EASTER
LIFE WITH JESUS
“Jesus Christ loves you; He gave His life to save you; and now He is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen, and free you.” This first proclamation is called “first” not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things. It is first in a qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways. It is the message capable of responding to the desire for the infinite which abides in every human heart. But this conviction has to be sustained by our own constantly renewed experience of savoring Christ’s friendship and His message, convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known Him, not the same thing to walk with Him as to walk blindly. We know well that with Jesus life becomes richer and that with Him it is easier to find meaning in everything.

Pope Francis

As a result of the education I received at home, my seminary training, and my reflections later in life, I came to believe deeply that only a faith arising from life experience and confirmed by it (and, therefore, relevant to life’s needs) could be sufficiently strong to survive in a world where everything, everything pointed in the opposite direction.

Showing the relevance of faith to life’s needs, and therefore—and this “therefore” is important for me—showing that faith is rational, implies a specific concept of rationality. When we say that faith exalts rationality, we mean that faith corresponds to some fundamental, original need that all men and women feel in their hearts. It follows that a justification of faith entails describing ever more amply and intensely the effects of the presence of Christ in the life of the authentic Church, the Church whose “guard” is the Roman Pope.

Luigi Giussani
One of the many jewels found in reading The Life of Fr. Giussani by Alberto Savarana is a booklet that the founder of CL wrote in 1955, not even a year after the birth of the Movement. Entitled Christian Answers to the Problems of Young People, it meets a widespread objection head on: “He came 2,000 years ago, but the world is still as full of evil as before; for 2,000 years, the Church has announced to the world, yet people still groan under these unsolved problems. It would seem more than understandable that one could lose confidence in Him after the passing of 2,000 years.” Giussani’s answer was surprising: “Jesus did not come to bring a mechanically complete solution to human problems. Jesus brought the deep principle of the solution that is applied and affirmed through human freedom.” This is the root, the seed—almost literally—of what years later would become the eighth chapter of At the Origin of the Christian Claim, a text many of our readers have been working on for some time.

But right after this, Giussani adds, “It is the task of each Christian to, so to speak, work out the technical application of that resolving principle, which is Christ, on the individual problems and individual cases. This application happens bit by bit as the pure ideal of Christ becomes alive in His faithful.” And he goes on, “The more Christ is followed and His ideal values are taken seriously as a norm, the more the human problem is resolved.” Therefore, the task of the Christian is to “incarnate the ideal values of Christ... in the attempts made to meet those needs.”

“The pure ideal of Christ.” The answer is Jesus, alive, and His way of looking at reality, incarnate and lived, because, as Fr. Giussani says on another occasion, “the single values are like your bones, which are formed over time, bit by bit, slowly, as you eat what your mother and father give you.... Following the gaze with which Jesus looked at him, Saint Peter grew his bones: these are the moral values.”

To forget that gaze, to take it for granted, to push it off to the side of life, means to lose everything.

So then, the important thing is not to have Jesus pushed off to the side of your life, but to live with Him, within His gaze. The Pope expresses this well in Evangelii Gaudium, quoted on the Easter poster you find on the cover of this issue: “We know well that with Jesus life becomes richer and that with Him it is easier to find meaning in everything.” Outside that gaze, the world does not understand itself, and the evidence becomes blurry, even the clearest and dearest. This is understood well, reading in this issue about the debate on abortion in Spain, the things that are happening in Latin America, and “Rose’s women” in Kampala. They seem like stories from the first millennium, and they also make you better understand Fr. Julián Carrón’s challenge to a group of leaders of the Movement gathered in Brazil: “Think of Peter and the first disciples. How did they enter Rome, the heart of a world that said the opposite? What did they have? Only new eyes, another gaze on the world.” The gaze of the risen Christ. Happy Easter.
To the Ends of the Earth and of Existence.
Destiny Has Not Left Man Alone.

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Agnes, Teddy, Ketty, and Florence, women who were kidnapped by the rebels or abandoned by their families, all have HIV. They relate how their lives and self-worth were re-born.
ON SACRED GROUND IN FRONT OF THAT GIRL

I live in the United States. One year ago, a Protestant girl met our small GS high school community, spurred by curiosity for the change she had noticed in a friend of hers who had previously met us. Six months after her encounter, she left to attend college. I was filled with wonder, considering how something as fragile as an encounter (especially where there are no “structures” or initiatives besides the texts that the Movement provides, and where the community is as small as ours) has indeed an indestructible strength, capable of resisting the attacks of the whole world. This girl asked me many, many questions (sometimes polemical ones) about Catholic doctrine, and her objections seemed insurmountable, given her Protestant upbringing. Nevertheless, while her mind was coming up with more questions, her face was becoming more radiant every day. I often told her that she needed to start from what she had seen and had felt an attraction for. She was ever more determined to find answers for all her objections. Last week, she returned from college, for spring break. She went with her family to their Protestant church, and her tutor (the person who followed her formation in the Protestant faith) was puzzled when she learned that our friend had attended Mass with the CLU university students. Her tutor told her that her perplexity was due to a sincere affection for her, and that she was concerned that she wasn’t able to distinguish what was true from what was false. At that point, our friend answered that she was certain that every person had in himself or herself the ability to judge and recognize what was true, beautiful, and right. Can you imagine these words coming from this girl? Father Giussani is alive and present now! In her brief journey, she has faced many challenges to her fragile encounter with us. At the same time, she also has had many experiences confirming what had happened to her. Later, she told me that she was preparing to receive the sacraments! I asked her, “Are you aware that in the ceremony you will have to declare that you believe in everything that the Catholic Church says? What will you do with all those questions you had about the saints, Holy Communion, and all your other objections?” She answered, “I am certain of a few things, and that’s enough for me. In time, I will understand the rest.” Lately, I have often thought about something Father Giussani said on his last birthday (when I had gone to visit him with a few friends): “How great is God—or better, how great is that man, Jesus of Nazareth!” Back then, I was not moved by those words. Now, nine years later, they are erupting from the depths of my “I,” and I don’t have a better way to describe what is happening. Who are You, Jesus, with such power, with such attractiveness, that nothing can dispel You? You are more real than reality itself! Father Giussani’s method is current and effective; it’s like a rock one can build life upon! I was standing in front of that girl as if on sacred ground; I felt like taking my sandals off before the One who was becoming present right before my eyes. I was the privileged witness of a mysterious relationship. The following day, I received Communion in a different way, and His presence filled me with silence.

Sebastian, USA

DEAR COLLEAGUE, MY DISABLED CHILD IS HAPPY

Dear Father Carrón: During a discussion about Belgium’s euthanasia law, one of my colleagues suddenly said that, after all, euthanizing gravely disabled newborn ba-
A LIFE-GIVING BREATH OF FRESH AIR

Dearest Father Julián: Immediately after reading the Page One section of Traces’ March issue, “Witness and Recounting,” I started breathing again. It was as if a breath of fresh air had reached me, just when I was about to suffocate, prisoner of a cage of values to defend, of positions to hold, and of battles to fight. Some of those values and battles might be right and even necessary, yet sometimes we forget His sweet and real presence and, with all our good intentions, we become utterly incapable of moving ourselves or others. We run the risk of becoming—or maybe we already are—like the Great Inquisitor that Dostoyevsky writes about, whose actions are oriented toward something good that had its origin in Jesus, and yet ends up affirming something else, adding something else to His decisive presence. I want to thank you, because you help us walk on this path, staying faithful to its origin, truly following Father Giussani, to lead us to Jesus—the One who has such a great conception of the human being.

Giuliano, Italy

bless was right, in those cases when said children would be clearly unable to walk, talk, or be autonomous, because for sure they could never be happy. At that point, I jumped in, saying that I had a disabled child, whose condition was exactly as the one described by my colleague. I said that, despite her condition, she is happy, which proves that happiness is not proportional to one’s abilities or performance, and that happiness is not something we can give to ourselves. I added that, despite the difficulties that her condition implies, I have always considered her a great gift for me, because her total dependence is a constant reminder that we are in the hands of Another. I proceeded to recount some of the instances when her presence had been a true enrichment for those who had the possibility to meet her. A week later, my colleague came to visit me in my office. Initially, he told me of a few personal events, as if to justify the ideas he had expressed during our discussion, then he ended by saying, “I don’t think what you told us can possibly change my mind on this issue; yet, I have to admit that I can’t stop asking myself how you can talk about your daughter that way and, most of all, where you found the courage to have other children. [By the way, I hadn’t mentioned my other children, as I didn’t think it was relevant to our discussion.] These questions have been haunting me since then.” After his visit, my mind went back to the discussion I had with my colleagues. In the past, every time I had found myself involved in a similar situation, I had always left angry at the thought that people might have such ideas, and unable to muster the courage to say anything. This time, I managed to face the circumstance with truth, thanks to the steps I am taking following you, and through the work on School of Community. I am starting to stay in front of reality without cutting out anything and, as a consequence, I am happier.

Anna, Italy
UKRAINE: ONLY A PRESENCE CAN CHANGE THE HEART

Below is a letter with which a girl of the Moscow CL community invited her friends to join the peace march that took place on March 15th, in the Russian capital.

Dear friends: The opposition has organized a march protesting the Russian troops entering Ukraine, in which I intend to participate. I do not have high expectations for the effectiveness of this initiative, since, in our country, not much happens as a result of people taking to the streets—apart from innocent people ending up in jail. I don’t know how much of an impact a march can have on the current political situation. But this is not the reason why I want to go. I keep going back to the text of School of Community, specifically to the Page One section of the March issue of Traces. Quoting Father Giussani, Father Carrón says, “What we see now is nothing other than the documentation of the failure of the attempt to affirm values without Christ. The issue is how we stay within reality to the point of allowing this reawakening of the ‘I’ without which the powers that be can let us go on in our struggle for values, meanwhile emptying us from inside. Only a Presence can order instinctiveness toward the goal, responding to human disorder.” The “disorder” around us is out of control, therefore I can’t avoid asking myself a few questions. Is my “I” awakened in the midst of this situation? Do I have something to oppose the omnipotence and unaccountability of the power? I think about my Ukrainian friends, for whom clearly hope resides with the One who can change the heart of men, not their power. I am certain that their hope is not a utopia. There are many ways to look at the situation in the Ukraine, and we could endlessly discuss it, trying to establish who’s right and who’s wrong. Yet I believe there are two considerations that we all agree upon. First, we all want peace and we all want the reciprocal hate and the threat of war to cease. Second, and most importantly, I hope we all desire the glory of Christ, His presence, His justice, and His gaze. I hope we desire this for ourselves and for everyone. For this reason, in this complicated situation, I believe it’s important for us who have this awareness to stand side by side with those who will march for peace. I am certain that even a few men and women who are aware, and who remember the heart of all things, can do a lot in a crowd of fifty thousand people.

Sasha, Moscow (Russia)

THE FRATERNITY EXERCISES ENROLLMENT

Dear Father Julián: This morning, just as the deadline was about to expire, I sent the payment for the Fraternity Exercises. To tell the truth, I had sent the enrollment form some time ago and left the payment for later. Our financial situation is dramatic. My husband’s line of work has been at a standstill for months, and he insists on waiting for the crisis to pass. I don’t agree with his decision, and I try to do my best to generate enough income for the both of us. Despite my efforts, though, there are holes in our family budget, and not only there. When I get to the end of my rope, I become impatient and go berserk. Lately, not a day goes by without receiving overdue bills, invoices from the Equitalk tax collection agency, and payment-due notices, to name just a few. Every time this mail arrives, my husband becomes gloomy, lays the mail somewhere, and carries on, pretending the problem does not exist. I try to keep my cool, but there comes a time when I have to shake him up, if only to help figure out the extent of our debts. But at that point, I am the one who tries to find a solution. This year, I waited and waited for him to say something about the enrollment for the Exercises, but nothing happened. With two overdue mortgage payments, and his account frozen, I couldn’t reach a decision myself. At the same time, taking for granted that I had to give up the whole idea didn’t quite sit well with me. Therefore, I decided to send the form, leaving the payment for later. I read the Page One section in Traces, and when I got to the point where you say, “The reduction of desire or the censorship of any need is the weapon of the powers that be,” I asked myself what my desire was and if I was reducing it. For sure, I would feel more comfortable if our finances were in good shape, but
Dear Father Carrón: My wife, my two children, and I moved to Taichung, Taiwan, because of my job. In Taiwan there is a house of the Fraternity of Saint Charles Borromeo, located in Taipei, in the north of the country. Here, in the heart of the island, people have their own peculiar way to live Christianity, and nobody has ever heard of CL. We attend a Mass at the cathedral that is celebrated in English by a likable priest from Congo. On the occasion of the anniversary of Father Giussani’s death, we took the initiative to present the Movement. Father Donato, of the Fraternity of Saint Charles Borromeo, came to Taichung to say Mass in memory of Father Giussani. After the celebration, we invited people over for pizza at our house. We had 35 guests—a mix of Catholics, Protestants, and Buddhists from all over the world: Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, the USA, Great Britain, Spain, and Congo. After the pizza, we showed part of a video about Father Giussani. Quoting Leopardi, he says that all men (all!) have the desire for Beauty to become flesh; for truth and justice to become flesh. This statement surprised me and dispelled my fears about Jesus being too far from the Asian culture. After the video, we answered a few questions, we talked, and we sang. I enjoyed answering questions about how we met CL, and about the essential traits of the Movement. Since nobody knew our songs, I could not pretend to sing (as I usually do, because of my precarious intonation) and I gave it my best effort.

