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TRACES

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LITTERAE COMMUNIONIS



**“All That You Have, Bequeathed
You by Your Father, Earn
It in Order to Possess It”**



**Education, freedom, youth...
and other challenging topics
that involve everyone. That's
why it is worth following the
upcoming edition of the Rimini
Meeting (August 20th- 26th).**



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An article by Ignacio Carbajosa commenting on the Book of Job, which appeared in the Spanish magazine *Jot Down*.

CLOSE UP

A LIVING INHERITANCE

A preview of the upcoming edition of the Rimini Meeting and an interview with one of the guest speakers, the French political scientist, Olivier Roy.



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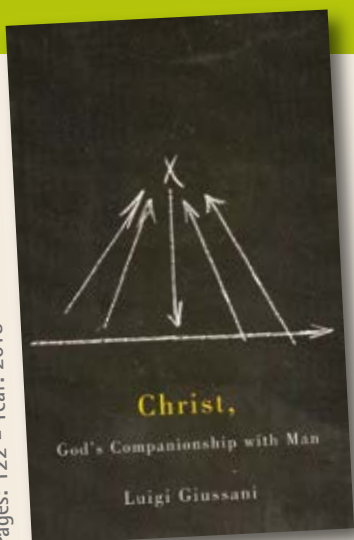
LUIGI GIUSSANI

This volume is a selection of the most significant writings by Monsignor Luigi Giussani (1922-2005), founder of the Italian Catholic lay movement Communion and Liberation, which is practiced in 80 countries around the world.

Presented by Julián Carrón, Giussani's successor as head of Communion and Liberation, *Christ, God's Companionship with Man* is the most succinct introduction to the breadth of Giussani's thought, including

memorable passages from works such as *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, *The Journey to Truth is an Experience*, *Why the Church?*, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, and *Is It Possible to Live This Way?* Many speak of Giussani as a friendly presence, a man who believed that it was possible to live in faith every day and in any circumstance. As a writer and religious scholar who was deeply devoted to his work, Giussani's teachings and reflections have come to generate worldwide recognition and support.

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WITH OUR HANDS OPEN

The words of Fr. Giussani that follow are always new, even if we have already heard them, because they get you where it hurts, a provocation that appears when summer comes and our lives ease up a bit from fixed commitments, obligations, and work. “The time of freedom” arrives. Fr. Giussani told the first GS students that it is “the most noble time of the year, because it is when you engage in the way you want with the value you recognize as prevalent in your life, or you don’t engage with anything at all, and then you are silly,” empty. “You understand what people want by the way they use their free time.”


So then, these days are a test, because they bring out what we have most at heart. We have said this often in *Traces*, but in Fr. Giussani’s words there is more. If they are true—and each of us can judge how true they are—it means that the weeks ahead are also a great opportunity to understand more what *freedom* is. What a precious, inestimable gift is this mysterious capacity we have to adhere to the good, to ask for it, to be open to searching for it even in the details of a reality that often contains features we do not want (weariness, pain, unmet desire), or to say “no” and close in on ourselves.

We often take freedom for granted, but instead, it is the most important thing. The subtle, almost imperceptible line between accepting and rejecting becomes the touchstone for how we face circumstances and decide how we live. In front of every moment of every day, as Fr. Julián Carrón recently reminded a group of CL leaders, “there are always two conceptions at work,” the one of those who “already know,” and have their own measure in mind, an idea of how things should be (usually, different from how they are...), or “the poor person, like the Unnamed in Manzoni’s *The Betrothed*, so aware of his need that he is entirely open” to the words of the Cardinal. The first “puts hope in his performance, the other expects everything from Christ.”

Two attitudes, two ways of living moment by moment. But it always depends on us, on our freedom. We can stand “with our hands open or our hands closed,” as Pope Francis said to the Knights, 5,000 middle school youth, in a moving audience that we recounted in last month’s issue. We can be open to learning anew what we thought we already knew, but can instead no longer taken for granted—an attitude that will be shown at the Meeting of Rimini this year, to which the Close-Up of this issue is dedicated—or we can close in on ourselves defensively in front of this “change of epoch” and find ourselves without weapons for facing today’s challenges: education, youth, work... Open or closed. This is seen throughout this issue.

