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Introduction to The School of Community (Part II)

Fr. José Medina, February 16, 2018

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I want to take the opportunity on this introduction of the second part of the work we are doing on chapter 8 of Why the Church – "The Divine in the Church" -- to relaunch and summarize the work that we have done to date. You may remember a month and a half ago I left you with the question that Davide Prosperi had put before us at the Beginning Day: *"How can we help each other to live the awareness of dependence?"*

The past few weeks, attending School of Community and listening to much of the feedback regarding the work that we've done, it became clear to me that the word dependence is not an easy one for us. To depend, to obey, to yield, to belong are words that, somehow, we identify with a denial or a nullification our freedom. Therefore, quickly enough we find them profoundly inhuman.

In the first part of today's introduction, I want to delve into this aspect which coincides with the work that we've done during the School of Community in this past month and a half.

In the first part of the year's School of Community, in the first part of chapter 8, through revisiting the dogmas, the tradition, the magisterium, we are being put before the fact that *"the ultimate meaning of existence and history – the truth – which the Church communicates to us with define clarity and certainty."* (Luigi Giussani, Why the Church, p. 179) As we remember what we read about the life of the Trinity, we come to understand that *"[I] never [say] the word 'I' so intensely as when [I perceive] the unity of [my] identity with the same passion as [I say] 'you.'"* (LG, WTC, p.167)

As Davide Prosperi reminded us in the Beginning Day, *"Life becomes useful when it becomes obedience. Ultimately, it is an openness to the presence of Christ; a yielding to the greatness that Another wants to achieve in you and for you, for the world, in a way that is perhaps different from how you would have it. We live so that Christ may be acknowledge everywhere. We live for the human glory of Christ."*

According to Fr. Giussani, this is the foundation and the absolute value of every single person. The value of the individual does not rely in the immediate participation to the flow of reality. We didn't make ourselves and we come to an end in this world. *"Man's greatness and his freedom derive from a direct dependence on God, a condition by which man realizes and affirms himself. Dependence on God is the primary condition for what truly interests man."* (Giussani, At the Origin of the Christian Claim, p. 87) This is the paradox of our existence, this is the point where we find much difficulty: *"My relationship with God is defined by that unique phenomenon which lies in the fact that the more deeply I abandon myself to Him, the more completely I let Him penetrate my being, the more powerfully he--the Creator--gains authority in me, the more I become myself."* (Giussani, At the Origin of the Christian Claim, p. 87)

To depend is to belong, to belong is to become free. This is the great paradox of existence. *"Without this relationship, man as an individual cannot have a face of his own, could not possibly be a person, a protagonist in the universal design, in the history of the world."* (LG, OCC, p. 87)

The Tension between belonging and freedom

It's second nature for us to understand the freedom that derives from belonging by looking at our experience, (We know this is what happened to us as we grew in age and maturity because without the love of another, our personality doesn't develop. It's as if without a relationship with another, without the capacity to be in relationship with another, we become almost like psychopaths without a personality, without a capacity to be creative) at the same time, we perceive this great contradiction between belonging and freedom.

This paradox is not new to us, it's quite old. We see its origin in Genesis 3, where we read that, "*in the day you eat from [this tree] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.*" (Gen 3:5) Be like God but without being in relationship with Him, without belonging to Him, without obeying to Him, without yielding to Him. It's the first moment in the recorded history of the Bible in which we are witnesses to the rupture of the relationship with God. And this rupture in the relationship with Him comes with grave consequences. While we are free to define ourselves, free to give meaning to what we do, while we choose to become the measure of everything, we suffer pain, we are accompanied by solitude. This is the Mystery.

Claiming the freedom to self-define, to choose, to reshape everything at my will, I find myself at a loss, impotent. The German philosopher Fichte has this beautiful expression, "*to be free is nothing, [to have the option, to have the possibility of doing what I want is nothing,] to become free is heavenly.*" To become free is everything. But this becoming free, this experience of freedom, is what we lack, is what we can't generate on our own (Often, we think about freedom in the negative, we think about freedom in legal or moral terms. But to have options does not entail fulfillment. We must begin to think of freedom in the positive, as this awakening in us when we experience fulfillment, like an engine that roars into life, that brings the vitality. Think about how many times Fr. Carrón continuously encourages us to remember this experience of freedom in the experience of being loved, in being chosen; the experience of a desire that is fulfilled).

In Mark, we hear the words that Francis Xavier remembers from his encounter with Ignatius, "*What profits to gain the whole world but lose yourself?*" (cfr. Mark 16:26) What profits you to actually have the capacity to choose whatever you want, to do as you please, to be the measure of your action and the measure of your goal and your fulfillment, if you--in the process of doing so--lose yourself? Those words resound strongly through the fabric of history because, in claiming my independence, in claiming that I can define myself, I need to force myself to numb my deepest desires, my longings, to opt for something that is predictable and already defined, to opt for forms that are safe. This way, we naturally decay in formalism.

Rediscovering Belonging

Our discovery in life, our life's journey, is precisely this task of discovering what belonging is, so that it may become truer, so that it may become good, so that it may become freeing.

All through the work of Fr. Giussani, all through his words and through speeches, we can hear this resounding desire to continuously educate to this dependence. "*This unique relationship with God, insofar as it is recognized and lived, is called religiosity,*" and this education to dependence, this education to religiosity, is the main task of the life of the Church; to introduce one another, to educate into the life of God. Fr. Giussani states that Christian religiosity arises as the one and only condition to being

human. In other words, to be intensely human is to be religious. Being fulfilled is the byproduct of my communing with, my belonging to, my being in relationship with the Father.

Let's look at and try to, in a sense, purify the meaning of this word dependence, that for us is so often filled with formalism, using the words of an Irish poet, John O'Donohue, who speaks of belonging in these terms: "*Belonging is a circle that embraces everything; if we reject it, we damage our nature. [...] When we deny it, we grow cold and empty. [...] The word 'belonging' holds together the two fundamental aspects of life: Being and Longing, the longing of our Being and the Being of our Longing.*" (John O'Donohue, *Eternal Echoes*, p.2) Belonging is not something that we can create with our own action, with our own doing; it's an ontological dimension. It's to be. We long to be. We long to be with the one who gives us being. Everything in us screams and tends towards this being.