Upon a specific request of one of our guests, I even performed an unforgettable rendition of “Let It Go,” from the movie Frozen. That day spent together gave us the possibility to share who we are and to initiate a few relationships, which are now developing in interesting ways. Specifically, we are becoming closer with a Buddhist family—father, mother, and three children. The mother is particularly taken by our conception of education and attention to reality. Here in the Far East, where work and money are the only gods, we feel the vital importance of our belonging to the Movement, which helps us keep our eyes open and recognize the Mystery hidden behind the appearance of everything.

Stefano, Taichung (Taiwan)

something allows me not to despair even with the situation as it is. What is this something? What makes me love my husband despite everything I told you about him? What gives meaning to my life? It is the encounter with a living presence that happened many years ago, and that reawakened my “I.” Christ is what I need to live, and Christ has the face of those friends who offered to help with the payment for the Exercises, as well as the face of those who will not be able to come, like my husband, who told me, “At least you go.” Most of all, Christ has your face, Julián, and you don’t give up on us. I asked for an appointment with my boss, to request an advance on my severance pay. The appointment was on the 16th, and I was afraid I would not have enough time to make the payment deadline. That very night, I learned that the deadline had been moved, and that I had one more day. That was the sign that He was waiting for me. Yesterday my boss authorized the immediate payment of the advance I asked for. Today, since the transfer did not appear on line, I asked my colleague to please complete the transaction. He actually understood how important it was for me and offered to go the extra mile to make sure the transfer would go through. Could it be that this colleague of mine—an atheist, a pragmatist, and a bit of a moralist, too—is the face of Christ as well?

Barbara, Italy
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Dear friends,

Last Saturday, March 29th, the Fraternity Diaconia met in Milan with the primary goal of electing the President, given that the six-year period provided for in the Statute had passed.

I had a concern, which I immediately expressed to the members of the Diaconia: that it not be a formal election, but the occasion to take stock of the situation of the Movement, after the challenges that we have faced in these years. All of them had seen the course that I proposed as a response to those challenges, in an attempt to take everything that happened to heart for our maturation, while following the path and the method suggested by the charisma.

I furthermore pointed out that I am well aware that I am not the holder of the charisma. And the fact of having been indicated by Fr. Giussani to guide the Movement is not a guarantee of all of my actions. Thus, having before them all of the journey that had been traveled, the members of the Diaconia had everything they needed for an evaluation of the pertinence of the proposal to life’s needs and, at the same time, the facts necessary for judging the faithfulness of the proposal itself to the charisma received.

In order to facilitate a free discussion, I immediately clarified that no one had to feel indebted to me, not even those whom I had invited to participate in the Diaconia. In searching for the most appropriate person to guide us, the only concern had to be the good of the Movement. In order to carry out this task, there was only one attitude to have: obedience to the Mystery in identifying the person considered to be most suitable for bringing our story forward, so that we can respond in an increasingly less inadequate way to Pope Francis’ request that we be witnesses of the essential in all existential outskirts.

Following this introduction of mine, a sincere and profound dialogue took place, during which each person shared what he had seen and experienced on the journey of these years. It would be impossible to summarize the wealth of each contribution in a few lines. But I confess that I was struck by the level of self-awareness of the speakers, a communal sign of the vitality of the charisma in many parts of the world. Believe me, nine years after Fr. Giussani’s death, this is the thing taken least for granted.

At the conclusion of the dialogue, which lasted throughout the morning and afternoon, we proceeded to the vote. The Diaconia decided for my reelection, which I accepted out of gratitude to the story that generated me, and continues to generate me together with you, and out of the desire to continue to live the fascinating adventure of these years.

I invite you, in this new stage of our story, to renew the desire to walk together toward destiny, toward Christ who won us over, in order to become children of Fr. Giussani more and more. May each of us, and each of our communities, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, always become more of a witness of the grace that fascinated us, striving together like Peter and John on the road to the tomb on the morning of the Resurrection.

Pray for me, that I may serve this wonderful story that has taken hold of us ever more. I look forward to seeing many of you again in Rimini for the Spiritual Exercises.

Yours,
Fr. Julián Carrón
Luca Signorelli, Life of St. Benedict: monks at lunch. Monte Oliveto Maggiore Abbey, Asciano (Siena, Italy).

IT'S ALL ONE
The Spiritual Exercises are taking place around the world. How does the life of the Fraternity help the life of each person, day by day? From Taiwan to the U.S., crossing the Ukraine, we present here the stories of some who have just arrived and some who, after years, rediscover in their Fraternity group the chance to live that which “truly sustains life.”

by L. Fiore, P. Perego, A. Stoppa
TAIPEI
IN THREE GESTURES:
"YOU-ME-EAT"

The picture on the right is from New Year’s Day 2013, at lunch, in a parish in the district of Tai Shan. It is the anniversary of the day when the CL Fraternity in Taipei was born. For some, the encounter with the Movement coincided with the first proclamation of the faith.

Fr. Donato Contuzzi, the most recent missionary of the Fraternity of St. Charles Borromeo, arrived in Taiwan in 2012. It was immediately evident to him that, in the small community that had formed in recent years, there were people for whom the “encounter” they had had was the path for their entire lives. “They had decided.” He didn’t see this fact in their discourses—he didn’t even know their language—but he saw it in the affection that moved them. A month after his arrival, he was left alone for two weeks, because Fr. Paolo Costa and Fr. Emanuele Angiola had to return to Italy. The evening of their departure, after having dropped them off at the airport, he found himself alone in the car. He wondered, “Now what do I do? I don’t know how to speak, and I don’t understand.” He returned home worried. A short time later, there was a knock at the door. It was a friend from the community, named Kun Li, who is a truck driver. In silence, with three gestures, he told him: you-me-eat. “I always thought that being Christian meant being in the one percent. It’s like that here,” says Kun Li, who is now a member of the Fraternity. “But when I was at the Rimini Meeting, I discovered that I am in a big family, and the desire exploded in me to build the Church.” With the same dedication, A-Mei and Chun-Jia, two sisters, take care of the parish and the missionaries’ house. “We do it to thank God for bringing us home.”

They met the faith as children, thanks to
their father, a poor soldier in the village of Xizhou, where people were Christians in order to have flour and medicine. Growing up, they were separated from the Church for years—more than 30 for A-Mei, who married a Taoist. When their aging parents had to move closer to their daughters, to a suburb of the capital, they suffered the detachment from their home and ensuing nostalgia greatly, but the Christians in the area kept them company. Then, when the sisters’ father died, A-Mei received all of the Christians coming to offer condolences: “Here, strangers don’t enter the house of a dead person. And I cried, not only because of the pain—I cried because of their presence.”

“THAT’S WHAT IT WAS!” Today, A-Mei and her sister are members of the CL Fraternity, along with 12 other friends. Among them is Julie, who lives far from Taipei, but if she cannot get there, then the others go to her. It seems like nothing, but here it’s everything. “People work all the time. They don’t have a free moment,” explains Fr. Paolo, who has been in Taipei for more than 10 years. “It’s not normal to get together for dinner, let alone take vacations together. Here, there are five days of national holidays at New Year’s. That’s it.” And this year, they all went on vacation in the mountains together.

When the missionaries decided to propose membership in the Fraternity to their closest friends, they were worried and wondered: Who knows if they will understand or how they will react... The missionaries didn’t want to impose anything. But the response from their friends surpassed their expectations and worries: “That’s what it was! That’s what we were waiting for,” they heard. “They felt the need for something more definitive,” says Fr. Donato, speaking of the community that sprang up around Fr. Paolo and the other missionary priests who took turns serving there.

The first spark of the Movement had appeared in Taipei in 1995, with a married couple who came to teach at the Fu Jen Catholic University. After that, there were nearly 20 years filled with arrivals and depar-
tures, new encounters, then the presence of the Fraternity of St. Charles Borromeo—
to whom two parishes had been entrusted—and finally, the Taiwanese community’s first
trip to Italy, in 2010, which left a lasting mark on their friendship. The first miracle, in
a place like this, is the familiarity that they live.
“We are like brothers and sisters,” says shy Mu Dan, Kun Li’s wife. It is a tie stronger than
blood. This is what struck Emilia, who is 25 years old. (She isn’t in the photo-
graph, because she is the one who took it.) “If I were to meet Fr. Giussani today, I would kiss his
hands to thank him. If not for him, there would be no CL. Without CL, I wouldn’t have been
baptized. And without Baptism, I wouldn’t be as happy as I am now.” She lights up, speaking ex-
citedly. One day, she saw the photos of some of her university classmates on Facebook—they had been to Italy, to Rimini...
She wanted to understand, and so she sought them out. She found herself at School of Com-
munity. “These friends were different—they had a deeper life. They took me seriously, and
they thought about things, everything, even affection, in a way more beautiful than the one
I was used to. I said, ‘This is another world’.”

CLOSE TO MY FAMILY. Last year, at the Easter Vigil, she received Baptism. And now she in-
vites everyone she meets to School of Community. “I want to share my joy with every-
one.” That includes her family, where problems are not lacking.
“Everything changed, because these friends said to me, ‘We pray for you and your family.’ So
I thought, if they pray for me, then why can’t I be more open, constructive? Today, I am close to
my family. I never was before.”
She greatly desired the step of Fraternity membership. “I feel
the responsibility: my whole life can con-
tribute to what I met. I always thought that it was impossible to be a saint. Instead, it’s
our goal.”
NEW YORK “WHAT DO YOU DESIRE?”

Five friends, smoking a cigarette together: that’s how their small Fraternity group was born, remembers Federica Maniscalco—age 31, a doctor in New York. She explains, “We were at the Fraternity Exercises in New York last May, after an assembly with Fr. José Medina on what it means to live the Fraternity.” With her were her husband Jonathan, her sister Stella, Stella’s husband Rich, and Vitaliy, a recent college graduate who was at his first Fraternity Exercises.

“We joined out of inertia, to continue that life of before.” But then those words by Fr. Medina...

“Jonathan, Stella, Rich, and I became members of the Fraternity right after CLU,” recounts Federica. They were all about the same age, today around 30. “We joined out of inertia, to continue that life, in a large group, without a very clear idea of what we were doing. But we never managed to really talk about life…” In short, it was a far cry from what Medina would say at that assembly: “That is, that the issue was to have someone with whom to share life; that the Fraternity was helping each other to know Jesus more and more.” And that having friends like this is a grace. “It was desirable, but we were disillusioned,” continues Federica. Vitaliy was the one to throw out the idea: “Let’s start again from here. This is what we want.” Their first meeting quickly followed. “It was the five of us, plus, via Skype, an older friend from Italy, with whom we all had relationships because of different stories.” Stella and Federica are sisters who came to New York from Pesaro 17 years ago with their family. Stella’s husband, Rich Vega, works in IT, and Federica’s husband, Jonathan Fromm, is a biomedical engineer who has been working at the CL headquarters in Manhattan for the past five years. Vitaliy Kuzmin teaches history at a high school, and recently entered into a long-distance relationship with an Italian girl. And then there are the children, two for Federica and three for her sister. At their very first meeting, the possibility emerged that the Fromms might move to Minnesota, Jonathan’s home state.

Federica was uncertain. The job offer that she received was excellent, and Minnesota would be less stressful than New York; also, she would have the option to work part-time, which would be helpful, especially if other children come...
along. Jonathan could start to work in his field. “But we would be an hour from Minneapolis, in a small town in the middle of nowhere. Our friends are here…” Their friend on Skype pushes them: “Jonathan, why do you want to go?” “For my wife, for my family, because it’s difficult for her here…” “Those are your wife’s issues! You have to say for yourself what you really want.”

The argument explodes, and Jonathan distances himself—but then he returns, asking for help in understanding. No one offers a solution to the problem. But for Federica, “it was clear that being able to talk about life like this was different from merely keeping each other company. And precisely when all of this was beginning, we were talking about leaving…”

**Toward Minnesota.** Starting in mid-2013, they began to meet regularly. Federica relates, “It became more and more urgent that that small amount of free time, amidst a thousand obligations, be entirely dedicated to what could truly sustain life. We couldn’t do without it. Just take the relationship with your husband. You get married, and everything is great. But then come the children, the difficulties…” The two couples are growing together, says Federica, as is Vitaliy, who talks to the others about his girlfriend and about his decision to propose to her. “He asked for advice, even about how to do it. And it obliged us to look at our own marriages again.”

