being born. In the conversation with him, there came out something 'heavy,' something with which I have always struggled, having to do with how to live relationships without suffocating the other person, with the idea of possession. I felt a huge weight, a heavy load on top of me, I almost couldn't breathe because of the shame I was experiencing toward myself! [...] So, remembering a phrase I read in the book *Barabbas* by Lagerkvist ('I entrust my soul to You'), I went as soon as possible to the little church by my house and, after years away from it, I confessed my sins. There was finally a breathe full of relief, that took hold of me, and picked me up, saved me! The fact that I could confess this shame to Christ Himself, with whom I was creating such an all-embracing relationship, led me to confess, offering Him all the struggle because I wanted to entrust, to share the disgust that I felt with the Only Person who has truly accepted all of me, without scandal, without reductions. To entrust my shame to my Father, and to be forgiven. It is Christ, Christ Himself, who let Himself be nailed to the Cross for me who forgave me in that confession. As soon as I came out, I thought immediately of a phrase from *Il mio volto* by Mascagni: 'Oh heart, why do you tremble? You're not alone. / You don't know how to love, yet you are loved.'⁵¹ You see, Jesus has a heart for her salvation, He does not put the Samaritan woman with her back to the wall because of her five husbands, but helps her to regain her freedom, to put her in a position to see and read her life from within that thirst for love, of that thirst for truth she always had, and to embrace it. This is what happens in the sacrament of reconciliation, to be treated with truth and mercy at the same time: the sin is recognized, the sinner is embraced!⁵² The Holy Spirit acts in the sacraments, the visible signs of invisible Grace. The more we immerse ourselves in the sacraments, the »

the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: 'This is my body which is given for you' and 'This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood' (Luke 22:19-20). In the Eucharist Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he 'poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' [...] The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 1365-1366).

⁴⁹ Cf. Rite of the Community Mass of the Ambrosian Rite, translation ours.

⁵⁰ "The essential signs of the Eucharistic sacrament are wheat bread and grape wine, on which the blessing of the Holy Spirit is invoked and the priest pronounces the words of consecration spoken by Jesus during the Last Supper: 'This is my body which will be given up for you.... This is the cup of my blood.' By the consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 1412-1413).

⁵¹ Adriana Mascagni, "Il mio volto" [My face], in *Songbook*, p. 219. "But Jesus forgives *everything*. Jesus *always* forgives. He asks only that we ask for forgiveness. Once, I heard an elderly woman, wise, an elderly grandmother, of the people... She said, 'Jesus never tires of forgiving: we are the ones who tire of asking for forgiveness.' Today, let us ask the Lord for the grace not to grow weary. We all always have small failures, large failures: each person has their own story. But the Lord awaits us always, with open arms, and he never tires of forgiving" (Francis, *Holy Thursday Homily*, Rebibbia Women's Prison, 28 March 2024).

⁵² "This is why when we acknowledge our weaknesses, we too would like to hear the voice of Jesus say what he often used to say to people he cured or encountered: 'Go, your sins are forgiven. I do not condemn you. Sin no more.' And these words of Christ do resound through history in the sacrament of confession, which is literally those words, that gesture of forgiveness by Christ which continues throughout history" (Luigi Giussani, *Why the Church?*, op. cit., p. 188).

» more we are educated to recognize His presence in the sacrament, the more we will change and begin to catch the signs of His presence in daily life, we will enter into the Mystery of reality, we will learn to love the other as a sign of the Mystery.⁵³

5. To treat everything with truth

We said before: "True worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth." Now we will concentrate on "in truth" and comment on it keeping in mind the initial question: "What does it mean concretely to love the other according to her destiny?" It means to love and treat the other with truth, and the truth is that I and the other are in relationship with destiny, with the Mystery, with Christ who gives us the hundredfold here below and awaits us in Paradise. So we begin to understand that love is connected to walking together toward destiny! If we do not have our eternal salvation at heart, where are we going?