As the poet says, "*Something in you knows, perhaps remembers, that eternal belonging liberates longing into the surest and most potent creativity. This is why your longing is often wiser than your conventional sense of appropriateness, safety and truth.*" (JO, EE, p.8) We long for great things, our desire invites us to leave these safe spaces and to throw ourselves into something other, that is, at the same time, profoundly familiar. We long to be ourselves. We often use this sentence. We understand who a friend is to us precisely because he allows us to be, yet we easily get discouraged, lost, distracted. O'Donohue continues, "*Months and years pass, and you fumble on, still incapable of finding a foothold on the path of time you walk. A large proportion of your activity distracts you from remembering [...] You mistake the insistent pressure of daily demands for reality, and your more delicate and intuitive nature wilts. When you awake from your obsessions, you feel cheated. Your longing is being numbed, and your belonging becoming merely external. Your way of life has so little to do with what you feel and love in the world but because of the many demands on you and responsibilities you have, you feel helpless to gather yourself; you are dragged in so many directions away from true belonging.*" (JO, EE, p. 8)

Longing for a You

This is the dizzying human condition in which we find ourselves. We long for someone. The truest nature of our lives, the truest nature of our person, lies in our longing to be with Another who makes me be; someone that, yet, we cannot reach or build on our own. The journey is not something we can project ourselves. Jesus answers this dizzying human condition by involving Himself with us. We read in the School of Community, "*The Incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus is the most enlightening of the hypothesis which gives unity to human history. (...) His profound involvement with everything man might do. All things belong to Him. I don't know how, only the divine itself can, by becoming involved in my trials, by enlightening and sustaining me along the path.*" The Mystery, by incarnating Himself in a man, has penetrated the fabric of space and time to reach out to you and I, to speak to you and I in human terms. The Mystery, in doing so, "*has altered the man-destiny relationship which will no longer be based in human effort.*" (Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, p.31) This is the content of the Christian message: no longer a human effort to make oneself truly be who we are potentially, but the acknowledgement of a fact in history to which we can belong, relate to, in human terms.

The divine communicates itself by osmosis

In the content of the next two months of School of Community, the second part of this chapter, "The Divine in the Church," we explore how this new being, this new humanity arises, takes place, takes hold of me. We heard the word osmosis. Giussani, with this word, highlights how the method is no

longer a human effort, it is no longer my attempt to make myself be, but the acknowledgement, the acceptance--as we heard at the very beginning--the yielding to a grace that Another wants to achieve in me in ways that, perhaps, are different from the ways I understood.

We read, in *School of Community*, that “*the introduction to the life of God into a more profound relationship with being that cannot be achieved by human effort happens through osmosis.*” We read, “*Those who adhere to this gratuitous initiative of God shall enter into a more profound relationship with Being to the extent that they become, as Paul says, part of Christ, members of His Body.*” (LG, WTC, p.182) It is through osmosis that the Mystery slowly seeps into our being. Fr. Giussani says that anyone who lives the mystery of the ecclesial community receives a change in his nature. He continues, “*We are before the communication of the divine itself, of man’s sharing God’s life, the ontological density of which is only hinted at in the expression ‘children of God.’*” (LG, WTC, p. 179) This is the heart of the Christian message, why we announce Jesus Christ as the New Adam, the healing of the rupture in the relationship between man and God.

How does osmosis work? The mechanics of the divine communication remain mysterious, yet we can see the effects: through grace, through the sacraments, by sharing in the life of the community, the “I,” my personhood, is exalted.

“*This new reality, this new being, this belonging, is communicated through a person that shares life with an authentic ecclesial community because it penetrates our entire fiber through the sacraments, the gestures that Christ has established.*” It’s quite fascinating to hear, as you will read in the next few weeks, that “*the sacraments indicate man’s ideal structure,*” they express this new humanity, but are not to be understood as some individualistic effort. Christian life, Fr. Giussani says, “*Cannot ever be conceived as an individualistic relationship with Christ. It is, nevertheless, a highly personal one, unfolding within the consciousness of fraternal relationships and within the bounds of personal responsibility towards the world. And here lies the difference between ‘individualistic’ and ‘personal.’*” (LG, WTC, p.186) The dynamic of revelation ceases to emphasize ingeniousness and initiative and it stresses the simple recognition of a fact, of someone to follow, someone that is happening now, that I long for, that I belong to. It stresses love and freedom over will. In the words of Fr. Giussani, “*Love, in fact, represents man’s only true dependence, the affirmation of the Other as our very substance, the supreme choice of freedom.*” (LG, OCC, p.31) Therefore, the saint is not the strong willed who chooses the right thing at all times, but “*The one who adheres, who corresponds to God, the one who adheres to the gratuitous initiative of God. Only he who, in freedom, loves and chooses God and accepts what God creates in him, will enter into a more profound relationship with being to the extent of becoming part of Christ.*”

Finally, we must always keep in mind that this transformation of our being, which is not in our control, does not occur mechanically. It requires our freedom. It only happens, Fr. Giussani says, “*if man makes that act a conscious experience, by accepting its significance, by making room for it, and by allowing himself to be invested by it.*” (LG, WTC, p.189)

As we continue in our work of School of Community and, at the same time, we live the season of Lent, I encourage you to continue the work that I previously indicated: the proposal of adhering, of paying attention to singing and praying because it is through praying that we allow ourselves to be open to God.

Often in our Lenten observances, we tend to sacrifice the things that we love most. But, at times, this sacrifice can be more an act of the will than one of memory. I encourage you, as you think about your Lenten observances, to think of opportunities to increase this memory, to increase our awareness, to increase our longing to be with Him. Therefore, Lent, as Fr. Giussani says, “is a privileged time to be with Him.” It’s a privileged time to be with friends who remind us of this longing for Him, it’s a time to pray, to allow ourselves to expose ourselves to the power of God. Therefore, our Lenten observance should not be a sacrifice of our desire, but an increase of our longing.

In these last few weeks, many people have expressed to me the great discovery in those few minutes spent praying the evening prayer and doing School of Community, and at the same time, the difficulty in being faithful to it. Let’s help and accompany one another in sustaining our desire. We may fall many times. If we forget, let’s ask for help to be reminded. If we fail, let’s do it with somebody else. I encourage you to actually use this time of Lent to be with others; to be with your friends, to be with your family, to pray with your friends and family.

And with this, I wish you a happy Lent.

8. The Divine in the Church pp. 179-180

THE SELF-COMMUNICATION OF A DIVINE REALITY

a) *Supernatural or Sanctifying Grace [1/3]*

At this point, we must consider the second aspect of the divine which constitutes the Church, whose mission it is to channel it to the world. The heart of the Christian message: how living within the Church, living the presence of Christ, communicates a divine reality.