The change in Vitaliy strikes Doug Plantada—a 27-year-old New Yorker of Cuban origins—as well. He had met the Movement in high school, a decade earlier. He had converted, after having gone to live with his grandmother at age 15. “He always had a tough time in college,” explains Federica, his godmother at Baptism. “When we all finished our studies, he hadn’t, and so he stopped taking part in the life of the Movement.” Only his relationship with Vitaliy remained. When Vitaliy told him about their Fraternity group, Doug lit up. “This is what I want for myself.” And the five of them welcomed him.

“Last weekend, while chatting, we asked Doug how his exams were going,” says Federica. “He had lost his scholarship, and what he earned as a bike messenger was not enough to pay for his courses.” He hadn’t mentioned it before because he was embarrassed. But Federica says, “What are we here to tell each other? Nice little stories? If we don’t get to the point of talking about what is most pressing…” Their friendship is a life that educates them to go to the heart of things. “So much so that, in the end, Jonathan and I were able to decide that we will leave for Minnesota in July. But without this Fraternity, this grace, maybe we wouldn’t have done it.”

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*Luca Signorelli, Life of St. Benedict: The Saint reprimands Valeriano. Monte Oliveto Maggiore Abbey, Italy.*
KHARKOV THE REAL REVOLUTION

“T he Russian news had just announced that, in an hour, Maidan Square would be emptied. I was watching TV and checking the Internet. Then the e-mail came.” It was February 18th, and Aleksandr Filonenko, a Russian by birth, was in his house in Kharkov, Ukraine, on the Russian border. Aleksandr, a philosophy professor, who is Russian Orthodox, of the Moscow Patriarchate, was watching the developments of the revolt in Kiev apprehensively. Flames surrounded the encampment in the center of the capital, and the Berkut (special police force) seemed to have the advantage. The e-mail message said, “Dear friend, this is to inform you that your request for enrollment in the Fraternity has been accepted.” A few days later, the phone at Aleksandr’s house rang—it was Elena, from the Memores Domini house in Moscow. It was the day of Yulia Tymoshenko’s liberation, and Elena was asking for information about the situation. Aleksandr responded, and then added, “Elena, I forgot to tell you something very important—I’m officially in the Fraternity.” She exclaimed, “This is the real revolution!” And he replied, “Yes, it really is.”

ORTHODOX IN CL. Aleksandr describes the beginning: his first encounter with Christianity. In the years of perestroika, the discovery of Pavel Florensky’s writings caused him to desire to meet “a flesh and blood Christian.” He met the Metropolitan of London, Antony Blum, who became his spiritual father. And then came CL: “After I spoke at a conference, someone told me that he could tell that I had read and understood Fr. Giussani’s works. But I had no idea who Giussani was.” So he read the works of the priest from Brianza, and met the experience of faith born from his charisma. “For CL, friendship is the place of Christ’s presence; it is in friendship that man is educated to the relationship with the Mystery.” Why did he ask to join the Fraternity? “Last year, I came to Italy for a series of conferences, and I met many people from the Movement. I realized that, in order to explain the situation in my country, I was forced to recount what I had learned from my Italian CL friends—I’m thinking of Franco Nembri-
ni’s school in Calcinate, Silvio Cattarina’s rehabilitation community in Pesaro, and Mariella Carlotti’s art lessons. And I realized that, through my own story, people in CL discovered realities that they didn’t know about. It’s incredible: we see what we have in our own backyard through what our friends tell us. And the reverse has happened, too—Giovanna Parravicini, of the organization Russia Cristiana, told me the story of the pianist Maria Yudina, which made me discover a piece of my own history. Thanks to CL, I have started to better understand what it means to be Orthodox.”

In the beginning, his adherence as an Orthodox was anything but obvious: it touched a raw nerve. Then: “One day, I heard the passage from the Letter to the Corinthians in which St. Paul speaks of divisions in the community—‘I am Paul’s; I am Apollo’s...’ And then he asks: Was Christ divided? There I understood that Catholic or Orthodox, we are all Christ’s. If the greatest desire of those who adhere to CL is to see Christ within a friendship... then this makes CL more than a denominational movement.”

Franco, Elena, Rosalba, Giovanna, and many more—Filonenko says that the response to his questions did not come via words, but in people. Today, his “Fraternity group” is divided among Kharkov, Moscow, Kiev, and Calcinate. At Easter, which coincides for Catholics and Orthodox this year, friends from Russia, Belorussia, and Italy will come to Kharkov. Filonenko will introduce the Orthodox Liturgy of the Triduum to them, and they will celebrate together. There is also a soccer game planned for the day after Easter: Catholics versus Orthodox. Today, Aleksandr thinks back to that evening, when the Ukraine’s history intersected that of his life in the Movement. “That e-mail was the demonstration of the fact that, in any circumstance, I can go back to seeing the most important thing in my life. Any personal or political matter, good or bad, is joined to the one story that is friendship in Christ.”
It Is Good that You Exist

The Rajoy government proposal to reverse the law legalizing abortion as a right has begun a debate that is both sad and painful, because of the way many factors are censured and only abstract images of women are banded about. “But living on the margins of reality has a price.” The author tells about the experience of the local CL community, which is trying to face the issue without censoring any facts.

by Ignacio Carbajosa Pérez

short time ago, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of a terrible event in Spain’s recent history: the terrorist attacks on March 11, 2004, which caused 192 deaths on a number of Madrid trains. Three days after that massacre there was an unexpected election result: José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero became President of the government, opening a phase of revolutionary changes to the law on issues such as gay marriage, abortion, and education, with the objective of “broadening rights.”

The Spanish Church, and with it the local Communion and Liberation community, interpreted those laws as a direct attack on the Christian roots of our country and the values upon which our people’s co-existence has been based for centuries. Thus began a phase of “battle” that saw even the bishops take to the streets alongside protesters who one day decried the perversion of marriage (the new law abolished sexual difference as a characteristic sign of marriage), and another day marched against the introduction of an Education to Citizenship curriculum in the schools that indoctrinated students in the positivist mentality, and yet another day objected to the idea of abortion as a woman’s right.

That battle had positive consequences. On the one hand, it forced society to take a stand on membership in the Church, be it for, against, or indifferent. In other words, it defined the borders of the small people of God that lives in Spain. On the other hand, it fostered the beginning of reflection on the nature of the Church, her presence in society, and her mission in history. CL members involved in the struggle engaged intensely in this reflection. The turning point came with the March 2008 elections. Until then, one could still think that the Zapatero phenomenon was due to a historical anomaly, extraneous to Spanish society. But the result swept away all doubts. After four years in which the new socialism openly showed all its cards, Zapatero won again, with an even larger number of votes, over 11 million. For those willing to understand, the lesson was clear. The problem was not Zapatero, but Spanish society itself. To use the image of the philosopher Alasdair Maclntyre, the moment had arrived to stop supporting the old empire and its legislative system, in order to build a new social context in which the beauty of Christianity would shine before all with its winning attractiveness, a beauty that had brought about a civilization and a world view that was now collapsing.

Several years have passed and the winds of history—or better, of economy—have risen against those “young >>
revolutionaries.” And yet their laws and the mentality of Spanish society remain. In the apparent “pax Romana” that provoked the crisis and the low profile of Mariano Rajoy’s conservative government, CL has distinguished itself through the flowering of social works that are meeting the needs of our fellow citizens at the grassroots level, showing in action the beauty that embraces human pain made worse by our own self-censure of the religious issue.

Three months ago, some truly surprising news came out: the Rajoy government, through its Justice Minister, Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón, presented a bill that proposes an about-face from the 2010 Socialist law proclaiming abortion to be a right. In practice, it proposed returning to a law like those in most European countries, except that Minister tried to abolish abortion also for reasons of eugenics, that is, when the fetus has a malfunction. The reactions were not slow in coming: the cultural left and the liberal world joined forces in an unprecedented campaign.

Sad spectacle. Communion and Liberation had learned its lesson, at least on this occasion. It was no longer a matter of fighting for a law, but of going against a wounded and needy society. Animated by passion for our society and for all that happens in it, we witnessed the sad and painful spectacle of a debate for the most part void of grounding in reality, full of censure, rich in abstract images of woman, of her freedom and her happiness. Why sad and painful? Living on the edge of reality has a price, and we wanted to say publicly what we thought, out of love for each and every woman and man of our society. What did we say? What was the source of our judgment?

We wanted to start from the drama of a real woman who has an undesired pregnancy, like those we already know in our homes or foster families. It is surprising how much this predicament is censured by both sides facing off in the discussion. Those who want abortion as a right describe an independent woman, without ties, who, to be free, demands the right to decide about her body. On the other side, many of those who cry that abortion is murder do not want to recognize the anguish and abandonment a woman in those circumstances experiences. The latter have even described the CL document as a “naive folly full of good intentions.”

How is it possible, instead, to understand and embrace in a concrete way the situation experienced by a woman abandoned by her family and on the verge of having an abortion? It is the first invitation to acknowledge the presence of the divine among us, the one thing that saves the human person. A family doctor recounted her experience during the public presentation of the document: “It changed my way of looking at women who are considering abortion. At first, I only saw their error, and so a wall rose up between me and them: ‘I cannot help you; I am a conscientious objector. Go to another doctor.’ And I continued to leave them all alone. Now, I see their wrong choice, but also their terrible predicament.” She gave an example. A few months ago a woman arrived, an alcoholic and drug addict, well known in the clinic for her ill-mannered ways. Our doctor friend was fond of this woman, who, crying, confessed to her, “I’m pregnant. What am I to do with my life? I can’t keep this child.” For all the medical staff, it was a clear case for abortion. “It will be very difficult, but it is not impossible. I will help you,” our colleague answered. What the woman’s own willpower was unable to accomplish, the child she carried was able to do, together with the human gaze of her doctor: with surprising determination she stopped drinking and taking
A pro-abortion protest.

We wanted to start from the drama of a real woman who has an undesired pregnancy.

drugs, carried the child to term, and says of him, “He is a gift of God, who gave him to me so that I would change. I did not deserve that life.”

These facts make us open our eyes. “What a woman most desires, her first ‘right,’” says the CL document, “is not to ‘get rid of’ a life that is an irritation. Her desire is to be loved, so that in turn she can embrace with the same love the powerful fact of a new life growing within her. The more the right of a woman to decide about her body is put abstractly in the foreground, the more she is abandoned to a solitude that is against her very nature. Our experience tells us that we are free when we love and are loved— in other words, when we acknowledge our need and depend on another’s affection.”

The document then addresses the difficulty Spanish society has in using reason correctly, given that it exerts it “in an abstract way, without starting from real experience, systematically censuring the facts of the problem.” Discussion of a woman’s right is couched in abstract terms, censuring the fact that there is already a life in her womb. The most terrible thing is that “a society that does not help or educate people to face all of reality, without censuring any of its factors, is destined to suffer in a particularly burdensome way the setbacks of life, those circumstances in which problems cannot be eliminated.” For 30 years, from the first debate on abortion, marked by the discussion of scientific data, up to the current one, centered on women’s rights, Spanish society “has slowly moved away from reality.” We are all conscious of how this mentality affects us as well.

The third topic of the document: let’s be realistic, “who is able to face the drama of a pregnancy caused by a rape, or a child who is born with malformations? Who can embrace a life like this?” We have to say loud and clear that it seems impossible to us, just as it does to the rest of Spanish society. But a fact—which is a point of reference—comes to our help: the growing number of families among us who welcome these children. A few years ago, one of these families, already with natural children of their own, welcomed a child conceived by rape, who had grave defects and was blind. Some time later, they welcomed a girl who also had grave deficiencies. And, a few months ago, they received an urgent call asking them to take in a young girl, abandoned by her relatives, who needed a family where she could bring to term her fourth pregnancy, avoiding a fourth abortion. Unable to find another situation for her, they decided to host her themselves. The atmosphere in their home is wonderful, full of joy and affection for these people, affection that in turn builds their family.

SECRET DESIRE. Those who see the impossible happening right before their eyes are forced to turn to this family and ask, “How can you be this way?” and then wait for an answer. The answer will simply be the story of how the Christian event reached them. This is the
...social experience. We know what happened later, during the Enlightenment: Kant, Lessing, and other authors claimed to conserve all the values that Christian civilization had reached, considering them self-evident for reason and eliminating the source that nourished them: Christ. For them, reason had reached adulthood and could exclusively possess the great values of the West, separating from something that seemed to go against reason: the fact that a man, Jesus of Nazareth, was God. And even so, they defined themselves Christians, because Christianity represented the apex of morality, where man calls God his “father” and his enemy “brother.” But they eliminated the Christian event and its newness, Christ, God’s companionship for man. The Enlightenment succeeded in making the great values of Christian civilization a civil patrimony, and wrote constitutions and declarations of human rights, but in the course of few generations that house of cards began to lose its foundations. To the degree to which the Christian event stopped being a living and real factor that has an impact on society, the values that had helped and supported society were falling one by one. We would do well to draw a lesson from this historical process: defense of values without Christ is destined to fail. Some of us were also tempted to consider the values we defend in the document as self-evident. Some would have preferred to eliminate any reference to Jesus or Pope Francis, because “it would put people off, they will throw it away....” But what experience have I had of Christ? How has He influenced the formation of my person? To what degree will the experience I desire to communicate bring good to the person I have before me? Taking initiative to distribute a document is very educative, because it brings to light the foundation of each person.