And it is for this reason that now we propose a very concrete example of this love toward destiny, "according to truth," and let ourselves be moved by the stories of those girls for whom we offered the Mass yesterday: their mothers were also moved in front of what happened to them, in addition to the pain at the loss of their daughters. They could have remained crushed by the pain of losing their children at such a young age, and, instead, this relationship, this being "worshipers of God the Father in Spirit and truth," this faith that coincides with life, introduced a new way of looking at this circumstance. It was necessary to celebrate the funeral of one of these girls at the town stadium—there were more than two thousand people there for her—because it was clear for so many people that she and her way of living her sickness were the sign of Another, it was evident that she was looking at Another during her sickness. In fact, the priest, during the homily, pushed the kids there present, saying: "If you are here it is because your friend taught you something, in fact, point someone out to you: Jesus Christ. Therefore, do not live this moment only in an emotional way. Life is something serious. Every morning we are forced to choose between an everything that ends up in nothing and a life that has a purpose."

The mother of the second girl, invited to give a testimony, tells what it meant for her, a mother, to accompany her own daughter to her destiny, to look at that circumstance with truth: the beginning of the sickness, the first tests, the first treatments, then their ineffectiveness, the questions that opened up...and she, little by little, discovers herself living that painful circumstance "in Spirit and truth." I will read you an excerpt from her testimony that confirms what we are saying. In fact, from the beginning of her testimony, this mother says: "It is the Lord who sends His Spirit and this changes everything." That is: in order not to be suffocated in the "cage" of daily life, we need to let ourselves be generated by an external, supernatural force. So many of you will definitely be disappointed, because I haven't made »

⁵³ When asked about how the movement was born, Father Giussani answered like this: "A possibility of action came to me many years ago when I met groups of students who were indifferent or already hostile to the Church because they did not know it. I was persuaded that, by proposing an experience of Christian life, such ignorance could be fought [...]. So I asked my bishop to go into the school as a religion professor, but with a method of teaching that looked toward engaging the kids also outside the school hours. In order to do this, I did not look for tangential or particularly captivating means, but simply proposed that they be loyal to their life, that they engage with the authentic terms of the Christian tradition into which they were born. In fact, I said: 'It is not loyal for you to continue, or worse, to abandon this tradition unless you engage first in a serious way with its authentic factors' [...]. In this way, this gathering of students found its center in the Sacraments on the one hand and on the other hand, in a creative engagement with the problems of the youth" (Luigi Giussani, "Father Luigi Giussani responds," interview by Vito Magno, *Rogate Ergo* [Pray therefore], n. 11/1976, p. 12). "Our conversion will happen in proportion to our capacity to base our lives truly on this fulcrum, even if we remain sinners. We will understand, we will feel, we will do things fundamentally differently while remaining sinners. God, in fact, even consecrates our evil through the greatest sign of His power: forgiveness. We are called to live even our evil according to faith, which means accepting the forgiveness of God. Thus, not even our evil will be able to stop us" (Luigi Giussani, *Living the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 16-17).

» any drawings yet: this year, they took away my technology, maybe because last year my drawings were so embarrassing! But a drawing that I would have gladly made would have been a circle: the circle would have represented our world, within which we feel a bit caged, a circle woven of "biological" relationships, of all the circumstances we live, etc. Only a point external to this circle, that is, only God, allows us to be free and not slaves within this circle, allows us to be free and to breathe here on this earth (you will find this diagram in the eighth chapter of the School of Community).⁵⁴ In fact, this mother says: "With the Spirit, only by invoking the Spirit, does everything change. We had to fix our gaze on Him. So many asked me: 'How does a mother not become desperate when her daughter is dying?'" And she responds: "How can a mother be desperate when she knows that her daughter is tasting the fullness and the eternal happiness of Paradise?" And then she adds: "This I knew only at the funeral: a person who was very close to my daughter confessed to me that my daughter had already been saying for a month that she expected to enjoy Paradise, she knew it, she didn't say anything to us and she wasn't particularly agitated; there I realized still more that her life was complete, that she had finished her path on this earth and desired to see God." Unlike last night, the mother continues: "In the end, this is love, this is love. Ultimately, we mothers, with the grace of God, bring our children into the world so that they may know Christ and arrive to Him [...]; I would call this a friendship for life."