John sets before us the unprecedented fact: "And the Word was made flesh." In this way, he shows us that we do not find ourselves simply in front of the communication of truth, a revelation of the mystery of being. **We are before the communication of the divine itself**, of man's sharing in God's life, the ontological density of which is only hinted at in the expression "children of God." We are dealing with a communication touching and transforming the whole being of man.

Within the man to whom Christ draws near and who freely desires and accepts the relationship with him - and, therefore, within the Church - his nature as a man changes. **This is an ontological "exaltation" of the "I," a leap in quality in the participation of Being.**

In the life of the Church, Being, God, the Word made flesh, Christ communicates to man the gift of a more profound participation in the origin of everything. In this way, man remains man but becomes something more. Man within the Church, is offered a "supernatural" participation in Being. This is the most fascinating element of the Christian announcement.



8. The Divine in the Church pp. 180-182

THE SELF-COMMUNICATION OF A DIVINE REALITY

a) *Supernatural or Sanctifying Grace* [2/3]

The Gospel calls this profound self-communication of the divine reality "being born again." "How can anyone who is already old be born again?" (John 3: 4) Christian tradition has an expression to describe the realization of this new way of being: "**supernatural or sanctifying grace.**"

The dynamism remains mysterious. It is not for us to know "how," but we can perceive its presence. Anyone who lives the mystery of the ecclesial community receives a change in his nature. We cannot understand how this happens, how it is that our person changes; yet if we take this phenomenon into consideration, if we live it, if we assume a commitment to it, then we will become different in a verifiable way.

Grace indicates the total gratuitousness of the phenomenon it defines because only the self-communication of the divine, the communication of self that Christ works in our lives (making us different people from the people we might have been).

The saint indicates a person who adheres, who corresponds to God. The term, sanctifying grace, then, confirms that those who adhere to this gratuitous initiative of God shall enter a more profound relationship with Being to the extent that they become, as Paul says, part of Christ, members of his body: "Now Christ's body is yourselves, each of you with a part to play in the whole" (1 Cor. 12: 27).

The force of this announcement - that we have been recreated - has been weakened in our consciousness! We have depleted the potential of this new self-awareness, of this different sense of ourselves, of our "I," which triggers all our energy for action. The concept of "sanctifying grace" has been emptied through moralistic usage, and the two most perfect and most beautiful words in all theology no longer express their own power.

8. The Divine in the Church pp. 182-183

THE SELF-COMMUNICATION OF A DIVINE REALITY

a) *Supernatural or Sanctifying Grace [3/3]*

A new phenomenon which penetrated history and human society **responds to an unconscious need of all humanity.** “For the whole creation is waiting with eagerness for the children of God to be revealed. ... the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labor pains” (Rom. 8: 19,22).

Without being fully conscious of what this implies - because of the impossibility of imagining God's initiative - man, in whatever age he lives, has been waiting for this new man. And, even more so, the Christian - or whoever wants to verify the content of the announcement which the Church has prolonged throughout history - cannot ignore that groan. He joins in it with all his inadequate response, remaining a protagonist of the universal attraction of the Christian adventure.

In the Christian, the newness is called to awaken and to manifest itself like **the dawn of a new day.** This is Christianity in history, the Church in the society of the times, a Christian community in its environment, a Christian man in the circumstances of his day-to-day living; the dawning of a different humanity, of a different human community, a community that is, new, truer.



8. The Divine in the Church pp. 183-186

THE SELF-COMMUNICATION OF A DIVINE REALITY

b) By Means of Effective Signs: The Sacraments

How is this supernatural grace, this ontological leap of quality communicated within us? This new reality is communicated through a person's sharing in the life of the authentic ecclesial community, by means of gestures, called sacraments.

the sacrament is the first aspect of this self-communication of the divine within human experience. In this sense, the Church describes itself as sacrament. We have seen how care for the tangible, for concrete teaching, was part of Jesus' pedagogy for his self-revelation. **The sacraments put us in contact with a reality more profound than the one we can see.** They are the signs communicating a divine reality in which the presence of Christ lies.

For a widespread current in Christian thinking today conceives of the sacraments as some kind of secret individual prescription, as if grace and salvation were a private reserve, quite apart from the individual's belonging to the whole community of the Body of Christ. **The acts of Christ's mystery are not the formula for one individual life of devotion.** Rather, they constitute the action of Jesus himself who, in the Church, stoops to assist human weakness just as he used to stoop at the sight of the twisted body of a cripple, taking hold of that weakness just as it is, so that he can change it.

Thus, while the Christian life cannot ever be conceived as an individualistic relationship with Christ, it is, nevertheless, a highly personal one, unfolding within the consciousness of fraternal relationships and within the bounds of personal responsibility towards the world. **And here lies the difference between "individualistic" and "personal."** Both refer to the attitude of an individual who either confronts things from the limited perspective of his isolated "I" or perceives himself as the subject of universal relationships because his essence is relationship with the Infinite and his task is to participate in the redeeming and triumphal sacrifice of Christ, who died and rose again.

8. The Divine in the Church pp. 186-189

THE SELF-COMMUNICATION OF A DIVINE REALITY

b) By Means of Effective Signs: The Sacraments



There is a community of life, and it is immeasurably deep. The same current of grace flows through all alike, the same active power of God. The same real Christ is present in all. And it is precisely this entire existence of a new *creatureliness* that we become aware of every time we look at the sacramental signs the Church proposes.

Christ continues to be present and to fulfil those acts of salvation at the most significant, fundamental moments in the life of man, moments that represent a turning point - in man's happy fulfillment through baptism and the eucharist or in his struggles, he also addressed aspects of the fragility of living, not just moral fragility through the sacrament of confession, but physical fragility too, by anointing, the sick with holy oil, the ill, whose social function as persons is always acknowledged until the very last instants of life. He wanted to be there to respond to the human need for the completion of the "I" and for the continuity of the race through marriage, in a family that procreates and educates. He wanted to respond to the human need to have present and active the ideal prophecy because of which it is worthwhile for man to give life and to teach life, and he created ordination, the sacrament conferring the priesthood.