**UNCONDITIONAL EMBRACE.** “We Christians have nothing to impose on our society,” it says in the closing lines, an affirmation that made some of us reticent. The truth is that it costs a lot to recognize in public that in some moments of our history the Church tried, in one way or another, to impose something. But we cannot forget that, like Jesus, the Church loves the freedom of women and men and her vocation is to testify to faith as a proposal for the freedom of the other. The document closes with these lines: “A new historic responsibility is opening up for us, characterized by the embrace of all the needs of our sisters and brothers. The extraordinary news is that this charity, echo of that gaze of the Nazarene, is present in our midst. Our existence is an unconditional embrace of all people, whatever their situation, to tell them, ‘It is beautiful that you exist.’” Time is given to us for this.
In the wards

“EVERY DAY I THINK OF THAT DAY”

I n recent weeks, the Council of Europe rapped Italy’s knuckles for the high number of gynecologists who are conscientious objectors, something that would limit application of Law 194, which has legalized a woman’s right to abortion since 1978. This was accompanied by a series of news reports about the violation of a woman’s right to find structures where she can have an abortion. “Maybe a question should be asked, before jumping to conclusions. Why are there so many conscientious objectors? What makes them object? I see it in the hospital. I know of doctors who decide to become conscientious objectors even after years of performing abortions, because you can do them for a long time, but you never get used to it.”

Marisa has worked as a nurse for 24 years, since the age of 20. For the past 10 years, she has been in the gynecology ward of a Milan hospital. One day, the head nurse proposed moving her for a few months from the ward to the day hospital. Given that abortions are also performed there, and knowing Marisa was a conscientious objector, she asked her first, “Would you feel up to it?” “First action, then discussion,” Marisa answered boldly. But the next morning when she entered the day hospital, she was shocked.

Elisabetta’s question. “It is one thing to imagine it, but to arrive and find myself with nine girls, to see them there, waiting for abortions, destroyed me.” During her shift, she was called back to the ward to insert a cannula needle for a woman undergoing chemotherapy. “I thought, this woman is poisoning herself because of her great desire to live, while there, those healthy girls are waiting to do something that kills them. If I feel so terrible, how must they feel? This thought ate away at me.” The next morning, her colleagues stopped her. “Mari, it was too trying for you. Don’t take care of the ones who come for abortions.” So she helped various other patients, with hysteroscopies and small plastic surgeries, until a girl arrived from the operating room. Marisa was free and took her. The girl had just had an abortion. Marisa put her in bed, took her temperature, measured her blood pressure, checked whether she had any bleeding. Everything was fine, and she put the trolley away. Then, before leaving, she looked at her for a few moments. She always does that with everyone. She never leaves without looking at the patient. “I don’t know what happens in that moment, but if there is something wrong, I sense it. It is like a suspicion, so I check better. If nothing’s wrong, I leave.” As she observed her for a few seconds, the girl turned toward her and asked, “Do you judge me?”

It was an instant that re-animated everything anew. “What’s your name?” “Elisabetta.” “Elisabetta, I don’t judge you. If I had known before, I would have tried my best to stop you. I am sorry that I can’t take away all the pain that you now have inside.” “Nobody can take it away. Not even me. I killed my child.”

The girl began to have a panic attack; she was assailed by fears of everything, so Marisa stayed with her until she was discharged. “The day before, I didn’t believe I had the same heart as those women waiting for an abortion. I said to myself, ‘I want to generate—my desire is this, absolutely the opposite of theirs!’ Instead, I looked at her and understood that it wasn’t true. She had my same identical desire: God makes us thirst for life. The difference was that she was not supported in her predicament.” Marisa went home and had no peace, thinking that nobody will be able to take from Elisabeth the suffering for what she did. But a friend told her, “No. There is Someone.” “Hearing it turned me upside down. I hadn’t been thinking about Christ anymore. But He is there.” Only for this reason did she return to those rooms the next day, and the next, for months.

What burden? When the period in the day hospital ended, Marisa returned to her work in the ward, full of sadness. The whole time she had worked in the day hospital, none of the women had changed their mind. “My presence was not useful enough to save even one. Even one.” One day in September, she was hurriedly crossing the courtyard of the hospital to go to the ward. “Señorita, señorita!” A woman with her husband showed her a prescription for several tests. “I don’t know where I have to go.” Marisa took the paper in her hand and checked. It was for voluntary termination of pregnancy. “Come with me.” The corridor was long. While walking, every so often they looked at each other in silence, until Marisa asked the woman her name. “Jessica.” “Forgive me, Jessica, but I have to know: have you thought this through?” “Yes. But I have five children. I could never manage another. My friends tell me that I would be crazy.” “Doctor, please explain to her…” began her husband, with a thin reed of a voice. Marisa didn’t expect it at all. “Why, do you want this child?” He answered, “Yes, but my wife is the one who has to be convinced. She’s the one who has to bear all the burden…” So Marisa looked at her, “Jessica, I am sorry that for the rest of your life you have to bear the burden of what you are about to do. Do you want this child?” “Yes,” answered Jessica. Then she looked at the prescription in her hand and ripped it up.

That very morning, Marisa had read the Gospel: “I tell you this that you may have joy, and that your joy may be full.” “Going to work, I thought, ‘a full joy.’ What is a full joy? I asked it that morning, and later with Jessica I experienced it. When she threw away the prescription, I returned to the ward, my legs trembling. First, we went together to the chapel to pray a Hail Mary, that Our Lady would care for her and her baby. I told her only, ‘You will lack for nothing.’ Some time afterwards, Jessica called to say that her husband had found stable work and the baby was a girl, after five boys. ‘I think of that day every day,’ Jessica told her. ‘I had stopped other people for directions, but you were the only one who looked at the prescription.’

A nurse who is a conscientious objector found herself assigned to help women in the post-surgery room after an abortion. “Do you judge me?”

by Alessandra Stoppa

BY ALESSANDRA STOPPA
SOCIETY
VENEZUELA

Repression, famine, political and institutionalized violence, and empty shelves in the supermarkets. One year after the death of Hugo Chávez, his successor, Nicolás Maduro, has pulled off what seemed like an impossible feat: to worsen the situation that he inherited from the populist leader, which brought an end to freedom, destroyed the economy of one of the richest Latin American countries in terms of resources, and drugged the people with subsidies and a rancorous ideology.

The opposition and the students have been protesting violently for several weeks. Their demonstrations and marches were followed by roadblocks with barricades (guarimbas). The response was blood and fire. At the time this article was written, there were already 37 dead, more than 546 wounded, and more than 2,000 arrested. “For a couple of years now, social protests in different parts of the country have been a daily occurrence,” explains political analyst Colette Capriles. “Doctors, public employee, university students, teachers, transportation workers... It’s clear that the relationship between the master state—benefactor—and the populace has gone awry.”

According to Tulio Álvarez, Professor of Constitutional Law at the Universidad Central de Venezuela, this situation has deep roots: “For years, the principle ‘If they hate me, then I hate, too’ was applied. The friend-enemy relationship was transferred to politics. Venezuelans’ favorite phrase recently is, ‘If it’s true, I’d rather not know.’” Rafael Luciani, Professor of Theology at the Universidad Andrés Bello—one of Venezuela’s most culturally relevant institutions—agrees with the observation that it all began much earlier. “What we are living today is the consequence of many years of a political practice that made use of language aimed at defamation and the generation of hatred toward people.” To the political violence is added that of delinquency: in 2013, there were 25,000 homicides. “It is an organized delinquency, tolerated by the system,” Capriles emphasizes.

After the first victory in 1999, Chavismo went about changing the institutions, finally arriving at a de facto dictatorship under the guise of a democracy. This revolution reached its peak in 2007, when Chávez launched a reform of the constitution that originally failed. From that moment, a parallel state was created, which governed by decrees, limiting every kind of freedom. “The objective factors that define a political regime as democratic are absent in Venezuela,” states Professor Álvarez. “There are elections, but they are not transparent. There is a frightening concentration of power, and the government agencies, including the judiciary...”

IMPOSSIBLE WITH
>> ones, are subject to the president. Pluralism is nonexistent. Dissidence is repressed by judicial power. The most serious part is that we are dealing with a military regime. This is an authoritarian regime that is moving toward total control of society." Real democracy was supplanted by “a model of popular democracy, like the ones that existed in Eastern Europe at the time of the Iron Curtain, inspired by Cuban political organization,” adds Capriles. In order to institute this semi-totalitarian system, Chávez resorted to bureaucracy and the “red shirts” or “collectives”—bands of delinquents allied with the government, which control the poor neighborhoods of the cities. Some have compared them to the Haitian tonton macoutes.

**MANIPULATED WORDS.** All of this took place with great popular support. Chávez experienced a defeat in the first referendum to reform the constitution, but he won all of the elections. Maduro, though he lost part of his support, obtained a percentage of more than 50% in the April 2013 elections. “It should not be forgotten that dictatorships in general have great popular support,” explains Capriles. “The Chavismo idea of democracy is totally illiberal, and there is no doubt that it obtained so much favor because it translates into a system of subsidies that proved efficacious for as long as it lasted. Furthermore, another very important element is the Chavist identity, the political identity that is based on the stereotype of the poor person who redeems himself.” The relationship between the state and society was founded on the use of other revenue from the nationalized exportation of petroleum ($800 million since 1999) to buy the backing of large sectors of the population. This money also bought international support. Despite evident repression, the statement approved by the Organization of American States at the beginning of March is scandalously benevolent toward Maduro. “This is fundamentally due to economic motives. The political left and its governments in Latin America, especially Cuba, subsist on the aid that they receive from Venezuela,” explains Álvarez.

But it’s not only a question of money—the regime’s strength is the “Chavist ideology,” an incoherent but effective system that feeds on centuries of injustice and constitutes a clear example of “political theology,” which profits from a transfer of sacredness. Latin American caudillos (autocratic government), described by Enrique Krauze in his 2011 essay *Redentores*, took on a new form that appropriates religious feeling in the name of necessary equality. This ideology corrupted the principal agent of social construction and unity: desire, which is always desire for the infinite.

One expression of this is what the writer Mario Vargas Llosa defined “the prostitution of language.” “We are subjected to the euphemistic language proper to capitalism, together with the language of hate that is typical of fascism and communism,” stresses Capriles. “The use of words with a particular humanistic accent was fundamental for many Chavist leaders, in order to win popular favor. They use terms like heart, peace, love, solidarity, justice, living well, humanization, and many others. And with these, they refer only to their own people or their followers,” adds Luciani. Maduro has accelerated the process, leaning on the Castro regime in particular. Venezuela has been “colonized” by
the Cubans: “The Cubans are present in the healthcare system, as well as in the military environment, where they provide intelligence advising for the Armed Forces. What is more, you find them in civil registry offices, where the records of Venezuelan citizens and foreigners are kept.”

**Reactivity or Encounter?** How to begin rebuilding in this situation? A flyer by Communion and Liberation that was recently made public states that “our society needs a compassionate, attentive gaze that listens, that is capable of recognizing the other even if he is different, that values the other for what he is and not for what he thinks, possesses, or does.” Along the same lines, Capriles indicates that the recognition of the other is decisive as a political criterion, as well: “It is necessary for the government to recognize the existence of the political ‘other,’ the opposition. Many public authorities are at the end, or almost at the end, of their mandates, and a qualified majority at the National Assembly is needed in order to be able to nominate their successors. The government does not have this majority, and it has not wanted to negotiate these nominations with the opposition.” But Luciani believes that this recognition will require external pressure. “A change in the government’s position looks very difficult. So far, it has been radicalizing its own politics and actions more and more. At a certain point, a mediator will be necessary in order to be able to start a process of national reconciliation.”

In this extremely difficult situation, the Church has broadened its mission to a work of reconciliation, insisting on the necessity that the democratic system be reinforced, a sustainable economy be created, and an education based on the centrality of the person be developed. Are these only principles? “The Episcopal Conference continues to call for dialogue in its recent press release,” explains Luciani. “It demonstrates that the possibility for peace does not lie with rhetoric, but with showing concrete facts that generate credibility and allow results that are useful for everyone, not just for those who are allied with the government and its ideology.” It is the same thing that the CL flyer points to, in a different form: everything depends on the fact that “there be an original presence in society that is born of the encounter with Christ and His Church, and not of the myopic violence that is the fruit of reactivity.” The oppression that came from a mangling of the religious fact can be defeated by an experience that frees and educates the people to true religiosity.
ON THE

For some, it is the first time. In São Paulo, 350 people from all over Central and South America (including the Caribbean) gather at the Assembly of Responsible with Fr. Julián Carrón. The situation in their countries is harsh, but they want to be “at the height of the circumstances,” and of their own desire. What is the path?