The father of this girl, in the same testimony with his wife, tells about a message that a priest friend sent them, with the image of Michelangelo's Pietà: the Virgin Mary who holds between her arms the mangled body of her son, just come down from the Cross. Under the image there is this comment: "The joy of this mother is completely in her knowing that this son came from heaven, [he belongs to heaven], is destined for heaven, and therefore is placed in secure hands." So, to love the other as a sign of the mystery: the other arrives from God, on the earth "she is ours, but not ours," her destiny is in Heaven. Now let us listen to two songs that accompany us before the final passage. *Nel silenzio della notte* [In the silence of the night]: "In the silence of my heart / a voice said: love. / In the silence of my days a voice called me."⁵⁵ And *Ballata dell'amore vero* [Ballad of true love]: "I love you / and for it I thank God, / who gives me the tenderness, / who gives me the strength, / who gives me the freedom that I do not have."⁵⁶

6. An encounter that expands

I warmly advise you to buy and read the March edition of *Traces*, entitled "To love still," because it contains many testimonies of how it is possible to love each other according to destiny, in truth.

So, we set out again: what happens to the Samaritan woman after that encounter, after that dialogue with Jesus? In front of the presence of that man, that woman was set on fire, she understood the true nature of the thirst of her heart, a thirst for infinite love, of the loving »

⁵⁴ "If the human being were to come into the world solely through the biology of a mother and father, as a mere brief instant in which all the flux of innumerable prior reactions produced this ephemeral fruit; if the human being were only this, then we really would be talking about something ridiculous, something cynically absurd when we use expressions such as 'freedom,' 'human rights,' the very word, 'person.' Freedom, like this, without any foundation, is *flatus vocis*, just pure sound, dispersed by the wind. In only one case is this point in the circle, the single human being, free from the entire world, free, so that the world together and even the total universe cannot force that individual into anything. In only one instance can this image of a free person be explained. This is when we assume that this point is not totally the fruit of the biology of a mother and father, not strictly derived from the biological tradition of mechanical antecedents, but rather when it possesses a *direct relationship with the infinite*, the *origin* of all of the flux of the world, of the whole 'circle' [...] that is to say, with that mysterious X that is above the flow of reality, that is God, it is endowed with something derived from God" (Luigi Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, op. cit., 94).

⁵⁵ Adriana Mascagni, "Nel silenzio della notte," *Songbook*, p. 231, translation ours.

⁵⁶ Claudio Chieffo, "Ballata dell'amore vero," *Songbook*, p. 209.

» Father who created her.⁵⁷ And when she discovered this, what does she do? “The woman said to him, ‘I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Anointed; when he comes, he will tell us everything.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am he, the one who is speaking with you.’ [...] The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, ‘Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Messiah?’ They went out of the town and came to him. [...] Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, ‘He told me everything I have done.’ When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world.’”⁵⁸

There is a transition here: from the human judgment—“He told me everything I have done”—to the judgment of faith, “It is He who is speaking to me, He is the savior of the world!”⁵⁹ What does the Samaritan woman do next? She leaves her jar, that is, she leaves the now-useless instrument with which she gathered water from the well that did not quench her thirst and runs, runs to her town. Before she did not want to meet anyone! She who knows well her own story and had let herself be conditioned by what others thought about her, she who devised strategies to avoid everyone! But her joy is uncontainable, the water of faith (as Jesus has told her) begins to gush up in her and from her, so much so that she runs to her “fellow townspeople”: “This one has understood me, has ‘read within’ me, has understood me more than my five husbands, has loved me with an eternal and faithful love; because, despite my betrayals and my infidelities, He was seated at the well expecting me, waiting for me!” She understands that the way she was living before had not led her anywhere, “it is another path that you must follow,” we said yesterday! And when she recognizes that Jesus is the Savior of the world (“I am!”), there is an affection for Him born in her, a connection, a communion with Him, from which flows the desire to share with everyone!