He truly is the Man-God who never forgets that he is a man. And he wanted to leave us his company in the fundamental aspects of living, almost entrusting them with the expressive development of our existence in him. **The sacrament, then, is the experience of a relationship with Christ contained in a concrete, physical act, an effective sign of grace.**

The sacrament is the typical structure of every act of the new individual, the ultimate structure of a person's every action. Its dimension is the immediate relationship with Christ, the definitive man, and, in this sense, its dimension, then, is the truth of humanity. And even though we remain inept, incapable, sinners, we yet live his new dimension, his new identity fully belonging to the communion.

The "I" is no longer an "I" torn out of a given context. It becomes a "we:" every action becomes charged with a responsibility we all share, and even the most secret act has the task of edifying totality.

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THE SELF-COMMUNICATION OF A DIVINE REALITY

b) In Free Personal Participation

We have seen that the sacrament indicates man's ideal structure. It expresses the new man, so the continual drawing near to it allows these supernatural connotations slowly to penetrate man. This is the metamorphosis Paul suggests when he speaks of renewal of the mind or of putting on Christ. **This happens by living the life of the Christian community because it penetrates our entire fiber through the sacraments, the gestures that Christ established.**

This transformation does not, however, occur mechanically. Rather, it comes through our freedom. It only happens if man makes that act a conscious experience, by accepting its significance, by making room for it, and by allowing himself to be invested by it. **Man must participate in the sacrament as a free man, in full conscience.**

Man is a composite of perceivable experience and attitudes that come from within, and both these factors must be present if humanity is to be fulfilled to the utmost in the unfolding of a given event. And Christianity, in making its urgent appeal to freedom of conscience, and given its concern for tangible things, responds to both these factors.

Therefore, the free conscience of the individual who believes is required not to envelop itself in automatic gestures, in repetitive suffocating cycles but to discover a reality. Moreover, we would add, this conscience's calling is to enter, with all the resources of its humanity, into profound contact with this reality.

8. The Divine in the Church pp. 193-195

THE SELF-COMMUNICATION OF A DIVINE REALITY

c) *In Free Personal Participation*

Outwardly, this might seem paradoxical, and some objection might very well be: how can this same Christian concept, which is so intransigent and peremptory in affirming the totality of the power of God, suddenly declare itself so indissolubly linked with an anthropological vision exalting freedom?

While it is true that the bond between the freedom of God and the freedom of man is a bond, it also holds that the elements of this bond are very clear indeed. The created person in the Christian vision participates in God's primary characteristic - which is that of being himself - for the simple reason that the person derives from God, and in this way, in his dependence, the created person affirms and distinguishes himself.

To understand this better, we could draw an albeit fragile comparison with artistic creation. The more powerful a person's creativity is, the more that individual's creation has, so to speak, personality. It exists, lasts, and affirms itself as time passes. This, in fact, is the characteristic of a work of art, just as everything born of God's genius and infinite power acquires an unmistakable identity of its own, for the simple reason that it participates in God.

Christianity, of course, can be reduced to a mechanism. But in asserting the constant, articulated presence in the life of man of Another who created and recreated him, the Christian message requires that man freely adhere to this presence. And it ensures the type of certainty that does not depend on any special effort or any automatism. It depends, rather, on the Other's Love.

At this point, it might seem that the hypothesis of Christian salvation is somewhat precarious. However, nothing could be further from the truth. **Salvation for the Christian means freely accepting the companionship of a merciful God who wanted to intervene and remain in history.** Naturally, this is not a mechanical formula, guaranteeing a result. Like any form of love, it implies the risk of one's freedom.

“Something that comes before”

Life of Luigi Giussani, p. 859

After the pilgrimage to Lourdes and the trip to Spain, early 1993 was marked by a conversation between Giussani and a group of cl leaders that was destined to leave a profound imprint on the life of the entire movement. The discussion centered around the topic of the young working members of cl and their weekly catechesis (the School of Community), which had, for some time, involved an increasing number of working people. Still to this day, the School of Community is the fundamental tool through which the members of the movement learn a Christian mentality.

In the discussion, Giancarlo Cesana pointed out that, from what he had seen, this group of young people had “the School of Community as their only educational tool.” Giussani specified: “Not the only tool, but the most important one for developing something that comes before.” The entire, long conversation that followed was an attempt to unpack and analyze this statement. Someone asked for an explanation, and Cesana replied, what comes before is “the charism, that is, the way through which, for each of us, the encounter was made possible in its totality. The entire issue has to do with our belonging to this.”

Then it was Giussani’s turn. He appealed to his listeners’ imaginations: if, hypothetically, the people who had started the movement thirty-five years earlier were to get together, the following situation might happen: *“They would feel like a group of friends. They would feel like friends because of a cherished memory. In the present, an experience they once had would have become a ‘cherished memory.’”* This was the thing that came before, at the start of it all.

Giussani agreed with what Cesana had said: it was true that the thing that came first was the charism, “but if you put it that way, then it’s just another word in need of an explanation.” While “‘what exists before’ should be something that has no need of explanation, but needs only to be seen, caught, intercepted. It’s something that stirs up an emotion, that serves to call us back. The word I would use instead is ‘diversity’: the phenomenon of a different humanity.” In light of this, Giussani acknowledged that the School of Community was the principal tool, in which “the essential thing (essential more than principal) is that no word goes unexplained or without justification.” This meant giving an account of “the experience of correspondence between a presence and the structural needs of the heart. If someone discovers this correspondence, then they feel the reverberation of that same thing that happened ten years before, or twenty-five years before, as they sat at their desk in their third or fourth year at Berchet, for example” (here, see pages 167 et seq.).

According to Giussani, the past was doomed to remain just a cherished memory, “unless it changes the present, unless it’s a determinative factor for the present, unless it’s a determinative response to the present.” The experience of the charism, therefore, was “bumping into a diversity of human reality, that is recognizable even for someone who was never at Berchet, who was never at the university, someone who was always with the revolutionaries, like Aldo Brandirali” (here, see page 682). It was an extremely simple experience, within reach for anyone and everyone: bumping into a different human presence, into something that happened right before one’s eyes.

Giussani went on: “Either this impact is constantly repeated, or else you don’t go forward: you immediately theorize, you immediately ideologize.” This was so true that even three months after that first encounter, “if one does not live the impact with a new reality, or new humanity, he won’t understand what happened just three months before. He’ll be reasoning about what happened three months ago, but not living its evolution.”