By Davide Perillo
For many, it is the first time: the first time that they see him in action, that they hear him speak. The face and words of Fr. Giussani roll by onscreen, and time passes in an instant. It is Friday night at the ARAL, the Assembly of Latin American Responsible. Fr. Julián Carrón, who leads the movement of Communion and Liberation, has just introduced their work, taking his cue from the Fraternity Exercises: “Fr. Giussani saw very early that ours is a time of evangelical poverty: the question is not, ‘Who is right?’ but, ‘How can one live?’ It is a challenge that none of us can avoid.” And Carrón brings another challenge with him, which is the title of this encounter: “How is a Presence Born?” “A presence is original if it flows from a different source. What experience have we had of this in recent months?” And Giussani’s responses in the video of the interview from 1987 immediately show what we are dealing with. They foreshadow what Michele Faldi outlines later, while presenting the biography of Fr. Giussani written by Albero Savorana (not yet published here). Above all, they show everyone the living origin that brought them here to São Paulo, Brazil. There are 350 of them, from all over Central and South America, including the Caribbean.

**The Pope’s mate.** Sherline, for example, comes from the Caribbean islands. She is the first Haitian to attend the ARAL. She is 29 years old and lives in one of the toughest corners of the world, and yet she is radiant as she recounts that she met Christ by stumbling upon a girl from AVSI who was reading *Is It Possible to Live This Way?* with three friends. “They were talking about St. Paul, and she said, ‘It was God who sought him out, not the other way around.’ And suddenly, I understood that the Lord is always present in man’s life. I thought that He was only present if you sought Him out. Instead, I can have the same experience that St. Paul did.” That’s how it started—and now there is a School of Community in Haiti.

The assembly begins with a provocation by Julián de la Morena, who is responsible for CL in Latin America. Three months ago, in Córdoba, Argentina, the police went on strike. The result was violence, looting, and homicides. “The Pope invited the priests to go out into the streets and ‘drink mate with the people’”—in short, to be present, by simply bringing Jesus. Carrón relaunches the provocation: “Who believes in this? Who believes that this can affect history, and respond to the challenge of violence? Who could believe in the method of God who, in order to change history, called one man—Abraham?” The floor is open.

Doris, from Colombia, talks about how the illness and death of her sister gave rise to questions so powerful that she even had to ask her middle school students, before beginning her lessons, “Who am I? Why does it make sense to start over every morning?” And they, too, began to ask themselves the same questions. “They started to write to me, to tell me what was happening.” Like one 12-year-old girl who, in the middle of one of her mother’s fits of rage, asked herself, “Is
she only this anger? And who am I?” “Do you understand? Twelve years old,” stresses Carrón. “It’s not that she has to have a Master’s degree in order to reawaken her humanity. What happened to her? What changed in your way of being? There is a way to be present that leaves the charism by the wayside, and another that reawakens the ‘I.’ We need to understand this difference.” Just as we need to understand what emerges from the painful helplessness of Paola, who, in front of the mother of a boy who was murdered in the streets of Salvador, finds herself “with no words. I didn’t know what to say to her. I thought that perhaps I am incapable of dealing with a situation like this, or that I don’t have enough help.”

Carrón asks Davide Prosperi to speak. He, too, is here for the first time, since he was asked to share in responsibility for the Movement. He talks about another dialogue, with a father who had lost his son in an accident and, months later, felt all of the lack and the apparent absurdity of 20 years of sacrifices made to raise a life that then disappeared in an instant. The response could have been a “correct” phrase. Instead, a question came to Davide: “Imagine that you have him there, just born, knowing about all of the sacrifices that you were talking about, and imagine that you already know it would end like this. Would you do it all again?” “Yes,” he answered immediately. ‘Ask yourself why,’” “Pre-fabricated responses are not enough to make people grow,” observes Carrón. “We need to challenge them to look at experience. Davide did not give him the answer—it came from that father, drawing on what he was living, and without a moment’s hesitation. It’s clear that he will still be nostalgic, but he will be able to live with it.”

**Without bread or milk.** Cleuza recounts an incident from December: their boat exploded, and she and Marcos wound up in the hospital. “The doctors were surprised by our serenity. We were in pain, but that presence was stronger. What the Movement says is true; I’ve seen it.” “Where does this strength come from?” asks Carrón. “This is an original presence, because it causes a question to arise in others: ‘Who are you? It is the same question in front of Christ.” Alejandro speaks of Venezuela: the violence, the grocery store shelves without bread or milk, the desire to be “at the height of these circumstances”—and the question born from the impact with the Gospel: “Love your enemies...” “It caught me off guard. If they hurt my family or my friends, how can I love my enemies?” Carrón answers, “How does the School of Community respond to this question of yours? Who saves all of the factors of humanity? Only in this way do we understand why Fr. Giussani asks, ‘Who is Jesus?’ Only if we grow in the certainty of the relationship with Him can He help us to make the entire journey, to the point of loving our enemies. We are not able to do it. So then, what is our task? Join the barricades, stay out of the fray, or generate a new presence? How is this possible today, if Christ is not risen?” It is the same question posed by Aureliano, whose work >>
is cutting precious stones in Bogotá, Colombia. “I have been asking myself if Christ is everything or not. I ask myself this question, but I am already automatically thinking of how things should be—and it’s a trap. Instead, I want to follow Him in what happens.” “It’s true,” replies Carrón. “We reduce Christ to an image of ours. But He manifests Himself only in following Him. We cannot start by already knowing.”

LIKE THE FIRST MILLENNIUM. It’s easy to think that you already know. You see familiar faces, in the same place as past years. You think about how to avoid writing more or less the same article. But then the encounters up-end everything. Oliverio, who is responsible for Mexico, tells you about what is happening in Coatzacoalcos, his city. It is violent, like all parts of this country where the state has retreated, leaving space for the drug cartels. “Several months ago, in order to respond to the violence, we started to propose a gesture: the Rosary, once a month.” At first glance, it’s nothing—like the Pope and his mate. But the last time they met to pray, there were 600 people. A woman came to him afterward: “Thank you; this prayer is causing me to change the way that I live at home.” How can one live? In evangelical poverty, to which Christ responds.

Carrón takes this up again in the afternoon lesson. He returns to the themes of Page One in the last issue of Traces, then goes beyond; he shows how the Church, from the Second Vatican Council onward, has recovered its original tradition and vocation, focusing once more on a decisive point: freedom. “It is part of the very nature of truth to be able to be reached freely, not by imposition.” To take up this thread, as Benedict XVI did and Francis is now doing, is to return to the beginning, to what is needed in order to live in a world that greatly resembles the first millennium—and not only because values, “detached from Christ,” are crumbling one by one, revealing a fabric where evident facts are no longer recognized. Examples of this crop up everywhere—here, too, where life is worth less and less, as they deal with clashes in the streets, criminality, and the liberalization of drugs in Uruguay. The work proposed responds to life, not to the debates in the newspapers.

You realize this as you talk with Alejandro and Conrado, ages 36 and 42. This is their first time here, too. They come from Cuba, arriving after navigating an odyssey of paperwork and permissions. Alejandro says, “In encountering Christ, I found the answers.” To what? “To the ‘difficulty of living’—as Pavese says—to pain, and to the question that I asked my father when I was seven or eight years old: ‘What happens after
death? He said, ‘Nothing; you cease to exist.’ But that wasn’t enough for me.” Then, at age 25, he met a Catholic family. “I was surprised by how they were with each other and with me.” And later, by chance, he started a dialogue with Conrado, who had met CL in Italy and gave him The Religious Sense. Three weeks later, Alejandro told him, “I understand. This is what is needed in order to live. What other books do you have?” Now there is a School of Community in Matanzas, too. “It started last year on February 22nd. We realized afterward that it was the anniversary of Fr. Giussani’s death.” There are nine of them, including “a retired professor of Marxist philosophy.”

**IF THE SUN BURNS OUT.** That evening, Prosperi gives a witness. He recounts a number of facts in which he found “the mark of what makes me certain.” He speaks of the encounter with Giussani, “who communicated this affective certainty,” of the responsibility he has, which “is not a chore,” nor is it a series of things to do: “It’s not how many things we do that fills life, but having the goal in mind.” He talks about how struck he is by these days—“It’s much more than what I imagined. I am having an experience here”—and of the friendship with Carrón, which is “watching together as things are born.” There is much more, and it leaves a profound impression.

Carrón introduces the final summary beginning from the songs just sung: *Razón de vivir* and *Ojos de cielo*.

“To lighten the weight of life… To not have the sensation of losing everything; what do I need? That you be here with your clear eyes.” If the sun that gives light burned out, and dark night got the upper hand, what would we need? “Your eyes; heaven in your gaze. Because your sincere eyes are the way and the guide.” What “clear eyes” do we need to meet? “It happened in reality. In history, a fact happened that introduced these eyes.” It is a fact—Christ—and a method. “The School of Community is these eyes, irreducible to us, to our feelings, to our reactions. And they cannot be manipulated by anyone, because they introduce the gaze of a Presence that is completely different from us.” It is what causes Giussani to pose the decisive question—Who is Jesus?—in Chapter 8 of *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*. Who we are, and the mark that we make on history, depends on this question. “Imagine those fishermen from Galilee who came to Rome with only this, with new eyes. If John and Andrew were here now, how would they defend values? As Jesus did—by letting this gaze enter into everything that they did.”

That is why the challenges that we have before us “are an occasion to rediscover what Christianity is, and what our task is. We know that Christ is risen, because we can meet this presence among us, these ‘eyes of heaven.’ Without this, I would be ‘abandoned in full flight’ in life.” Instead, one can live “at the height of the circumstances,” as Alejandro wishes to do, anywhere—and at the height of our desire.
Agnes, Teddy, Ketty, and Florence, women who had grown up in the slums or been kidnapped by the rebels or abandoned by their families, all have HIV and had given up on life. Help in obtaining medicine was not enough to change everything. These women, together with Rose Busingye, director of the Meeting Point of Kampala, relate how their life and self-worth were re-born.

BY Alessandra Stoppa

“Even a decisive value like life can be dimmed. Only in the Christian encounter is it illuminated again in all its beauty.” In this period, Fr. Julián Carrón has been sharing all he has learned from his Ugandan friend, Rose Busingye, a member of the Memoria Domini and a nurse who directs the International Meeting Point of Kampala, the small NGO created over 20 years ago to
accompany the ill, poor, and children, many of them orphans, who now can attend school thanks to sponsorships. “Rose wanted to respond to the provocation of the women with AIDS, helping them obtain medicine,” recounts Carón. But even once they had medicine, they did not take care of themselves. “Only by announcing Christ to them were they re-awakened to the consciousness of the value of life.”

Teddy, Agnes, Florence, and Ketty are in Rose’s office with her. They are very beautiful. Teddy bursts out right away: “Happiness has made us young and beautiful!” They all break out laughing. A couple of times, talking about themselves, they start singing—one starts, and the others join in. They give of themselves, even with a song, via Skype. It should be known that “Rose’s women” have had hard lives—growing up in the misery of the slums, or being kidnapped by the rebels, or being abandoned by everyone, and, in the end, becoming infected with AIDS. But they are full of grace too, because this marked the beginning, and for this they continue to say thank you, even for their work, breaking boulders with a hammer in the quarries among the famous crumbly hills of Kireka. They hammer hard under the sun until the large stones are reduced to small rocks to sell to builders.

Agnes is 46, with a round, laughing face. You would never imagine that
she is sick. “I felt like I was a nothing.” The rebels had kept her with them in the forest for three years. When she returned to the village, “I wasn’t anyone anymore, just a killer.” When she would go out of her house, people were afraid of her and avoided her, so she decided to escape to the city and stay with an aunt there. But when her aunt discovered her illness, she put her in a shack outside the house, without food or medicine. Some neighbors, who knew about the Meeting Point, sent “Auntie Rose” to her. When Rose arrived, Agnes was lying in bed. Rose brought her medicine, as she did for all the sick. “But very often,” adds Rose, “when I returned to visit them, I found the pills still there.”

**Another Question.** Agnes recounts, “She was always telling me that I had value, but I didn’t understand what she was saying. Then she invited me to come here. I found women who were happy, who didn’t seem sick, and I thought I must have made a mistake and come to the wrong place, because I couldn’t belong to these people. I continued to feel like I was a nothing, to the point that I tried to find 20,000 shillings to return to my village and die.” She never did go, because when she asked Rose for the money, Rose cried. She has accepted care, and is doing better. She is still sick, but her deeper wound is healed. “When I began going to School of Community, I discovered the value Rose was telling me about, because Giussani says that nobody is nothing in God’s eyes. I sinned, I killed, but to Him, I am someone. This is my worth, the life God has given me. Because of this love, I have begun to have energy that medicine did not give me. I am free, even if I am sick.”