It can be seen in an article by Ignacio Carbajosa commenting on the Book of Job, available at www.tracesonline.org. It is a provocative text offering many points for reflection, one of which is how God entrusts the response to the question of innocent suffering to our freedom, to the way we stand in front of Him. Open or closed. It depends on us, and it is life-changing. **T**


WE WERE THREE FRIENDS IN THE BAR...

 Dear Fr. Carrón: I was at your School of Community with my friends Monica and Osvaldo. Afterwards, we decided to go to the bar for a beer. We couldn't help but comment on what we had heard, comparing it to our own lives. We related to each other what had struck us most: does salvation, that is to say joy, still interest us, and where have we experienced it? To recognize Christ is not difficult; it's simple. How are we surprised by recognizing Him? What are our relationships like? Our friendship, if it is an end unto itself, sooner or later falls asleep, whereas it should awaken our desire, that hunger and thirst that you spoke of. We spoke of Pope Francis's poverty as an opening to the modality with which He decides to come meet us. I was still in the car when I got this message from Monica: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I with them. Christ present and alive, even in front of a beer, so much so that the bartender asked me, 'Excuse me, I don't want to bother you. I see you discussing something with such passion. But I hear you say Christ, not as a swear. You're Christians, right? But such passionate Christians?' I only said yes." How beautiful life is when lived so intensely. A stranger, without knowing it, describes the meaning of our friendship: we are together only because of our passion for Christ and for our brothers.

Donatella, Italy




POISON BALL THAT ATTRACTS MATTEO

 Matteo is not an "easy" kid. The principal of the middle school recommended him to our after-school program because when his parents started divorce proceedings, he stopped studying. Matteo is very "sharp," but he's against everything and everyone. He endures with disgust the hours of the after-school program, fighting and challenging everything. After months, the situation didn't get better, perhaps it's even worse because Matteo lost his initial uneasiness; now he knows us and what our weak points are so he knows what buttons to push. The struggle is tough and personally, I wanted to forget about it and move on. Both of us (he and I) awaited the end of the school year as a liberation. Finally, the end of the after-school program arrived and we counselors decided to finish on a high note. We organized an afternoon of games at the park. Obviously, Matteo was forced to come but he showed up with his soccer ball, intending to play a game of his own. With a sour face, he began his usual challenge, especially when we told him that, with some high school students, we'd

already decided on the games and songs. In reply, he said to me, "kids' games!" I didn't give him permission to go home, and he sat alone at the edge of the field. We started to play, we sang a song, we divided into two teams and then we went wild with a game of "poison ball." We adults were the fiercest. My team narrowly won! While I was celebrating the victory, I felt someone tugging my sleeve: it was Matteo. I thought to myself, "What does he want to complain about now?" Instead, he asked, "How do you get in the game?" I couldn't believe my ears but I have seen the truth, repeated so many times, but perhaps never believing it, that in front of beauty itself, it's impossible to remain indifferent. Right away, I put him on a team and he became, as expected, one of the best players on the field. We played for two hours, everybody giving his or her best, and for two hours, we are teammates. The games ended and we went back. I approached him and asked if he enjoyed the day. His answer threw me off again: "Not at all. Those were kid games." I looked at him and I couldn't get mad; I actually burst out laughing, which maybe infected him a little because he didn't insist. We left each other with: "We'll see each other next year?" He didn't say yes, but he didn't say no either.

Mariella, Pesaro (Italy)

I COULD HAVE BEEN THAT MOTHER

 I'm a 26-year-old obstetrician, married with a 15-month-old daughter. On my way to work this morning, I heard on the radio the



AN INSISTENT REQUEST

THE CHICKEN AND THE BREAD

On the sidewalk outside my house, there is often an immigrant who begs. His requests are frequently insistent and demanding, so I'm happy when I can sneak into the house without being noticed. This morning I ran into him outside the supermarket. He stopped me and told me he'd like a roasted chicken and some bread. I told him I would gladly buy him something to eat. He insisted that he wanted precisely what he had asked for. I went in and got a large ciabatta, but I couldn't find the chicken. So, I met him outside and told him that in place of the chicken I had bought him some ham. He maintained that they sold chicken, so he went into the supermarket with me and went to the meat counter. He told me the ciabatta I had bought was too small, so he grabbed a baguette. I began to get angry, but I didn't feel like getting into an argument. Not happy, he disappeared for a few minutes and returned with a bottle of water. Anger got the better of me and I headed toward the check-out, but a voice called out to me, "Excuse me, ma'am." It was a cashier who was promoting a new drink and in exchange for a purchase, she was giving away shopping bags. "Excuse me, but I'd like to give you one of our bags because you are helping that man who is always outside begging!"