Because of this dynamic, Giussani said, it was correct to say that “bumping into a new human reality is a grace; it’s always a grace. Otherwise it becomes the attempted endeavor to discover your own thoughts or affirm your own assumptions, your own critical capacities.” Instead, “a year later, three years later, twenty years later it’s still that! Twenty years later, the thing goes on if you start from your impact with a new reality.” In order for this to happen, in addition to grace, the act of freedom that Christ had called “vigilance” was necessary, so that “if I spend five years making constant mistakes, if I have this simplicity and openness, I pick up again, even better than the guy who was undaunted the whole time, and never made a single mistake.”

Giussani went back to his point and wondered how one could achieve continuity with what had begun: *“Through an impact that is always full of wonder as though it were the first time.”* Otherwise, instead of wonder, a person would be dominated by *“the thoughts my education permits me to have, the criticisms that my maturing sensibility makes of what I have lived and what I see, and the choices that I impose through my demands.”*

At the conclusion, as was his habit, Giussani presented a summary of the salient points of the discussion. He presented them as the factors that make up a movement. The first factor was *“the person bumping into a human diversity. It is an event because it corresponds to something that I am waiting for: it has certainty, hope, and usefulness of time.”* But this called for careful attention: *“The initial phenomenon is destined to be the initial and original phenomenon of every moment.”* Giussani explained that this means even that, *“whatever moment of the evolution we focus on, the principal thing about that moment is the same thing that was there at the beginning. Not how it was in the beginning, but what it was in the beginning.”* His second point was: *“In this impact, the surprise I have, the hope that comes from it, the presentiment I have and that moves me to follow—how can it be educated?”*

It was clear to Giussani that the School of Community was the “explanatory and unifying” tool. But it was necessary to have “some person or group of people in whom you could see the initial impact reproduced.” And this “collects everything into the surprise of the reason they give for every word they say. The reasons they give for every word makes us pass ‘from light to light,’ as Saint Paul said.” It was important for the people who spoke in a School of Community “to offer the starting point for the renewal of the surprise and communicate an experience they are having—they can’t just be playing a role!” By communicating an experience, the speaker, “broadens himself by giving reasons for the words he uses.” This required poverty of spirit, without which, Giussani warned, it was impossible to hear explanations because of “the objections raised by your habitual thoughts, or the ones you are most attached to, or the ones you want prevail. ‘What could anyone possibly learn from an ignorant?’” the Pharisees had said of the man born blind. Giussani reminded the leaders, who were used to speaking often and at length: “I use the specific words I use because it clarifies an answer to the needs of my heart, which are like yours, and that is why I offer it to you.” This meant “communicating the experience one lives with the light and the heat that those words give off, that they offer as a correspondence to the heart in search of its own destiny.”

The third factor of a movement was “everything else,” life in its entirety. This was because “the word, which the School of Community illuminates in its profound connection with the heart, becomes a subject working in the world, inevitably. And the work starts there. Because the work is nothing more than a self who, in relationship with the ideal, tries to mobilize reality according to that ideal.”

“An encounter of Grace with a different humanity”

Life of Luigi Giussani, p. 884

The date 16 October 1993 marked fifteen years of the pontificate of John Paul II. Giussani spoke about the occasion in an article he wrote for *Avvenire*: “*How empty the world seemed when John Paul I’s smile vanished. But we can see now that that was the mysterious way in which God prepared the Church for the entrance of Karol Wojtyła.*” He recalled, “*We soon learned to understand that his words, uttered in what was still a halting Italian, and his gaze, already so familiar, had the friendly and intimate strength of He who, in his providential design, had placed him close to us so that we would more easily recognize Him as [...] the ‘centre of the cosmos and of history.’*”

Giussani pointed out that some historians were already trying to place him in historical categories. But in his view it was more accurate to grasp the entirety of the pontificate as it was captured in John Paul’s first encyclical, *Redemptor hominis*, which he called “the Magna Carta of Christianity of the third millennium.”

Then, in a few, pointed words, he outlined the encyclicals and documents that had followed *Redemptor hominis*, which he said illuminated “*the depth of the mystery of God and the Church,*” as well as, at the same time, “*the various nodes of human existence: from the family to the great social issues, from work to physical and moral suffering, to concern for the historical destiny of humankind on earth.*”

Redemptoris missio had “placed before the heart of the Church the supreme task of mission, as the way of truth and freedom.” The apostolic exhortations *Familiaris consortio*, *Christifideles laici*, and *Pastores dabo vobis* “restored substance to the subject of the Christian people and to its presence in the world.” The new Code of Canon Law “gave an objective structure to the organic nature of the ecclesial communio, promoting freedom for the layperson, the believer.” The new Catechism of the Catholic Church “re-established the great certainties of the Church: defense and support of the Christian people.” And all of this had been laid out “under the sweet and tender gaze of the Madonna: *Redemptoris Mater.*”

The figure of the pope, according to Giussani, was evidence of the way in which “Christ touches and changes us and our brother and sister human beings: an encounter of Grace with a different humanity, with a reality of people changed by the encounter with Christ through the accent of a charism.”

A few days later, on 19 October 1993, Giussani was at the Vatican to take part in the Plenary Session of the Congregation for the Clergy, to which he would become an advisor in January 1994. He spoke on the topic: “*Life, ministry, and the permanent formation of priests.*” He described priests in light of Christ’s words, “*as the Father has sent me, so I send you.*” And he invited his listeners to imagine the first-century Church: “*If someone had seen an apostle on the Troad peninsula, or on a ship in the Mediterranean, or on the streets of Rome, and, after hearing him speak had asked, ‘Who are you? Why are you here?’ the whole answer would have been: ‘I was sent by Jesus of Nazareth. I am sent by Christ.’*”

At the end of the Plenary Session, on 22 October 1993, John Paul II received the participants in an audience and said, among other things: “*Configured to the Redeemer, Head, and Shepherd of the Church, a Priest must have a clear awareness of being, in a new way, the minister of Christ for his People.*” This meant having the awareness of being “*merely one who is ‘sent,’ in imitation of the Good Shepherd.*”

“A very grave moment for our movement”

Life of Luigi Giussani, p. 439

On 16 January 1972, at the leadership course for cl leaders, Giussani gave a warning: “We have arrived at a very grave moment for our movement: we have arrived at the point when our movement cannot tolerate for even one minute more an associational or organizational approach.” He was insistent: “The moment has come in which we can no longer exist—in the sense that we can no longer stand ourselves—if things don’t originate from life, that is, from below (but not from below according to a more or less socialist, or something else, or communitarian democratism [...]), from below as life transformed.”