Rose has been with them every day for years, but for her, nothing is taken for granted. She has always been happy to be able to give her life in this way, but she saw that the sick people continued to complain. Some hung themselves or let themselves die. Nothing is ever enough for the poor. The children did not want to go to school, even though it was provided for free. “I started out thinking that the problem was medicine and food. But I gave it to them, and nothing happened. I was destroyed, because I wanted to solve the epidemic this way!” The temptation is to focus more on the things we must or can do for a person, rather than on the person herself. “Instead, at a certain point, everything started from the discovery of myself.” But Rose stops telling her story, and will finish later, so her women can speak first.

Teddy sees that she has changed by the fact that she is no longer afraid of anything, not even death, “because God knows all that I am.” She discovered this with the faith, in the journey of School of Community. She had lost her parents as a girl and thought that when she got married everything would work out. “Instead, much bigger problems began there. For me, there was no sense in staying in the world anymore; I hadn’t seen anything beautiful in life.” Rose expresses it this way; “Unhappiness arrives when you have decided that it is no longer possible to be happy.” And Teddy was unhappy. At the Meeting Point she found work as a social assistant, but she succumbed to the weight of the problems. “School of Community set me before another question: Who am I?” From the very first meeting, the things she read spoke of her. She felt she was the Samaritan woman at the well, who encountered a stranger who knew her more than her husband. Her marriage is a torment, because her husband is an alcoholic and when he drinks he becomes violent. There are nights when he does not even let her sleep in the house. Jealous of the Meeting Point, he rants, “You continue going to that place and brainwash you. You should think about the money!” She answers that the only reason she and he are still together is because of this place.”
he is sober he realizes and tells me, ‘Fr. Giussani is an intelligent man,’” Teddy smiles. Asked why she hasn’t left him, she answers, “I could never do it. If I am of infinite worth, so is he.”

Ketty understands this. She remembers how badly her body smelled when she arrived at the Meeting Point, but nobody was disgusted by her. She got married when she was 13, a Muslim at the time. She spent a year and a half with the rebels, who took away her month-old son. They made her eat human flesh, and they raped her. When she got pregnant, she was no longer of use to anybody. “So they threw me away.” She was 17 by then and screamed like a crazy woman. She was a skeleton of 55 pounds and yet people were afraid of her. Then her family abandoned her when she was diagnosed with AIDS. What made her want to live? “Rose looked at me as the person that I didn’t know I was. And School of Community freed me; I discovered that even in the woods I had the same worth as I do now.” She asked to be baptized.

Florence introduces herself this way: “I am 40, I come from eastern Uganda, and I have AIDS.” When the HIV exam turned out positive, her relatives feared she would infect them, and they counted the days until her death. “So then, I only thought about dying.” She moved to Kampala for treatment, “but I had already given up on living.” Even though people told her about the Meeting Point, she didn’t go. “If all my relatives abandoned me, who could want me?” But one day, looking at her children, always closed up in the house with her, she understood that she had to do it for them. “I arrived here and I found the women, who were even learning how to read and write. I began treatment right away.” When paying her rent became a problem, she ran away, but Teddy went looking for her. “They took me back with them.” Today, her relatives see her happy, see that her children go to school, and ask her how all this is possible. “Who stayed with you?” “I say, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” For years, Rose has been immersed every day in a reality of suffering, and she stays in the midst of it like a child who abandons herself to her father. “Neither the medicine nor the words changed anything in them. Without living the fact that I am loved, I can’t help the others.” She needed to be conscious of the way Jesus looked at her. “I could only tell them about their worth if I knew my own.” For Rose, this worth was inseparable from the way Giussani treated her: “He looked at me like someone special, bigger than everything, even bigger than my limits. I always thought that he didn’t understand who I was. I tried to explain it to him, but he wouldn’t listen to me. ‘Look, Rose,’ he told me, ‘you don’t know that if you were the last person on the face of the earth, God would have come and died for you.’ Then he corrected himself, ‘He came and died for you.’”

**“He did not stop”** What Rose did and does is to be open to this love she encounters. “Today, I follow Carrón, curious about what makes him the way he is.” She goes forward like this, finding “problems, contradictions, or my incapacity, but these limitations also become a way into the infinite.” Sitting in the midst of her women, she tells how she realized it: “What did I do today affirming God? Nothing. Not even at Mass, or praying, did I affirm God. But He did not stop; He continued to be there for me, to count my cells. I didn’t remember Him, but once again today He left Himself, to tear me away from nothingness. We stop being aware of this, and we lose ourselves in little things, in stupid irritations, but if we knew what greatness is ours, what greatness the others are, we would cry!” And so she finds herself again, because “grace” becomes deeply moved emotion, and becomes consciousness. She says, “Who is Rose, that you care for her?”
On April 27th, in a unique event in history, Pope Roncalli and Pope Wojtyla will be proclaimed saints. Their pontificates marked the history of the Church and the world, changing forever the existence of millions of people. In these pages, the testimonies of two collaborators tell us about JOHN PAUL II and JOHN XXIII.

BY ALESSANDRO BANFI

Joaquín Navarro-Valls was one of the closest collaborators of John Paul II, for 22 years director of the Vatican Press Room. In his eyes and in his heart he has the exceptional life of this successor of Peter, who brought Jesus Christ back to the center of the message of the universal Church. With him, Traces reflects on the political reading of his pontificate.

One of the lines of interpretation of the pontificate of John Paul II concerns the political and strategic consequences of his great pastoral mission. Certainly, electing a Polish cardinal as Pope meant seeking a representative of the Catholic Church “from behind the Iron Curtain,” to use Churchill’s expression. And yet, one cannot truly say that Wojtyla had a political project...

No, he did not have a political project. He had something more important: he had a human project. This is the thing that is still most lacking today. If one does not have a solid anthropology, how is it possible to lay down laws, to organize the social and political life of a society and of peoples who are formed of women and men whose identity one does not understand? Such anthropological opacity is still today the number one predicament of our culture.

His message at the outset sought to bring Jesus Christ back to the center of the scene, so to speak. I remember his first speech in Saint Peter’s Square: “Open, I say, open...”
wide the doors to Christ!”

That first speech of the inauguration of his pontificate already contained in nuce the whole conception of his mission. We should remember the cultural coordinates of the time: on the one hand, structuralism, and on the other, Marxism, but not so much the real Marxism of Eastern Europe—which had become merely a technique of power—but the academic Marxism, for example of the Frankfurt school. They were closed visions of the human person, without any opening, where the idea itself of the person was problematic. In total contrast, there was the thought of Karol Wojtyla, developed in Person and Act. The root of the pontificate of John Paul II was to preserve the transcendent openness of the human person, threatened with being treated like an object.

His first encyclical, Redemptor Hominis, is also totally founded on “Christ, center of the cosmos and of history.” In what sense did his more “political” mission start out from there?

He always started out from the principle, the origin of the human person, from those two lines of Genesis that are the first biography of the human being: “And God created man in His image and likeness.” History is the demonstrative consequence of that creative act. But God did not merely make man; He accompanies him during his entire personal biography. For this reason, John Paul II could say in Warsaw’s Victory Square, during his first journey to Poland in 1979, “The exclusion of Christ from the history of man is an act against man.” Being aware of this means being aware of the lie of the Communist system of the time as well; it can also be the cornerstone of a great movement of social and political change and, indeed, it proved to be so in history. But this is not in and of itself “politics”—fundamentally, it is a principle of personal identity that lends itself to the building of an appropriate ecosystem for the human person.

Among the consequences of the centrality of Jesus Christ in history, there are, above all, freedom of the person, solidarity among people, and a “subsidiary” vision of society. Do we perhaps have here the origins of the grassroots movements, beginning with the Polish labor union Solidarnosc—“codified,” so to speak, in Sollicitudo Rei Socialis?

Yes but I would change the chronology: the principles existed before Solidarnosc, even if they were later articulated in Sollicitudo Rei Socialis. Laborem Exercens profoundly elucidates the topic of work as creation of man, in God’s image...

Human nature needs work—it postulates work to be able to realize it—
self as “person.” It is not that people work just for survival; they work in order to be themselves. The pages of this encyclical on this point are stupendous. And naturally he could not fail to use the Second Vatican Council documents that dealt with the topic, such as *Gaudium et Spes*.

Entire books have been written on the “Western” alliance of the 1980s between Rome and Washington. Even the assassination attempt in Saint Peter’s Square can be connected to the tension of a world that until then had been divided into two spheres of influence, according to the Yalta Conference agreement...

There was no “holy alliance” that some mentioned in those years. In fact, being present at the conversations between John Paul II and Ronald Reagan, I always saw a very clear difference between the two of them. One spoke of the “empire of evil” and the other of a “Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals.” One was ignorant of the fact that Christianity had been in Russia for a thousand years, while the other knew that the Christian soul remained alive in the Soviet Union. Two parallel lines that could not meet.

And yet the courageous and prophetic position taken by John Paul II in the early 1990s against the “Western” wars, beginning with the first Gulf War, demonstrated that it was not a prejudicial alliance, fruit of a “political project”...

I repeat, there was another plan, higher and more basic than the political one. It was the ethical plan, and it was not limited to the current situation or applicable only to the East-West conflict, because it was an anthropological plan. John Paul II did everything to avoid both the first and the second Gulf Wars. And even if he was unable to forestall those two wars, he did succeed in elevating ethical sensibilities about armed clashes. History has proven him right.

In short, having been at the side of this holy Pope for years, what impression do you retain of his more “political” way of acting?

I will answer with the words of Mikhail Gorbachev in an interview a few years ago: “I would say that the political concepts of John Paul II, his political thought, flowed from his spirituality and were nourished by his spiritual thought.” Not bad for a person who says he is agnostic. But Gorbachev understood this original root in John Paul II.

Could we say, to quote the Italian director who has just won an Oscar, that his political action was a “consequence of love”?

I would say that it is not a consequence of love, but is already in and of itself love, love for the truth and for women and men.
“T

his is the victory
that overcomes the
world: our faith.
My dear friends
and brothers, let
us be on our guard against the vain
simulacrum of today. All eras re-
semble each other.” Thus, on August 6th
of the Holy Year 1950, Monsignor An-
gelo Roncalli, apostolic nuncio in
Paris, closed his homily in the church
of Sant’Alessandro in Colonna, in
Bergamo. The future John XXIII, who
on April 27th will be canonized together
with John Paul II, had a particular bond
with this parish. Here in 1898, as a
young seminarian, he listened to the
homily of the Patriarch of Venice,
Giuseppe Sarto, later Pius X, and, in
1906, gave his first important homily
as a priest, on Saint Frances de Sales.
Other occasions would bring him back to this church. “John XXIII was
the most beautiful expression of the
clergy of Bergamo, close to the people,
and dedicated to pastoral care. He
would always feel he was a pastor,” ex-
plains Msgr. Gianni Carzaniga, rec-
tor of the seminary of Bergamo
and for eight years director of the
John XXIII Foundation, which collects
and studies the writings of the Pope.
He left the position when he became
parish priest of Sant’Alessandro be-
cause “the commitment was incompat-
ible with care for souls.”

What does it mean to say that John
XXIII always felt he was a pastor, he
who never served as one?
The first gift that the Lord gave him was
to meet Him. Angelo Roncalli be-
came a priest because he wanted to be
a priest, that is, to announce Jesus
Christ in any situation. It is not some-
thing you learn in books. He had ex-
perienced it by watching his parish
priest, close to the people in his pastoral
care, person by person. In this sense, he
would always be a parish priest. I’m re-
mined of the years spent in the per-
ipheries of Europe.

Where and in what sense?
First in Bulgaria, alongside the over
160,000 Macedonian Catholic immi-
grants who escaped during the war, and
then in his ten years in Turkey, where
he was apostolic delegate, that is, the
representative of the Pope to Catholics:
a missionary bishop, alongside the
people. His diplomatic role with those
announced everywhere, but care is required. Toward the end of World War II, he was invited to Paris as apostolic nuncio, an important role. There, he became aware of the work of de-Christianization that began with the French Revolution. These were all experiences he would bring to Rome. The world was changing. He felt anxious, desirous to speak to the modern person. This is why he called for Vatican Council II.

Can we say that the Council originated in his pastoral concern?
Yes. John XXIII said it clearly. The Council was not born of a doctrinal question, but of the desire to care for families, those in need, the human person in a society that was changing. There was no need to alter the dogmas, but the way they were presented. Here we see his pastoral sensibility, his being a parish priest. The doctrine needed to become flesh, even while remaining anchored to tradition. He was the man of tradition, not of traditionalism.

What does this mean?
Tradere means to cherish and transmit the Christian mystery. Pope Roncalli spoke to everyone, even though he knew there were differences. Like Pope Francis, he respected each human being, but had no intention of changing dogmas or doctrines. John XXIII looked at what united, not what divided. In this sense, his tradere was vigorous, lively.