Let us not forget the passage from Father Giussani that we read this morning at the beginning: “This is the new humanity that through each of us must expand in the world,” the heartfelt joy that flowers on the face of the Samaritan woman. And the others recognize that something has happened to her. “What is this? Isn’t that the woman who had five husbands, the one who ‘slunk around’ so as not to meet anyone? What happened to her?” Now it is from her that the living water gushes forth, generating communion, friendship, mission. From the recognition of the fact that the Savior is present, that Christ is present, from the recognition that our friendship is the place where His presence is manifested, from that recognition is born friendship, are born new relationships, renewed relationships, relationships made new. How concrete is the contribution from one of you: “When I discover that there is in another the same stretching toward the origin, the same fire, something in me suddenly cheers up. As if I had within my heart a piece of the puzzle and finally found someone who matched it perfectly. This happened to me lately: spending the New Year at the lake, during our communal meetings, most of all in the choir. That correspondence has a revolutionary effect; it nourishes the fire and consequently nourishes my gratitude exponentially. Why? I understand that there is someone who shares with me the same road toward that origin, toward that destiny. We walk together.” Because of the words of the Samaritan woman, others turn to Jesus, »

⁵⁷ “From the hand of Him who looks on it with love / before it lives, comes forth, like a little girl / who weeps one moment and as quickly laughs, / the simple infant soul that has no knowledge / but, moved by a joyous maker, / gladly turns to what delights it” (Dante, *Purgatorio*, op. cit., Canto XVI, vv. 85-93).

⁵⁸ John 4:25-26; 28-30; 39-42.

⁵⁹ “This is faith, made possible by the initiative of Christ Himself there in front of him, to whom the man born blind adhered. Without this final passage of recognition, it is still not faith, at least according to the proprium of our charism. Giussani told us over and over again that faith is the recognition of a Presence, the presence of Christ” ([Davide Proserpi, “Faith the fulfillment of reason,” Beginning Day, 23 September 2023, p. 9](#)).

» they go to Him and ask Him if He can stay a few more days with them, so that they too could enjoy that Love that had reached the Samaritan woman, and He stays there with them for two days! This happens also for us: when we are small, we believe by hanging onto the words of parents and adults, but now we are the ones who want to understand and enter into relationship with Him to verify and make those words our own. Do you see the movement that gets generated!

Father Giussani says that what dominates in communion, in true friendship, is Him, not a claim on the other:⁶⁰ "True friendship reminds you in such a way that it fills your time as much as possible with the thought of the great Presence, of Christ. That's the reason why those who with Christ got together among themselves. They didn't even know each other and they became friends."⁶¹ What helps a friendship the most is "the awareness of destiny [...]: a clear awareness of destiny, love for destiny. If one loses sight of destiny, then he or she errs. Everyone, a hundred out of a hundred, lives like this; let's be attentive, because we too live like this [...]. Life's destiny isn't that thing we want. It's the mystery of God, awareness of the Mystery, awareness of destiny,"⁶² that we have learned to call Christ, who promises us the hundred-fold here below and eternal life, paradise, like that mother with her daughter. Within this friendship toward destiny, then, one discovers the enjoyment and the reasonableness of following: "It's because I've taken my own life seriously that I tell you, 'Look, please, because this is important for your life. If you follow me, you'll understand.'" If you follow, if you are open to following, you will surely understand, but if one "starts the car up" and at the same time "has his foot on the brake," he does not move, he remains there! The two things cannot go together! "Look, please," and you will recognize: this is a real revolution, because we think that we are "submissive" when we follow, and instead, our own mature consciousness is beginning: "If you follow me, you'll understand. And then, after, you'll follow yourself. Following me is like following yourself, we're friends."⁶³ True following is a friendship. True obedience is a friendship. "Bit by bit you begin to understand, you no longer depend on who says it to you. Bit by bit as it's said to you, it's as if the one who told you has become one with you yourself. You follow yourself. At its limit, the extreme form of obedience is following the discovery of yourself operating in the light of the words and example of another, without which you fumbled in the dark, or lived like an animal."⁶⁴ This communion, this friendship is fruitful and expands, and therefore, the last point this morning is mission.