Giussani was convinced that “the protest melt-down was able to happen because the value of self-awareness had not yet sprung loose, and only those who had the guilelessness of the Samaritan and Zacchaeus at heart were spared.” And this simplicity had to be found again by the adults of the movement. He returned to this topic on 28 August 1972, at the leadership course scheduled in Assisi, adding that “if the liberation of man were the fruit of politics and ascent, in order for the poor, the delicate, the weak to save themselves they would have to be indebted to other men, to others, to be the slaves of others, in addition to being freed by others. In reality it’s simpler than that, there’s a simpler way, that works for anyone, in any condition: being part of a companionship.” For Giussani, this was the method by which even nature “generates a new person: it places them in the bosom, the arms, and the relationship of a mother and a father.”

On 13 September 1973, at the diocesan diaconia (as the group of leaders of the movement was called) in Milan, Giussani again spoke of the risk of an associational reduction of the cl experience—which he had talked about continually throughout the previous year—and observed, *“For the vast majority of people in the movement, communion is identified with the sum of initiatives or the sum of relationships. This is not communion. Communion is a new nature of mine, a new nature, a new reality that entered the world and that makes a new nature in me, and means that my relationship with you has to be different.”*

The characteristic specific to the movement, he went on, was “the prevalence of fact over dialectic, and therefore of experience over discourse.” Giussani’s words became severe: “If the movement fails to recognize this, we will be distracted this coming year, we will be shattered. Because there is a dreadful urgency in this: the flourishing of our initiatives, the very life of the obligations we have taken on—all of it will collapse.” He said this while the activities connected with cl were multiplying. “Right now God shows us that that is not conversion; nor is it conversion to say: ‘we need to be morally coherent,’ because being morally coherent draws its strength and its very possibility to exist from a new mentality, a new self-awareness.”

He reiterated this with an image from the Gospel: “The Christian announcement is the Magdalene crying on Christ’s feet, and not going with men anymore was a consequence” of this love for Jesus. Because of it, “money no longer has the same value; women and men no longer have the same value; a career, time itself no longer have the same value that they have for the rest—their value is different.”

Giussani was driven by the same concern during the 1974 National Council, where he warned of two risks the movement was running: parochialism and intellectualism. *“In parochialism I go to the meetings, I live the relationships, and [...] whatever I find [...] I bend to suit my way of seeing things.”* The second risk concerned “the prevalence of discourse.” Those were months of great preoccupation for Giussani, and he spared no judgment, however harsh: *“There are a lot of people who are with us, but not of us. I hope they become of us, because if another Sixty-Eight happens, they will all go with the other side.”*

“Try to imagine: forty years in which all of life has pled for eternity!”

Life of Luigi Giussani, p. 1052

Giussani was too ill to go to Rimini for the fraternity spiritual exercises on 19 to 21 May 2000, and so they were led by Fr. Stefano Alberto.

Using teleconferencing, Giussani followed the reflections and the open assembly that followed. At the end, he asked if he could offer an impromptu greeting. His words, pronounced with great difficulty, were nevertheless full of certitude as he looked back on an uninterrupted story: *“I am speaking to you ... and all day today, all day yesterday and the day before—we have been talking to each other our entire life together. What is contained in our first songs is really true, right from the content of our first songs. I am not worthy of what You do for me.’ Think how, with every day that passes, I increase in myself the wonder at what God does! And God does it today because He has done it yesterday!”* He went on, quoting the same song, written by Chieffo: *“You see, I am not worthy of what You do for me, I who have nothing to give to You.’ However, I tell You, ‘If you want, take me.”*

While he was following the Exercises, Giussani reflected on the enormous quantity of life and thought that had marked the history of the movement. *“Think of the theme song of our movement: [...] ‘If our voice is a voice that no longer has a reason then it is the poor voice of a man who does not exist.’ [...] If this voice were not to have a reason, it would be false and empty. Therefore if it must cry out and implore that the breath of life may not end, it must also ‘sing because there is life.’ This is the immense reason, which cannot be compared with any other word. ‘All of life asks for eternity.’ When we get up in the morning for a frenetic day, a tiresome day, or for a day free from particular engagements, ‘it must sing because there is life; all of life asks for eternity.’ [...] Try to imagine: forty years in which all of life has pled for eternity!”*

Then, referring to Judas’ betrayal of Jesus, he warned the thousands of people in the audience in Rimini: *“We advance in life through a certainty that burns away all that threatens us and all our fear of the strength we might lack. [...] But we let darkness overcome us too often; above all, more than the desire for truth there is the disappointment of incredulity.”* He closed with words of encouragement and exhortation: *“To look at Jesus in the womb of his Blessed Mother is the most liberating, the greatest thing we can imagine. Let us help each other to walk more and more in the light of this, so that the failing of our energies does not obscure the truth of the light.”* These words described the reality of his days, delineated by his increasingly real perception of his ebbing strength and defined by equally clear evidence of Christ’s freeing power in his life. Giussani’s overall feeling of security was clearly visible in the gaze with which he greeted visitors in his little room in Gudo: the expression in his eyes was ultimately joyful despite the evident suffering they contained.

Among the many events scheduled for the Holy Year was the Jubilee for priests. Giussani offered a written testimony at it on 19 May 2000 (L’Osservatore Romano later published a summary): *“If, at the time of the Gospels, you had stopped someone on the street to ask ‘Have you heard of Jesus?’ and that person, then, meeting Him on the dusty roads of Palestine, had asked Him, ‘So what do you go by, what’s your name?’ Jesus would have been able to answer: ‘I am the one who is sent (missus) by the Father.’ [...] Like Him, we have been called to be those ‘sent by the Father.’”* To what end? *“The human glory of Christ in the world; [...] it is a matter of history.”*

Giussani went on to say that there were two words that indicated divine power: sacrament and authority. About sacrament, he said, *“All our strength comes not from human resources, but from what the Catechism calls by a word that is so humble, so unassuming, so maternal, paternal, and fraternal: Grace.”*

Exceedingly human gestures like eating or drinking were transformed, he said, by the energy of the Spirit. The sacraments defined *“the method by which Christians are present in the struggle of the world, always living in communion with Christ, with the Sacrament being the great stone upon which the traveler can step with sureness, with hope.”*

Then he turned to the word authority, which he called, “an echo from the word of the apostles, as the passage of Tradition in its own body and its own soul, a sure passage, because it stands on the rock of Peter. Therefore, authority is authoritative inasmuch as it is in unity with Peter.” Giussani was unequivocal in making this point: “For us there is no criterion other than unity with the pope! Any other would be subjectivism, individualism. At the wellspring of the ‘rock of Peter,’ the great Presence of God-with-us overlaps increasingly with our I.” On a later occasion he would say, “[Christ] is risen!” This was a fact, an event. “He is risen means that the world has been won, it has been conquered—and that also the flesh has been conquered, this mortal flesh in its weakness and its plans. Let us love this word and let us put it on every page of our book, the book of our life: ‘event.’”