Do you have an example to illustrate what you mean?
When he visited prisoners in the Regina Coeli prison, he was not ashamed to talk about his cousin who had been incarcerated. Here was the pastor who “put himself alongside” those he cared for. He communicated with freshness what he had most at heart: the relationship with the Lord, who leans over everyone and offers His desire to meet them. This relationship shone through him, a relationship that enables us to forgive others and ourselves for harm done. For him, the Gospel re-animated the fibers of existence to the point of making us understand that the relationship with the Father that the Son offers is something that opens us outward, that melts our anger, because we feel loved and, in turn, can love.

There are many affinities with Pope Francis...
A fundamental one is that both start out from the encounter with Christ, who sets into motion an existence filled with a greater love. Only as a consequence are there rules. Pope Francis, like John XXIII, is announcing the experience of having encountered Christ. But there is another aspect they share: prayer. John XXIII prepared for the Council with a week of spiritual exercises. He thought that his person was within the mystery of Christ. He wrote: “Prayer is my breathing.” His prayer was for the world. When he prayed the Rosary, on the third joyful mystery, the birth of Jesus, he would say, “This is for all the babies being born.” The evening of his election, when he was alone with his secretary Monsignor Loris Capovilla, and the latter asked him, “What shall we do?”, he responded, “Let’s pray Vespers.”

In an interview, Fr. Giussani said that the characteristic feature of John XXIII was “God’s merciful forbearance for the salvation of the human person.” This reverberated in the goodness of John XXIII. As Cardinal Capovilla always emphasized, he was not “the good Pope,” but the Pope of goodness. His gaze, just as he received it from Christ, was charged with confidence, ready to correct, but without condemnation. It was the announce-
THE LOGIC OF GIFT AT WORK

What does faith have to do with business? The co-author of a document that analyzes this link, Dr. MICHAEL NAUGHTON, discusses his experience in exploring the origin of caritas: a new gaze that pushes us “wherever we are planted” to find ways of being “more human toward each other” in a sometimes barren wasteland of relativism.

BY SUZANNE TANZI
D

uring these times of persistent unemployment and “lack of engagement” in work, as in life, the Church carries hope to a way forward. In the land of free choice, the key is chosen-ness; in a life of acquisition, the pivotal point is giving. Dr. Michael Naughton, Director of the John A. Ryan Institute for Catholic Social Thought, University of Saint Thomas, drafted The Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection for the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, soon to be in 16 languages. Traces revisits this reflection and its co-author to understand better why and how the seeds for change it carries are being spread, over two years since its publication, by the winds of certainty in individuals like Naughton who “speak from their center” to share the applicability—and profound meaning—of the Catholic social tradition.

You have said that your main hope regarding the document you helped author, The Vocation of the Business Leader (VBL), will speak to our fundamental sense of humanity. What generated the creation of this document?

It began with Benedict XVI’s phrase, “the logic of gift,” and was born at a February 2011 seminar with the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace entitled “Caritas in Veritate: The Logic of Gift and the Meaning of Business.” This meeting followed the October 2010 conference, “Caritas in Veritate and the USA.” Underlying both meetings is the Church’s firm conviction that all Christians are called to practice charity according to their vocation and to the degree of influence they wield in the polis.

Does rereading this document two years after it was published, in an ever evolving social and cultural dynamic, bring something new?

The document highlights the “see, judge, act” method in business, which is very current. The “see” section may eventually become dated and we will have to reassess that in terms of technology and other factors, but the trends described are major and will be around for a while. The “judge” section deals more with the principles of Catholic social tradition that can help people live out better business practices—which come into play in the “act” section. While the document is focused on business it is really more broadly about human work, drawing upon a long social tradition.

This tradition includes a number of encyclicals…

The document is unique and will always be timely—as the needs are urgent—in that it takes a very big tradition and tries to extract what is relevant for the business leader, for the people of work. Caritas in Veritate, Rerum Novarum, Centesimus Annus are all encyclicals in which one can find great material, but people are not sure what it all means for them in their work. This document boils down these rich and important texts so they are accessible to those who are seeking.

Can you explain the emphasis, concerning this “fundamental sense of humanity” you speak of, on the logic of gift and its connection to giving?

As Pope Benedict reminded us, charity is love that is received and given. The logic of gift is recognizing that we have received much. VBL opens up with Jesus’ line: “From everyone who is given much, much will be demanded” (Lk 12:48). When we first experience our being as created, as being gifted life, this receiving enables us to see our doing and having as ways of giving, which they were meant to be.

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How can we keep this awareness alive?
Silence, prayer, and worship are fundamental habits of receptivity which then nurture this deep sense that I have been given—and am continuously receiving—an abundance, and that part of my work then is to give of myself.

How does the logic of gift differ from the logic of the market?
Whereas the logic of gift presupposes that something is given, the logic of the market presupposes that nothing is given and it is only acquired. You have to assail nature and grab things out of it, and then it becomes yours. Whereas the logic of gift presupposes that we are chosen, the logic of the market sees only discreet individual choices; one decision is no better than the other. We are simply the arbitrators of our own choices, as in in careerism and materialism, in which everything is acquired and nothing is given.

Especially now, the market is being watched eagerly for signs of recovery—upticks in business bring hope to most.
To be clear, I am not against the logic of the market; profit is a necessary and valid goal. But if it is the only logic a business person has, it will undermine the logic of gift. The logic of gift is the much larger logic, which the market is imbedded in and thus controlled by.

So when there is no logic of gift, subjective choice reigns?
There should be a dynamism between choice and chosen-ness. The market does not recognize the chosen part just as it does not recognize the logic of gift. If all I have is choice—relativism—that is not judged, a consumer mentality gets imposed on all decisions. But in reality, I choose well when I have a deep sense that I myself am chosen for something. Otherwise, I am left in a barren wasteland in trying to find criteria for my choices. A deeper context in which I can understand my choice is needed.

In your book Leading Wisely in Difficult Times, you highlight businesses that operate from within this deeper context. Which of these case studies was the most striking?
We examined the business practices at a food processing company in Montreal where, if a manager lays off or fires someone, he has to meet with the former employee twice in the ensuing 6 to 7 months. The company CEO gave us two motivations for this practice: 1) it transcends the “fault” issues, giving space to the very human experience of asking someone, “How are you doing?” and 2) when people are fired or laid off by their manager, a deep rift is formed. The CEO wanted to create an opportunity for reconciliation. Even in this fallen world we live in, we can still find ways to be human toward each other.

Relationships are important in understanding the Christian concept of “managing as if faith mattered.” You travel a lot and make many other sacrifices in order to encounter people on this plane and share ideas.
There are many great groups out there doing incredible outreach. For example, I am connected to an action-oriented organization called Seeing Things Whole. With one of my colleagues there, I went from
know how to apply what they learn
in these classes to their business goals. Students and professors are focused
only on their own disciplines, so we are
trying to create a bridge by engaging
the faculty. The Church has a difficult
but rich doctrine that speaks to so
much of the world of business—prop-
erty, just wage, design work, institu-
tional set up, and market products. Much of my effort is geared toward
trying to get faculty to take all this
more seriously.

Do you agree with Alasdair McIn-
yre’s insistence that universities
are increasingly losing their capac-
ty to help their students see things
whole?
This is certainly true, but I have hope
in the projects being cultivated around
the country. Still, there is a funda-
mental force in the
academy that thwarts
our efforts. One of
the main problems is
*rewards*: you get high-
ly rewarded if you
publish in A-1 jour-
nals, which are very
quantitative and em-
pirically driven. If I
want to get my tenure
and promotion, I should forget about
the ethics and focus on the empiricism
of my own discipline. For this reason,
I am trying to find respectable pub-
lishing opportunities in ethics studies
that will reward business aspirants
both personally and professionally.

It seems your emphasis on educa-
tion from a grassroots level–uni-
versity business schools—is key.
We need to start wherever we can—wherever we are planted. Grass-
roots is very important, and that’s
why I value the efforts of CL and Fo-
colare and others who are educating
to the indispensability of social doc-
trine, as are Catholic conferences
around the country. The USCCB is
challenging the political system in un-
precedented ways, particularly re-
garding religious liberty and the
question of marriage.

*VBL has received much positive
feedback from other Christian de-
nominations, Jews, and even Mus-
lins...*
Social doctrine is a place where you
can have an ecumenical convergence
with other traditions, but the lan-
guage we use in such engagements
makes a difference. A friend of mine
phrases the challenge like this: “How
can you speak from your center in
such a way that you invite the others
to do the same?”

In your own story, what catalyzed
your journey on this
road?
My father was an en-
trepreneur. Hard work
was very important to
him, and I understood
its value through his
example. I never saw
myself as an academ-
ic, and I still don’t! I
grew up in a blue col-
lar neighborhood on the south side
of Chicago—something about that
never gets out of you. But later on,
when I was teaching high school, I
read John Paul II’s *Laborem Exercens*
encyclical on human work. I realized
I could spend the rest of my life ex-
ploring the theology of work. Then,
at Marquette University, I was asked
to start the collection process for
Dorothy Day’s canonization. Her
writings of the ’30s and ’40s, which
reveal the deeply Catholic under-
pinning of her actions, personally in-
spired me. So I would say that she and
John Paul II had a major impact on
my endeavors of today.

company to company, to get a bet-
ter sense of what is going on in the
world of business. You have to get
into the guts of the action; you can-
not just understand it in principle.
Pencils are important but people live
and tell the story. Also, I work a lot
with Catholic business schools. In-
ternationally, there are about 1,800
institutions of higher learning in the
Catholic tradition—and I am trying
to stay in touch with them all.

But it seems that Catholic social doc-
trine is not much emphasized in
Catholic universities...
True, and this constitutes a constant
challenge of mission and identity.
Philosophy and theology instruc-
tors might teach it from a political
standpoint, but business majors don’t
**BOOK**

THE WONDERFUL FACE OF AUGUST

This is a book from which a normal 11-year-old boy, though little interested in reading, will find it hard to break away. And not only because August, the protagonist, is his own age, and the world in which he moves—Xbox, Star Wars, science projects, texting, school field trips, and a good and loving sister—is so familiar. The real charm of this *New York Times* best-selling novel, by first-time author R.J. Palacio, is a boy whose face is horribly malformed due to a genetic disease. Full of an 11-year-old’s fears and desires, he finds himself going to school for the first time, after a childhood of surgeries and home schooling. In the classrooms of Beecher Prep, Auggie enters a world that, terrified to face him, mocks and marginalizes him. But his real discovery, while he feels like “a lamb being led to the slaughter,” is the experience of true friendship. His new friend Jack defends Auggie and accompanies him so closely that others are not sure who needs the other more. A friendship so pure—though not lacking in betrayal—and ready to sacrifice becomes enviable and contagious for all. Within the hearts of the characters introduced chapter by chapter, August awakens the question of meaning and the capacity for doing good. Auggie enables each person he meets to discover his own true face. As the midwife said the day he was born, “Every creature of God conquers the world.” This is why the novel is a wonder for adults as well.

Anna Leonardi

**FILM**

SOMETHING AMIDST ALL THE BROKENNESS

In his most recent film, *The Place Beyond the Pines*, director Derek Cianfrance illustrates an inter-generational parable through a cinematic mosaic. The mosaic displays images of brokenness—broken fathers, broken families, broken youth; really, a broken world—and, most importantly, the existence of grace and the potential for rebirth amidst all the brokenness. Nonetheless, Cianfrance’s film isn’t an ideological “religious” movie with a “message,” yet a work born from, in his own words, “a deeply personal place.” The birth of his second son several years ago prompted Cianfrance to seriously re-consider the passage of choices between generations. In the film, the lives and failures of two fathers in very different places in society intertwine in a tragic encounter that leaves lingering consequences for their sons. Luke Glanton (Ryan Gosling) is a talented travelling motorcycle stuntman, stained by a criminal history, who, after a chance meeting with his ex-girlfriend Romina (Eva Mendes), now married to another man, learns that he has a son. Avery Cross (Bradley Cooper), a promising young police officer, is a middle-class family man conflicted with career pressures. Following a tear-filled moment of grace at his son Jason’s Baptism, Luke, desperately seeking to provide for his child, repeatedly chooses crime over responsibility, leading to his encounter with Avery. Their meeting forever disturbs family equilibrium with especially damaging effects for their sons. Years later, both sons, Jason (Dane Dehaan) and A.J. (Emory Cohen), meet as two lost young adults and newly discovered tensions mount. All the ugliness, corruption, brokenness, and hatred transferred between generations culminates in a pivotal scene between Jason and Avery. Ultimately, an ever present merciful grace—which comes from a place beyond all the brokenness—is victorious over hatred, transforming the wreckage between generations into a path toward new life.

Andrew Favata
IS A NEW BEGINNING POSSIBLE?
The Contribution of Experience

As the May European elections approach, public opinion seems divided between those who press to leave the European Union and those who deem voting useless because it will change nothing. While supporters of the EU are not lacking, there is a prevalent sense of frustration: Europe no longer seems a center, but instead a great periphery of the globalized world. But, drawing upon Pope Francis’s words, isn’t it possible that being or feeling “on the periphery,” if we consider it in depth, can afford the opportunity to recover a positive attitude and give ourselves the chance for change?