Luisella, Milan (Italy)

tragic news about the mother who forgot her daughter in the car. I burst into tears. I thought of that little girl, who was my daughter's age, and I thought above all of the mother, of her life destroyed, how others would look at her, but especially of the tormenting war within herself. I saw no hope, I saw no way out; there was only anguish. I listened to the comments that circulated: "But how can this happen? How could she?" I, instead, was certain that I could have been that mother. This idea scandalizes me and others. Yes, especially in this period when I feel so tired, fragile, worn out, it could have been me. The only

thing that made me lift my head and start driving again was the feverish, impatient desire to get to work a little early so that I could read a few bits from School of Community, because it was the only tool I could think of to keep a concrete memory of the Mystery present in my life *now*. I'm certain that I was moved by the indelible print God has placed within me, that seed that has made me say more than once that life is beautiful. For me, this fact isn't just a fact from the news—it has made me ask myself what hope I have, who I belong to, what I live for, who my daughter belongs to. My life, full of things that I don't under-

stand (like the stress of my job), what does it consist of? Once the car was parked, space opened in my heart for the existential certainty that the answer to these questions is the only thing that makes life worth living, the only thing that makes me the protagonist of my life. "Is salvation still interesting for me? Not habit, not the mechanical repetition of certain gestures, but salvation? Am I still as interested as I was in the beginning?" I had already read these questions of Fr. Carrón's in the introduction to the Exercises, but this morning I practically shouted back, "Yes."

Chiara, Italy

A LIVING INHERITANCE

Post-truth, rights, and the collapse of values. As well as jobs, migration, and terrorism. This year, the provocation of one of the most important international cultural events will touch on hot button topics for Western society. Not seeking solutions in the past, but in something that's already present. Here is what we should follow at the Rimini Meeting.

BY PAOLO PEREGO

Not worshipping ashes, but something to live by. This is the challenge that the 39th edition of the Meeting of Rimini hopes to put forward as a guiding theme for all that will happen in the halls of the convention center from August 20th-26th. It all starts from the theme, a quote taken from Goethe's *Faust*—"All that you have, bequeathed you by your father, earn it in order to possess it"—which has inspired the drafting of a rich program of events once again this year.

"In any case, it won't be a Meeting about an inheritance, something left over from the past, but rather about something that's already present," Emilia Guarnieri, long-time lead organizer of the cultural festival, is quick to say. "It's just that you have to discover the value of what you inherited. The 'what' is already there. The problem is that we're no longer aware of it. And that goes for everyone. There is hardly anyone left who has a grasp on something that gives meaning to life." Topics covered will include post-truth, rights, and the collapse of values; global conflicts, migration, and terrorism; the crisis and its effects on the economy and employment; and issues facing young people—all components of the picture Pope Francis paints as an "epochal change."

The first step, then, is knowing and understanding what is happening around us. >>

"ALL THAT YOU HAVE, BEQUEATHED YOU BY YOUR FATHER, EARN IT IN ORDER TO POSSESS IT" August 20-26, 2017



» To help with that, many leaders in their field were invited to speak about religion, economics, and politics. They range from the Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin to the Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni; from the Orthodox Metropolitan Hilarion to the Custos of the Holy Land Fr. Francesco Patton and his predecessor, Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa. Pizzaballa is returning to the Meeting to give a presentation on this year's title, as Guarnieri explains. "Together with him, we'll look at the educational needs of our time; in other words, the need for a new subject who rediscovers who he is and where he comes from. And how all this can set his freedom in motion."

GIRL CHILD SOLDIERS. Guest speakers will include representatives from the Islamic and Jewish worlds; politicians from Italy and abroad, including the mayors of Aleppo, Paris, and Tel Aviv; Ján Figel, the EU's Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU, and Olivier Roy, one of the leading experts on the Muslim world; Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of NATO; Italian parliamentarian Luciano Violante; retired Italian politician Fausto Bertinotti; jurists Joseph Weiler, Marta Cartabia (Vice President of the Constitutional Court of Italy), and Tania Groppi; Egyptian scholar Wael Farouq; Buddhist priest Shodo Habukawa; and author Eraldo Affinati. Less famous names also appear in the program, including Ugandan missionary Rosemary Nyirumbe, who is coming to talk about her work with female child soldiers... Just a brief glance at the schedule gives you an idea of the dimensions of the challenge presented.