“The sap that refreshes our dryness”

Life of Luigi Giussani, p. 972

In March 1997 *el's* magazine, *Traces*, published a meditation on the stations of the Way of the Cross. It was a collection of short talks Giussani had given to the *Memores Domini* over the years. It was intended to help people identify with the Christian Easter mystery.

From the very beginning, in his comment on the first station, he declared, “We [Christians] are among Christ’s murderers like everyone else, but in a unique way, just as his relationship with us is unique.” Nevertheless “this Presence in our life remains implacable, because our life belongs to Him. [...] He took all our sins upon himself; we are already forgiven. This must be made manifest. And how? Through my heart that welcomes Him, that recognizes Him. It is such a simple thing.”

But how could sinful humanity cooperate in what Christ had died for? How could a person take part in the remaking of all things new? By asking, “*God, make haste to help me.*” Indeed, “*the rolling away of the stone from the tomb of our empty actions begins here. The Resurrection starts with [...] our infinite powerlessness, which is mendicancy, with the supreme recognition that God alone is powerful [...]. This permits each one of us to daily take up the search again, the desire, the question, and the sacrifice of purity.*”

On 30 March 1997, Giussani’s interpretation of the meaning of Easter reached the public when the national daily paper *la Repubblica* published an article he had written entitled “The New Beginning of the Children of God” (“*Il Nuovo inizio dei figli di Dio*”). Addressing Executive Editor Ezio Mauro, he wrote:

Dear Editor, the plants outside my window are still ravaged by the cold and frosts of winter. Looking at them, it occurred to me that every thing, everything of ours would come to the same end if it weren’t for that power, that creating power that is reawakening other plants before my eyes with leaves that are green and new. This mysterious force wished to show itself, making itself familiar to our human journey. The power of God says to each one of us, “I am with you. I became the child of a woman just like you. I lived what you have lived. I was unjustly condemned, I suffered pain, I was killed, and I accepted all of this so that you would understand that I take part in the struggle that I have called you to fulfill.”

The article then returned to the image of nature, which spilled into Giussani’s house through the wide picture windows of his study in Gudo Gambaredo, far out in the hinterland of Milan: “*Now everything is being reborn, but if someone had never seen the springtime before, and was born and lived knowing only the illness and dryness of winter, could they imagine how everything can change from within, from this strange and mysterious within? They would never be able to imagine it.*” This tangible experience provided Giussani with an analogy for Christ: his Presence is like “*the sap that, from within—mysteriously but certainly—refreshes our dryness and makes the impossible possible. What for us is impossible is not impossible for God. So that the slightest hint of a new humanity, to someone who looks with a sincere eye and heart, becomes visible through the company of those who recognize that He is present: God-with-us. The slightest hint of a new humanity, like dry and bitter nature becoming fresh and green once more.*”

“The person is the point where the divine rocket touches down”

Life of Luigi Giussani, p. 424

Giussani spoke about this same revolution at a gathering of adults at the Péguy Centre on 26 November 1969: *“The point where Christian discourse radically wars against any ideology is the person.”* This is because *“the definitive resolution of the problem of the world passes through the relationship of God with an individual, that is, passes through the phenomenon of the person. The person is the point where the divine rocket touches down to reduce to shambles, or to put back in order the great earthquake of the world.”* Because of this, it is *“in the transformation of the person that most just and healthy revolution takes place. It is the Christian concept of conversion.”*

There were two elements not to lose sight of: prayer and friendship. Giussani said that prayer is *“the time when a person realizes, recognizes, accepts, cries out to the divine lance that penetrates our existence. So, it is only from prayer that you can unleash action that is real, indomitable, inexhaustible. Even if no one understands you; even if things don’t go as well as you thought they would. No one can stop you. You make yourself sure before the universe, sure of an Other.”*

As far as friendship was concerned, the new thing that was taking off during those weeks gave Giussani the occasion to pronounce a warning: *“Let’s not sabotage this word, altering its authentic value, as we do all the time,”* because friendship is *“the relationship that calls you back to the presence that came to be inside you, as if all the atomic energy in the universe were unleashed.”*

And he concluded, with a touch of sadness, *“My friends, after much companionship we must recognize that these are the two factors we don’t have. We have it all, except for these two factors because the first is personal, and the second is absolutely personal.”* And yet only *“this personalness, that we can’t shake off or transfer to someone else, can give rise to the true action that changes society, history, and the world”—action that “does not become presumption,”* but is *“full of the energy of optimism, which all the others call dream or madness or illusion. But it’s been exactly two thousand years that people live, and build, and understands better and better how this thing, which is called an illusion, is really the dominant factor coming undaunted from within history.”*

At the end of a meeting on 17 December 1969, the following announcement was made for the first time: *“The Communion and Liberation group invites any students to meet afterwards just outside the door.”* This was a clear indication that the student group was following the reality of the Péguy Centre and the movement that was being reconstituted around Giussani. Giussani added immediately after the announcement, *“I ask you to please read the Christmas poster put together by the university student groups of Communion and Liberation.”* In his eyes, cl was already an identifiable reality.

In May 1970, speaking to students at the Catholic University, Giussani stressed the necessary starting point for Communion and Liberation: *“To trust you not because I like you or think highly of you. Trusting you is feeling that I am one with you, is looking for oneness of life with you, and of thought too, because this is the origin of criteria and judgments of feelings and values, action, plans. Unity with you because you, too, have been touched by that announcement; you were touched by it and you receive it, you embrace it, too.”* He added that he hadn’t known the people he saw in front of him until a few minutes beforehand, *“[a]nd now I care more about them than I care about myself.”* This is why it was important to promote *“this friendship above all else: a fact needs to be created, a new fact within the university, an ‘occurrence of Church.’”*

On 20 May, however, speaking to students in the sciences at the State University, he noted, *“It almost seems that [...] we don’t get the new content.”* Faced with the task of changing the world, it is necessary that *“we ourselves begin to change,”* because Christianity is a new human reality. But, instead, *“it almost seems like*

we live among one another without seeing one another. We don't get the new content that's surfacing among us because we don't know how to listen to each other."