WHAT ARE THE FACTORS TO CONSIDER REGARDING THIS NEW OPPORTUNITY?

Europe was born and grew around a few great things that marked the history of the world and that document the importance of the Christian faith for the life of women and men. Fr. Giussani reminded us of this in 1986:

- the value of the person, absolutely inconceivable in all the literature of the world;
- the value of work, which all of world culture, ancient culture but also Engels and Marx, conceives as enslavement, while Christ calls work the activity of the Father, of God;
- the value of matter, that is to say, the abolition of the duality between a noble and an ignoble aspect of the life of nature;
- the value of progress, of time as charged with meaning, because the concept of history requires the idea of an intelligent plan;
- freedom. Man cannot conceive of himself as free in an absolute sense: since before he was not and now he is, he depends. Perforce. The alternative is very simple: either he depends on What makes reality, i.e., on God, or he depends on the chance movements of reality, i.e., on those in power.”

1. THE VALUE OF UNITED EUROPE

In the furrow of these few great things that historically founded Europe, there also arose the project of a United Europe, as Fr. Julián Carrón underlines: “What enabled the fathers of Europe to find the willingness to speak to each other, to build something together, even after the Second World War? The awareness of the impossibility of eliminating the adversary made them less presumptuous, less impermeable to dialogue, aware of their own need; they began to give space to the possibility that →
The current crisis shows that what gave life to United Europe is no longer an evident fact.

The others, in their diversity, could be perceived as a resource, a good” (la Repubblica, April 10, 2013). In the period following the Second World War, the leaders of countries that up until then had been fighting each other (De Gasperi, Schuman, and Adenauer) decided to set aside feelings of revenge or domination and laid the foundations for a long-term peace by putting together their respective economic interests.

To understand the exceptionality of what happened in Europe at that critical juncture, just consider what happened after the World War I, after the Napoleonic wars, or the wars of religion: there was never true peace, but a continual tension that set the stage for the following wars. United Europe began with a very precise and concrete agreement: the 1951 accord about management of coal and steel (the treaty constituting the European Coal and Steel Community), recognized by all as the example of a new way of dealing with each other. In the birth of the first European project, the force of ideals was a decisive factor, capable of changing the course of events. In contrast to what happens today, the goal was not limited to the economy. In fact, that economic agreement was the first step toward a much greater goal: peace (partners who cooperate and do business with each other tend not to go to war against each other) and, together with peace, reciprocal help so that each could seek its own and the common good.

The pursuit of this very goal was renewed in the second historical passage of contemporary Europe, which happened with the fall of the Berlin Wall and was also determined by the power of an ideal. Few in the East or the West would have wagered on the possibility of a peaceful resolution to Europe’s division into two blocs, which so dramatically marked the vicissitudes of the Old Continent. Václav Havel, who would become the first President of post-Communist Czechoslovakia, in his 1979 book, The Power of the Powerless, had asserted that the problem of social and political life was the dominance of the lie of ideology and that the true answer to the situation was not a violent revolution, nor a simple political reform or the mere overturn of totalitarianism in favor of a parliamentary democracy, but a life, personal and social, engaged in the pursuit of truth. In the testimony of Havel, it appeared evident that the factors that change history are the same ones that change the heart of the human person.

2. THE CRISIS

The current crisis of the “European consciousness,” together with the economic crisis, shows that what gave life to United Europe is no longer an evident fact, a premise acknowledged by all as the condition for facing the challenges that reality sets before us. As happened in the past, so too we Europeans in 2014 must recapture the reasons for a unity that is not at all taken for granted and from which we can always regress. In fact, as Benedict XVI affirmed, “incremental progress is possible only in the material sphere. Yet in the field of ethical awareness and moral decision-making, there is no similar possibility of accumulation for the simple reason that man’s freedom is always new and he must always make his decisions anew. Freedom presupposes that in fundamental decisions, every person and every generation is a new beginning.” The difficulties of the present make us aware that “(e)ven the best structures function only when the community is animated by convictions capable of motivating people to assert freely to the social order” (Spe Salvi, 24).

This, then, is the great opportunity that the crisis offers us Europeans: to recapture the reasons for our “existing as a community.” This challenge is imperative, and Benedict XVI reminds us of the reason: “Since man always remains free and since his freedom is always fragile, the kingdom of good will never be definitively established in this world. Anyone who promises the better world that is guaranteed to last forever is making a false promise; he is overlooking human freedom.” In other words, “good structures help, but of themselves they are not enough. Man can never be redeemed simply from outside” (Spe Salvi 24b, 25).

One element today makes the road even harder: we no longer have the same awareness of the depth of our human need that the founding fathers had; the drive provided by an ideal has petered out, to be replaced by a logic of pure self-interest.

Going to the root of the crisis, trying to understand all the factors in play is the only road for finding the new awareness Europe needs today. Precisely for us Europeans, it has become vital to promote a real debate on the present and future of the Old Continent, evaluating whether the attempts made so far have been appro-
prome to the nature of the crisis. This concerns just as much the economy as it does anthropological challenges. Expecting to resolve the grave anthropological issues we are facing with mere juridical instruments is as ineffective as it is illusory. As becomes evident before the most radical problems of human existence, the solution “does not come directly facing the problems, but exploring more deeply the nature of the subject who faces them” (Fr. Giussani, 1976).

Forgetfulness of this level lies at the origin of the crisis of the human that has weakened awareness of our goals. So, over time, the means (the economy, profits, and finance) have become the end and the European economic union has changed into a mere compromise between inevitably conflicting interests. The Europe of nations re-emerges, no longer warring with cannons, but with the weapons of the economy and finance, divided over many crucial questions: the relationship with Mediterranean countries, illegal immigration, sovereign debts, peacekeeping operations, and solidarity with partners in difficulty.

The disappearance of an ideal-based drive and of awareness of the ends has also produced consequences in Europe’s functioning as an institution: the European organisms have become ingrown, often bloating beyond measure and generating a sort of technocratic monster that seems to have decided to bend reality to its own needs. Thus, there is an increasingly widespread perception of the inefficacy of European structures. Until 2008, when the financial crisis exploded, the judgment on the trustworthiness of European institutions was very positive, much more positive than the one for individual nations. Today, instead, polls indicate that 70% of European citizens consider the European structures (the Commission, the Council, the Parliament) inadequate to meet the needs of people and social life.

According to Joseph Weiler, one of the most authoritative judges of European dynamics, Europe suffers from a political deficit: an authentic European political life is missing because the dimension of ideals is lacking. Having wagered everything on the economy, which has not taken off at all, people wonder, “What is Europe here to do?”

At the same time, there is a growing idea of Europe as a relativistic cultural and political space, whose structures seek to legitimize, and even deem as rights, all individual aspirations, unmoored from the question of what the human person is.

So then, are the Euroskeptics right in wanting to abandon the European Union, deeming it defeated and the dreams of the founding fathers passé?

3. THE PERSON SHOULD BE THE FIRST PRIORITY FOR EUROPE

Is there a way out? Yes: starting again from the position that generated Europe and the European Union. Economic interests alone are not enough for starting anew. We need to rediscover that “the other is a good and not an obstacle to the fullness of our ‘I’; in politics as well as in human and social relations” (Fr. Carrón). The only thing that builds is “love for the reverberation of truth found in everyone. This is a factor of peace, construction of a human dwelling place, of a home, that can be a refuge from extreme desperation” (Fr. Giussani, 1995).

The recovery of an adequate consciousness of the human, of what is essential to the realization of individuals and of peoples, can happen in places that reawaken the “I” of each person, educate it to an adequate relationship with reality (whatever it may be), and help it existentialistically perceive the centrality, uniqueness, and sanctity of each person: here, the 2,000-year experience of the Christian community and all the social realities inspired by lay and religious ideals are called into play. Only a conception of the human being as an irreducible reality, “relationship with the infinite” (Fr. Giussani), can put together people who differ in ethnicity, social background, culture, religion, and political ideology, in sight of a true integration that eliminates all ghettos and becomes a catalyst of development.

Beginning with these concerns, a broad dialogue must be opened about how the EU should evolve in the coming years, involving all citizens, above all the future generations, thousands of whom are already leaving their countries of origin and feel at home wherever they go to study or work.

This has an important impact on the institutional level, as well. In the speech he was to give at Rome’s Sapienza University in 2008,
Benedict XVI said he shared the judgment of the philosopher Jürgen Habermas, “when he says that the legitimacy of a constitutional charter, as a basis for what is legal, derives from two sources: from the equal participation of all citizens in the political process and from the reasonable manner in which political disputes are resolved. With regard to this ‘reasonable manner,’ he notes that it cannot simply be a fight for arithmetical majorities, but must have the character of a ‘process of argumentation sensitive to the truth,’” that is, in the continual striving to discover every spark of truth kindled in the encounter with the other. In fact, the truth is never one person’s possession, to brandish like a cudgel against others, but emerges in the dynamic of the human encounter: “Truth is a relationship! As such each one of us receives the truth and expresses it from within, that is to say, according to one’s own circumstances, culture, and situation in life, etc. This does not mean that truth is variable and subjective, quite the contrary. But it does signify that it comes to us always and only as a way and a life” (Pope Francis, Letter to Eugenio Scalfari, la Repubblica, September 11, 2013). This route relativism, saving precisely what relativism seeks to valorize: diversity, otherness.

In the measure in which there is an appeal to an experience of the human person that is not reduced, European politics can be founded. In this sense, the European organizations must be the first to structure themselves in the direction of true subsidiarity. This would promote the responsibility of all (people, social groups, nations), avoiding the illusion that the answers always and in every case come from above.

A Europe that understood this would not tend to close itself against immigration; would not practice austerity alone, but also solidarity in economics; would not withdraw into unrealistic and anti-historic nationalisms; would not push for legislation that breaks all bonds, cultivating the obsession for new rights of individuals; and would not endorse hostility to faiths, in particular the Christian faith, betraying precisely what built and gave greatness to the history of Europe.

“Sometimes I wonder if there are people in today’s world who are really concerned about generating processes of people-building, as opposed to obtaining immediate results which yield easy, quick, short-term political gains, but do not enhance human fullness. History will perhaps judge the latter with the criterion set forth by Romano Guardini: ‘The only measure for properly evaluating an age is to ask to what extent it fosters the development and attainment of a full and authentically meaningful human existence, in accordance with the peculiar character and the capacities of that age.’ […] As believers, we also feel close to those who do not consider themselves part of any religious tradition, yet sincerely seek the truth, goodness, and beauty which we believe have their highest expression and source in God. We consider them as precious allies in the commitment to defending human dignity, in building peaceful coexistence between peoples, and in protecting creation” (Evangelii Gaudium, 224.257).

Here we see the fundamental contribution that faith can give to public life, “broadening reason,” as Benedict XVI reminded us. Christianity’s foremost contribution is in educating people to look at reality in all its factors and thus to recover the original ideal-based drive that has dimmed over time. This is the true emergency of our times.

If Europe is not deaf to this call, it will be able to be born again and thus to hope to return to being the “new world,” an example and model for all. The contribution that a re-born European culture can offer the whole world is to put back in the center the question about what enables a human being to be and feel such.
Dear friends:

This magazine is published with only one purpose, which is to communicate the experience of the CL Movement: a life, judgments, a gaze toward the world that is generated by faith. We want to communicate it to as many people as possible, in the most immediate way.

For this reason, taking into account the possibilities that the new media offer to us, we have decided to invest in tools that are both free of charge and available to a wide audience.

Therefore, we will stop printing *Traces* and steer our resources toward creating an English-language *Traces* website—[www.tracesonline.org](http://www.tracesonline.org)—and a monthly PDF version of *Traces*.

The copy you are holding in your hands is the final print edition of *Traces*. We believe that moving in this direction will both increase our outreach and allow us to focus our resources on developing quality content without the expense of printing and shipping, and we hope you appreciate the new more accessible online version and monthly supplement.

We are grateful for your past support and encourage you to continue to participate by offering letters, article pitches, and photos as we transition, with your help, to new ways of communicating.

It is a new *Traces*, but it will always be *Traces*.

Kindest regards,

Davide Perillo
Editor-in-Chief
In American Protestant Theology, Luigi Giussani traces the history of the most meaningful theological expressions and the cultural significance of American Protestantism, from its origins in seventeenth-century Puritanism to the 1950s.

Giussani clarifies and assesses elements of Protestantism such as the democratic approach to Church-State relations, "The Great Awakening," Calvinism and Trinitarianism, and liberalism. His rich references and analytical descriptions reconstruct an overview of the development of a religion that has great importance in the context of spiritual life and American culture. He also displays full respect for the religious depth from which Protestantism was born and where it can reach, and expresses great admiration for its most prominent thinkers and spiritual leaders, including Jonathan Edwards, Horace Bushnell, Walter Rauschenbusch, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich.

Further testament to Giussani’s clear-minded and comprehensive knowledge of Christianity, American Protestant Theology makes the work of a master theologian available in English for the first time.