It's not by accident that the Goethe quote in the title of the Meeting came from a passage of Fr. Gius-



sani's *The Religious Sense*. Giussani cites *Faust* on the topic of tradition as part of his description of our "relationship with reality." An inheritance, yes, but one that's alive today; one we bring into our dialogue and our relationships. The encounters with big names and small who have come and will come to the Meeting all share the same goal: to re-awaken in each person the awareness of who they are.

One of the most important themes of the Meeting has always been the encounter with the "other," with those who are different, with whom we can build together, going to the heart of what we have in common. In other words, it's a friendship.

So there will be the great debates on stage in the main halls, but also the accounts from "ordinary" life told through the panels of the exhibits. One, for example, was put together by a group of young "second generation" Italians, born to immigrant parents who left their

homelands years before. "The fruit of months of work," Alessandra Vitez, the lead organizer for the exhibits, says. "And not without difficulties, specifically in going beyond preconceptions and prejudices to discover that they share, no matter the region or background, the same heart, made up of the same desires, expectations and voids." All done in answer to the challenge to rediscover that inheritance mentioned in the title, finding bridges with the "other," moving from the word "integration" to the word "interaction."

A second exhibit seeks to shed light on another major issue of our time: work. The big panel discussions with businesspeople and politicians will be intermixed with debates and witnesses, including in the area dedicated to the exhibit put together by a number of young people just setting out in the world of employment. "We started with their questions, which are increasingly urgent these days: 'What does it



“ **Giussani cites Faust on the topic of tradition as part of his description of our “relationship with reality.” The encounters with big names and small who have come and will come to the Meeting all share the same goal: to re-awaken in each person the awareness of who they are.** ”

mean to fail? Is it possible to accept doing a job you don't like? How do you reconcile work and family life? How do you choose a job? How do you look for one? The point will not be so much to give clear-cut answers, but rather to try to really engage oneself in looking for a way to live in a world that's not like it was 20 years ago, and that continues to change,” Vitez says.

This theme of the relationship with tradition will take center stage in three other exhibitions, as well. One is an exhibition of contemporary art titled, *Il Passagio di Enea* [*The Passage of Aeneas*], with dozens

of original pieces created to express how what has been “bequeathed” by those before us is not just a heavy burden to carry, but that it can also be embraced as part of a new creativity. The Holy Land will be the focus of another space dedicated to the 800-year history of the Custody, a presence in that region that goes back to a concession of the land from the Egyptian sultan after his famous meeting with St. Francis in 1219. What made that dialogue, and all that has happened since and continues, possible? The same ageless applicability goes for the exhibition on the October Revolution

curated by Russia Cristiana, called “The shattered dream of an ‘unseen world.’” It presents an analysis of the historical circumstances that led to the overthrow of the Tsars a hundred years ago, with the breaking of the ties between faith and society right at the top of the list—in some ways similar to what we're seeing in our world today.

FATHER AND SON. The opening performance, China Opera House's staging of *Madame Butterfly*, will offer another witness to the fact that this inheritance, tradition, can be discovered in an encounter with what is different from us. “It will be just one piece of the giant smorgasboard of shows scheduled, each of them helping us to go deeper into different aspects of the theme,” says Otello Cenci, head of the “Shows” department of the festival. “We'll also have *Father and Son*, a play by Fabrizio Sinisi based on Sacred Scripture, and *sdisOré*, Giovanni Testori's new interpretation of the Greek trilogy *Oresteia*. There will be concerts, too, with the playing of the melodies of Fabrizio De Andrè, and Benedetto Chieffo retracing the life of his father Claudio through his songs.” And much more.

Could that be all? “They'll also talk about science, with a space for booths and a number of events dedicated to the relationship between man and machine. And about justice, where the order of the day will be the human dramas, and not the corresponding technical issues and legalities. The world of education will also be represented, as the star of an entire day with ‘School4Meeting.’” Guarnieri goes on to say. “Reality, when you really encounter it, no matter what it is, can become a ‘plus’ for your life.” It can set you back into motion to start building. Just as we see happening at the Meeting. **T**

REVOLT AND PROPHECY

“There aren’t two separate worlds.” OLIVIER ROY, guest speaker at Rimini, speaks about the West and Islam. And the “transmission” of meaning.