On 4 October, during a meeting marking the beginning of the social year for the adult members of the Péguy Centre, he described the situation as he saw it: *"Just yesterday I thought with surprise, and some fear as well, of that disconnect, of everything about that disconnect that happens year after year between those who stay in the flux of our life and those who leave. If someone took off a year ago—not out of ill-will, not because he went over to satan—he doesn't understand us anymore."* He observed that *"this is, objectively speaking, the bitterest part of the crime committed by those of us who left. Because they could have been our frontline of change and of action."* Then he spoke about the name the university students had chosen for themselves: *"The term 'Communion and Liberation' truly is the definitive formula of our being present to the world."* The success of the movement, he concluded, would not happen thanks to the circumstances, *"but from your truth as persons, not from our structures."*

“Father Giussani, the pope wants to see you”

Life of Luigi Giussani, p. 515

As soon as the mass had ended, just after noon, Giussani was in the atrium of the Vatican basilica when he heard someone calling him: “Fr. Giussani, the pope wants to see you.” He was still holding the pix containing the consecrated hosts, and tried to pass them off to a flag-bearer, who recoiled. Finally he caught sight of Fr. Negri and handed it to him. He ran towards the pope: *“I knelt down; I was so confused.”* Paul VI addressed him in few words: “Take heart. This is the right road,” encouraging him to go forward.

The Osservatore Romano referred to the episode on 24 March 1975: “The pope, after the Apostolic Blessing that concluded the mass, went with the procession to the Vatican Basilica, pausing to greet Cardinal Vicar Poletti and Fr. Luigi Giussani. Fr. Giussani heads the group of young people ‘Communion and Liberation,’ which made up the largest group in attendance at the Palm Sunday ritual.”

The fact was further confirmed some weeks later, during an audience the pope had granted to Msgr. Enrico Manfredini, bishop of Piacenza and president of the Episcopal Committee for the Catholic University. During the conversation (the topic of which was Paul VI’s concern regarding the identity of the Catholic institution) “the topic of Communion and Liberation came up briefly, and [Paul VI] was moved as he told me that he had hugged Fr. Giussani on Palm Sunday in a sign of affection and encouragement. He became more serene,” wrote Manfredini.

It is not hard to imagine the feelings that must have flooded Giussani’s heart, and how the whole story leading up to that moment must have passed before his eyes. The pope’s words were like a recapitulation for him. Proof of this can be found in the first words he addressed to the members of cl who gathered on 23 March in Nervi Hall (in the Vatican). The hall was usually reserved for papal audiences, but they were permitted to use it through an unusual concession by Paul VI. *“No sign, aside from the Eucharist that we celebrated together with the Holy Father, [...] is higher or deeper for us than the comfort he offered, than the words His Holiness told me so I could repeat them to you: ‘Take heart. Take heart’—I can’t remember the exact words because I was too emotional. I’ll just tell you what I remember with certainty. ‘Take heart, you and your young people, because this is the right road.’ And then the Regent of the Papal Palace called me and he told to tell you that His Holiness could not be with us today, notwithstanding his desire to be, due in part to the exceptional strain of this morning.”*

Giussani encouraged everyone present to be grateful to God: “We well know that, because of his mercy, the mystery of God, in its infinite greatness, makes itself concrete to become a sign among us [...] an experience of life [...] through the sign of this goodness, this kindness, this encouragement given to us by our common Father.” Then he read aloud the telegram he would send to the pope: “Happy to have responded paternal invitation, grateful for more signs benevolence and encouragement, we confirm existence in many young Christians of new journeys in faith and joy for society of today. We repeat Your Holiness our only desire Christ living.”

After the whole assembly sang two Claudio Chieffo songs (La nuova Auschwitz and L’opera), Giussani talked about Pope Paul VI’s Apostolic Exhortation from 8 December 1974, in which he had written, *“Reconciliation, accomplished by God in Christ crucified, imprints itself on the history of the world, the irreversible elements of which now include the event of God who made himself man and died to save him.”* Giussani commented, *“The event of God who made himself man and died to save him is an irreversible element of the history*

of the world. Not of the hereafter. And this is the crux of our conception of faith. This is the strength of our hearts and of all our activities.”

He read again from the pope’s words: “The event of God who became man and died to save him [...] finds permanent historical expression in the body of Christ, which is the Church, in which the Son of God gathers ‘His brothers and sisters from among all the peoples.’ As its head, He is its principle of action and authority, which makes it a ‘reconciled world’ on earth.”

Giussani stressed that the pope’s words were a call to responsibility: an invitation to “carry in our flesh and in our heart—in our soul—the beginnings of the reconciliation of the world. The reconciled world—that is, the true world, the freed world—is already inside us, and it is up to our freedom to allow the Spirit to reveal it.” In light of a task so immense, Giussani could not hold back a feeling of grief: “We still feel frozen. We get in the way of the Spirit revealing what it has already accomplished in us, among us. The mystery of the liberation of the world is already among us.” Still, he recognized that the twenty-year history of the movement, “at the same time that it judges our sins more and more, [...] also confirms our certainties, it confirms them day by day. Those who have lived a few years of this history with humility—in spite of everything, with faithfulness in spite of everything—how truly they can say this today! Because those who have left have not found something better, and have even lost what they already had in their hands.”

Giussani’s next words, spoken with all of this in mind, seemed to embrace his entire life: Little by little, as we mature we become a spectacle to ourselves and, God willing, we become a spectacle to others, too. A spectacle of limitation, of betrayal, and because of this of an affable and impassioned humiliation. And, at the same time, a spectacle of inexhaustible certainty in that Grace that is given to us and renewed in the awareness of each morning. This is where our characteristic, naïve self-confidence comes from, thanks to which every day of our life is thought of and desired, despite everything, as an offering to God so that the Church may exist, within our bodies, within our souls, through the materialness of our existence.

Still speaking in Nervi Hall, Giussani reminded his audience of why cl existed: to help us “on this journey of faith and joy, as His Holiness said this morning. And still more we want to communicate this faith and this joy to everyone who touches our lives, to everyone living beside us—to these people, whom the Pope’s love of the living Christ teaches us to love as though we were born to the same mother.”