Mission: "We have to carry everywhere this new humanity by which man loves man." In a talk, Father Giussani describes how the charisma was first spread: "The Movement for many years did not have teachers or priests, and it established itself in various Italian regions and even in Brazil solely through young people who were engaged in this process of Christianizing the world, through that cultural phenomenon that had been set aflame in them and developed in them [like the Samaritan woman: she found faith and that faith began to gush forth, set her on fire, and then illuminate others]. We have to return to this. One of the aspects of the schematism to which we have entrusted our hope is that the adults do everything."⁶⁵ Some of you are present here because of the initiative of another, because someone took to heart »

⁶⁰ "So what is friendship? Friendship, in its minimal state, is the encounter of one person with another person whose destiny he or she desires more than his or her own life: I desire your destiny more than I desire my life. The other reciprocates this and desires my destiny more than his or her life" (Luigi Giussani, *Is it Possible to Live This Way? Volume 1: Faith*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal 2008, p. 146).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 135-136.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁶⁵ Luigi Giussani, *Il rischio educativo. Come creazione di personalità e di storia* [The Risk of Education. As creation of personality and history], SEI, Turin 1995, p. 89, translation ours.

» your destiny: "A year ago, I came, 'harassed' by the invitation of my sister to participate in the GS Triduum. I had already met GS before, but then, for various reasons, I had considered it totally useless. She did not give up on me. She must have asked me at least 50 times to come to the Triduum, even though my initial answer was always a dry and contemptuous 'no.' And yet, she continued to insist, so that I couldn't do anything but accept her proposal. Why? Her desire to communicate all the beauty that she had seen had so captured me that I wanted to see as well. I wanted to see the same beauty she had seen. Last Triduum she put me in front of this beauty. Something that I wanted to avoid completely [like the Samaritan woman!], and I thought could not exist, was here [it can be the Triduum, or an evening of singing the songs of our history in your community, or watching a film together, the Meeting, a gathering of those who will be graduating, a Raggio, an attempt to be a presence in your school...], in front of me: the way of singing, of being in silence on the bus, of praying and listening, were totally different from the way I thought things could be done. The kids with whom I exchanged looks had that same desire for truth that I had lost, but it was awakening again in me, stronger than ever. In that moment, I felt myself loved, loved truly by 'an eternal Love.' That Love overwhelmed me so much that I couldn't do anything but entrust myself to it." Here it is: the mission is to take to heart the destiny of the other. In the Via Crucis we will listen to this phrase "take my destiny to heart," *gere curam mei finis!*⁶⁶ God has taken our destiny to heart, so much so that He became flesh and raised up the Church. Therefore: communion, friendship, and mission!

We are giving you the gift now, in conclusion, a video of Father Giussani! I do not know how many of you ever saw him, maybe no one. Now we enjoy him with all his passionate impetuosity!

Father Giussani

"The faith is like a great working hypothesis that comes to us from tradition. But if the work of experience is lacking, it remains at a purely abstract level and becomes only rituals or moralistic preoccupations, while faith is life, it is a way of conceiving and feeling life. And this is our supreme task: not to be a father or mother, not to be a journalist or an engineer, not to be a soldier or a worker, not to win elections or to be a slave to our boss. It is not this: our task is to spread the great message of Christ in the world. The gift of faith has been given to me so that I can give it to others, communicate it. The gift of faith has been given to us so that we can communicate it, and our life will be judged on this. So that man may know Christ, so that humanity may know Christ—this is the task of the one who is called, the task of the people of God: mission."⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Confutatis*, from *Requiem in D Minor for soloists, choir, and orchestra*, K 626.

⁶⁷ [Video—Father Luigi Giussani, Il pensiero, i discorsi, la fede](#) [Thought, conversations, faith] (from 36:10 to 37:50).