BY MAURIZIO VITALI

French political scientist Olivier Roy, born in 1949, is one of the world’s most highly regarded experts on Islam and the Middle East and the author of a number of very successful books. He teaches at the European University Institute in Florence and is joint chair at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. He has previously worked as a consultant to the French government, to the UN, and to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which he served as the representative to Tajikistan.

One of the topics Roy spends a lot of time on is the crisis in transmitting religious and cultural values to young people, in particular the so-called “second generation.” It’s an “angle” on the issue that fits perfectly with this year’s Meeting of Friendship Amongst Peoples (August 20-26 in Rimini, Italy), and its title “All that you have, bequeathed you by your father, earn it in order to possess it.” Roy accepted the invitation to speak and his contribution promises to be a valuable one.

Roy’s expertise doesn’t just come from books, but from the field as

well. His extensive travels were opportunities to dive in, full of curiosity and without hesitation, to get to know peoples and cultures, beginning when he was 19 and took off hitchhiking to Kabul, ditching school right in the midst of his exams. He’d been teaching himself Persian from books, without understanding the pronunciation because he didn’t have any recordings (“But I found out along the way that I could understand and be understood well enough.”) The only Westerners in those parts (this was 1969) were hippies looking for an Eastern utopia and readily available hash.

When the time came for his undergraduate thesis (in Philosophy), Roy wrote an exceptional paper on Leibniz and China, inspired by his curiosity regarding the connections between Enlightenment philosophy and the Jesuit missionaries. And because, among all the other things he was doing, he’d of course studied Chinese.

At age 68, the renowned scholar and political analyst is still as curious and open as a teenager with the whole world to discover. In his office in the European Institute,



Olivier Roy.



where the quiet hills of Florence fade into the town of Fiesole, his desk resembles that of the old-time correspondents: piled high with layers of books and papers, giving the air of disorderly creativity. There’s barely room for the keyboard of his PC (which, in linguistic irony he call the *ordinateur*) and a few bottles of water from which he takes a sip every so often.

Some of his most-recently translated books to come out in English are published by Columbia Press, *Secularism Confronts Islam*, *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways*; and by Hurst Publishing, like the newly-released *Jihad and Death: The Global Appeal of the Islamic State*. The latter tells the story of the young terrorists who were born and raised in Europe and why they choose a road of violence, murder, and suicide in the name of the Caliphate. In brief, to put it simply, his thesis is that these young people



are not violent because they're Muslim, but because they're nihilistic and hopeless. We'll try to understand why that's the case.

Dr. Roy, you maintain that the recent jihadist terrorism in Europe is the result of an "Islamization of radicalism and not a radicalization of Islamism." In other words, the explanation for the choice of violence is not rooted in religion, but in nihilism.

What fascinates these young people about jihadism is death; the death of others, and their own death as well. In fact, they use suicide attacks. They believe in a paradise after death, but they don't believe in the possibility of a better life or a more just society here on earth.

Neither Islam nor Western culture offer convincing ideals that can give meaning to life?

No.

And yet, the West offers plenty of values, goods to consume, and models of success to choose from.

"My life was empty"; that's what everyone who has chosen jihad has said. To them, so-called Western values seem hypocritical; they're purely materialistic and leave them empty and incapable of being fulfilled. They blame society for not acknowledging them. For them, the only way to be acknowledged is through death.

But, in any case, we're talking about young people who've for the most part grown up in our big cities, in Paris, London, Brussels... They went to school here, they've grown up with other European youth...

Of course. I'll go even further. They share the same culture as their peers, in terms of musical taste, how they dress, their food, how they talk; they watch the same movies, they exchange the same kind of videos on social networks, use the same slang,

go to the same dance clubs, buy pot from the same dealers, and chase after girls just like everyone else. None of them dreams of fighting against poverty and oppression. Or even against Islamophobia, which we see as quite the paradox.

And does the cultural and religious tradition of their family not offer a proposal of a defined personality and identity? They die yelling, "Alla Akbar..."

