

**Pilgrimage to Częstochowa  
of high-school graduates, undergraduates and recent graduates  
of Communion and Liberation  
August 2024**

**Message from Davide Prospero**

Dear Friends,

it is always a moving surprise for the whole movement at this time of year to be able to set our eyes on you, young recent high school graduates, undergraduates and graduates, who are ready to undertake such a demanding gesture like the pilgrimage to Częstochowa, proposed by the movement in the middle of summer, when you could be spending your vacations elsewhere. It really must be worth it! We are deeply grateful to you: you are the powerful sign for all of us of a burst of freedom, in all its power, of adherence to the Mystery you have encountered in the faces of our companionship; of freedom that adheres to what you have experienced in your everyday life as corresponding infinitely more than anything else to your desire for happiness and fulfillment. A burst of petition and entrustment to Mary, the good mother who is always attentive to the needs of Her children, the security of our hope in the face of the unpredictability of the future. It is so, you are right: there is no more appropriate form of expressing this adherence than this gesture; there is no more desired goal to reach at this juncture of your life than that Shrine. It really is the concrete expression of your faith within this burst of freedom that first of all surprises us. Thank you!

It is beautiful that your faith is expressed in following a path together with your friends – and the many new friends you will meet along the way. The pilgrimage experienced together, as a sign of a companionship that always accompanies and guides you, is the other great lesson to remember in life. Each step is personal, but it is taken in communion with others within a path of following that truly sets you free. Take to heart to live this journey of entrustment in this way.

But I want to emphasize the most important thing to be grateful for: knowing that you are on the journey toward to one who precedes us in her adherence to Jesus and his friendship. Your journey, the journey of each of us, could not take place without the one who first sighed her “Yes.” I entrust these words of Fr. Giussani to you, spoken precisely on a pilgrimage and dedicated to Our Lady. They perfectly summarize what I have tried to tell you: “A woman whom God called ‘Mama’! The humanity of this voice echoes through the entire history of the world. All the world is made up of little men, incapable of living and being themselves in the truth if they do not have this mother. Only such a faith can make a man feel that his steps are accompanied. If walking together is not an aid to the certainty of destiny, it would not be a truly human companionship. The throng of this pilgrimage makes all of us become one thing. Devotion to the Mother of God testifies to the wonderful reality that has occurred in the world. Your pilgrimage makes the force of faith lively and evident: religion is not ‘a gentle oblivion of life’s toil’ or ‘a pensive yearning for peace’ as a by now unknown poet could say, but is a peace which finds in sacrifice its maternal womb and its reason for the fervor of human activity” (‘Greeting to the participants in the pilgrimage,’ *Traces*, No. 7/2001).

We are truly incapable of living in truth without this mother! In communicating to you the companionship of the movement during this pilgrimage towards the tender embrace of Mary, I bid that it may make “the force of faith lively and evident.” May you discover how all the questions and desires that forcefully appear on the horizon of your days at this stage of your lives, so full of crucial choices, can find “peace which finds in sacrifice its maternal womb and its reason for the fervor of human activity” in faith in Jesus and in belonging to his companionship. We are called to this fervor in every moment that God gives to us, to bring this peace to everyone in a world that seems to no longer find any foothold of true hope.

I would like to conclude precisely on this point of the mission to which you are called, together with us all. The book *Sulle tracce di Cristo [In the Footsteps of Christ]*, the account of the pilgrimage that Fr. Giussani made to the Holy Land in 1986 written by Luigi Amicone, has recently been republished. I invite you to read it, and allow me to quote here a passage from the preface written by Cardinal Pizzaballa for this new edition: “Every day we are hit by increasingly tragic news and increasingly despairing analyses; it seems there is no way out, that peace is impossible. And even we Christians can give in to this climate and lose hope. [...] When we allow ourselves to be overcome by sadness and despair, we overlook an essential detail, that is, that all our hope is in a man who went up on the cross for us and rose again to deliver us from evil. The Church was born under the cross, where the Son of God, crowned with thorns, became the king of the world. His pierced heart, by the power of God, turned a failure into victory” (*Sulle tracce di Cristo [In the Footsteps of Christ]*, Bur, Milan 2024, p. VII).

I entrust our movement to your prayers. And thank you for your witness!

In friendship,

**Davide Prospero**