The truth is, there's a major crisis in transmission of faith. Often parents don't know how to communicate their creed or their culture. They don't even know much about authentic Islam. They might know rituals and practices that they learned, I don't know, in a Muslim neighborhood, that belong to a social and cultural context that no longer exists, especially not in France. For these future jihadists, Islam is a label, not a reality they actually know. And, they often see the Islam of their parents as unattractive folklore and superstition. They see mothers who observe Ramadan but then prepare sweets to gorge themselves after sunset. They see fathers who speak of God but drink alcohol. They ask, "Why did you come to France?" "For a better life," the parents say. "No, this isn't a better life." Basically, they don't see anything attractive in their tradition. Their extremist rebellion is a generational revolt.

So how does Daesh fit in?

Daesh offers an aesthetic of violence that makes the extreme gestures of nihilism attractive. Note that it's a very modern aesthetic, in line with current American movies (in which bloodshed now clearly prevails over sex) and popular video games. The theatrical way of slitting throats and broadcasting it, the films of people being tortured with a voice nar- >>

» rating it are both formats used often by the *narcos* in Mexico. The models and archetypes of this aesthetic are very Western.

So, you'd say the fascination with violence and death essentially comes from emptiness and hopelessness.

Exactly. The experience these young people have is not being able to be happy. Not through sex, not through having a family. It's really remarkable that some of the terrorists had a baby the same year of their attack, while they were already organizing it. They have wives, companionship, and a child without taking pleasure in these things. And by dying, they abandon it all to the organization or... to their destiny. Pay attention, here. All of this is contrary to Islam, which is known to be quite family-centric, and condemns suicide because it denies God's will. There is undoubtedly a powerful existential question at the base of all of it.

There was a generational revolt in Europe and America, too, in 1968, against traditional values and bourgeois institutions. How is this different?

What happened in 1968 was utopian, not nihilistic. They were pursuing their desire for a happy society. Further, there wasn't a total break in the transmission of political traditions and culture: in Italy and France, almost all the protest movements adopted the traditions of anti-Fascism or Communism. On the extreme fringes, you found terrorist groups like the Red Brigades, who carried out deadly attacks to provoke a broader uprising of the working class, which never happened. Consequently, the lack of a connection with their heritage meant the end of their activity. The jihadist terrorists have also been distanced from their heritage, but this

hasn't put an end to their activity, which, as we said, doesn't have political or utopian goals.

The politicians are always emphasizing security. Guaranteed, you could say, by bolstering law enforcement and building walls. Is that an answer?

To prevent the attacks and violence of a jihadist terrorist, you need to understand what sets off the bomb of homicidal and suicidal rebellion inside of him. You can't try to close this bomb into a religious paradigm. As I always say, the radicalization comes first. Let's not forget the terrors committed by suicidal youth in the United States; for example, in schools in Colorado (Columbine 1999, 15 dead), Virginia (Blacksburg 2007, 33 dead), and Connecticut (Newtown 2012, 28 dead). Let's not forget that, in spite of this, they still didn't manage to pass a law prohibiting carrying firearms into schools everywhere in the U.S.; Texas, for example, opposed it. These were mass killings similar in their theatrics and use of the media to today's attacks, but that had nothing to do with Islam.

Who bears the most responsibility to do some soul-searching: Islam? The West? Or Christianity itself?

Everyone. We are all protagonists acting in the same scene; there aren't two separate worlds. The problem facing all of us is the crisis in the transmission of values, of the meaning of oneself and of the world. This crisis has affected religions as well. The difference is not secularization itself, because Christianity, and Islam, too, have proven capable of "adapting" to a secular society, of being present without denying their distinct identity. The difference is in *deculturation*, the separation of religion from culture; the disconnect with people's daily lives... Because



it's really true that religion is not a culture—Christianity is a proclamation, an event—but it can't help but express itself culturally within the conditions given.

Could you say that your concept of the deculturalization of religion is similar to the separation of faith from culture that Paul VI pointed out, or of knowledge from belief, as indicated by Benedict XVI?

Yes. The divorce between religion and culture contains within it the seeds of fundamentalist violence because it eliminates the "gray area" of encounter and mutual understanding. In France, if a bishop says, "thanks be to God," or something like that in a public speech, he's immediately accused of being a fanatic. In Italy, this phenomenon is not so notable for now because the Church is still "part of the landscape." The deculturalization of religion in Italy is less drastic and less violent, which partially explains the lower incidence of religious violence. In France, it's stronger because *laïcité* is very ag-



SHOWS AND CONCERTS. *Madame Butterfly* as staged by the China Opera House, the opening performance for the Meeting. In addition to the plays and concerts described in these pages, the stage in Rimini will also feature *Solaris*, inspired by Andrei Tarkovsky's masterpiece, and the orchestral and choral performance titled *A Leap of the Heart*.

gressive and anti-religious. This explains why many terrorists—not only in France, but those in London as well—are French speakers. *Laïcité* could tolerate the headscarf that was like the couscous of Middle Eastern grandmothers, but not the one worn to school by girls born in France. Which is to say: it has demanded from Islam an immediate “reformatting,” an integration into our frameworks without proposing or offering anything in exchange.

Shouldn't deculturization, by rounding out cultural differences, actually facilitate integration and dialogue?

On the contrary. The deculturization of religion transforms the space between believers and non-believers into a barrier; as a result, believers seem absurd, if not fanatical, to non-believers. Once the break between religion and culture is complete, the retreat into a “pure religion,” can follow, and this easily takes the form of fundamentalism. Evangelicals, in the Christian realm,

and Salafis, in the Muslim one, in order to protect the purity of faith, try to free themselves completely from the dominant culture. Practically speaking, they intentionally ignore culture. It's what I call “holy ignorance.” I have to say that instead, Roman Catholics in general try to stay connected with the culture and maintain its presence within the realm of religion.

What, then, can we do? What road can we follow to face the challenges?

From my perspective, the road is in re-socializing and re-enculturating religion. Religion has to seek to “reconnect” with people and their daily existence, which is the only alternative to the “ghettoization” of religion. The State shouldn't dictate how a religion needs to change, what it should believe or do (for example, it cannot decide if circumcision should be allowed or not, as the courts did in Frankfurt in 2013). Civil societies need to set the basic conditions, the rules of the game, for a non-aggressive secularism in

which religion is allowed sufficient visibility in the public square.

And among religions?

Religions need to favor interfaith sharing and exchange. There's an Austrian priest I respect who takes groups of Muslims to visit the monastery of Tirolo to show them what Christianity is. I would say that, in Europe, to counter its deculturalization, Islam first of all needs wise and well-formed imams who can truly help reconnect Islam and the culture, connecting religion and the life and consciousness of the faithful in Western societies. Instead, most of them are fly-by-night and self-educated. There should be a space for faculties or courses of Islamic theology. It's a problem that's especially an issue among Sunnis: among Shias, some have read Kant or Marx, but not the Sunnis.

And how can we reactivate a process of “transmission,” of communicating a religion, by which I mean an education, that is plausible and convincing for today's world?

To young people, the West tends to propose rules to follow and values that they perceive as empty boxes. Populist movements call them back to defending an “identity” that, in the end, is just a formality without substance. Religion has to be equally careful to avoid the shortcut of fideism. And on those “non-negotiable values,” legalism doesn't help. Fr. Paolo Dall'Oglio, the Jesuit kidnapped in Syria in 2013 said: we're not legalists; we're prophets. We have to “warn” young people about the risks of where nihilism leads. But we won't convince them with “infallible” definitions. Reciting formulas or imposing norms won't work, what we need is prophecy; we need witnesses. **T**

The Tamras family: from left, the grandfather Michael, the eldest son Tommy, the mother Caroline, the father Martin, Josephine, and Charbel.

THE BEGINNING OF PEACE

The story of the Tamras family: the night of the attack, the imprisonment, and the faith of three kids together with their father and grandfather. While their mother negotiated with one of the militants: "Just to look for that ember of humanity that still had to be burning in him under all the ashes."

BY ANNA LEONARDI

Tommy Tamras became the man he is today the night of February 23, 2015, when ISIS came bursting into his village and into his 20-year-old life. He remembers that day down to the minute: the timing, every move, every thought. First came the late-night skirmishes between the ISIS militants and the Kurds, a little before the first rays of dawn flooded the 35 villages nestled in Khabur Valley in northern Syria, where most of the inhabitants are Chaldean or Assyrian Christians.

The second thing he remembers was the sound of Kalashnikovs growing closer and closer to his house. That was when he grabbed his cell phone to call his father. “My parents were in the city, in Al Hasakah, at work. I was at home with my sister Josephine, who’s 23, my brother Charbel, who’s 14, and my 90-year-old grandfather, Michael,” Tommy remembers. He was home on break from the University of Al Hasakah during that period in February. “My dad told me over the phone to get everyone together and run for it. I tried >>

» to get out, and I realized that they'd already shot and disabled all the electrical generators."

In the dim light, he could make out his neighbor running, holding his youngest daughter by the hand. They glanced at each other, and in a half-whisper he said to Tommy, "They've come. They're forcing everyone out to take us away." Tommy rushed into the house and found only his grandfather. Before he could get out of the house, he had a pistol pointed to his head. The man, his face covered, said, "Come with me or I'll kill you right here." They walked a short distance and came to the middle of the village where the other inhabitants, about 90 of them, were crammed into a house. Tommy's siblings were also there. Josephine was with the women: they, along with the small children, were being separated from the men. After a couple of hours, they transported all of them north into the area controlled by the Islamic State. Waiting there were another 200 people who'd been kidnapped that same night.

The biggest shock for the Tamras children came in the middle of the morning. "It was about 10:00 when Charbel and I saw our father's car pull up," Tommy says. "He stepped out and handed himself over. He told the militants, 'You've taken my children and my father. Take me, too.'" At that time, Martin was 48 years old. He'd always worked as a carpenter and then, when the country had been overtaken by crisis, he had gone to work for an organization that helped people who were displaced. That night, he had to make a horrible decision. "I could tell how serious the situation was. My wife Caroline and I wanted to leave immediately. I tried to calm her down. Then, with death in my heart, I left without her seeing me."



YESTERDAY AND TODAY Top right, the Tamras's house in one of the 35 villages in the Kabhur valley, in northeastern Syria, before the arrival of ISIS. Below, the ruins of their house after the attack. Here above, Daesh militants on their way to Raqqa, ISIS's headquarters.

He left a piece of paper with a few words written: "Forgive me. I've gone with them."

"When I saw Dad, I felt a burst of strength," Charbel says. "I understood that I had to look to him." For example when, a few hours after the kidnapping, the leader announced that they would kill anyone who wouldn't convert. "My father encouraged everyone saying, 'It's a lie. Don't believe him. Believe that God will help us.'" And that's exactly what happened.

OLIVE PITS. Their imprisonment lasted 12 months. Countless times, they feared the end was near, but each scare instead became the beginning of a new peace. Which came back and dominated them even in the most dramatic moments. During those first days, Tommy shut himself off in total isolation. "I was trying to distance myself from all the evil

I was seeing. I'd found a few sheets of paper and a blue pen and I spent my time drawing." Then, the militants came into their room. "They took all of our things, including our rosaries, sacred images, and crosses. And they burned them. That's what woke me up again." For the first time, Tommy raised his eyes and realized he couldn't condemn himself to a prison within their prison. In the face of evil, he could still be free. With his friends, he started collecting olive pits from their lunch and dinner, rubbing them against the walls until they were smooth, and threading them onto pieces of metal taken from the couch cushions to make rosaries. "Prayer became the center of our days. We realized that it kept us human." Praying together was risky. In the cells, the persecution was constant. "We'd become really good at hiding everything. One day, as I left the room, the rosary slipped out of



my pocket. I thought, ‘Okay, I’m in trouble now,’ and I started to pray to Our Lady.” Standing outside the door, he watched the men search the room top to bottom, with his rosary there, in the middle of the bed, but nobody saw it. Tommy’s eyes were full of awe and wonder when he heard one of the men say, “Everything’s in place here. Let’s go to the next room.”

Josephine lived in the camp with all the other women, separated from her family. She was filled with fear and the pain of solitude, but within those dull hours and days of sameness rolling by, something new quickly started to blossom. “There were so many children, all terrified. We started to pray the Rosary, even four times a day, in front of them and with them. Every day, we played games with them and we always found some time to tell a story or two from the Gospel.” The guards surprised her repeatedly. “They told

us not to do it anymore, because our prayers were *haram*, prohibited. I don’t know how, but I found myself standing up to their demands.” By doing this, she showed the full humanity of their gesture. She said to one of them, “But why would it be a sin to pray to God? Don’t you do it as well? So let *us* pray.” And after that day, the man started to pretend not to hear the Hail Marys that drifted through the walls and under the doors of the tiny chambers where the women were locked away.

Josephine had an idea for Easter. With the help of other women, she managed to collect about 40 eggs. The evening of the vigil, they boiled them in their tea and decorated

them. “When they woke up, the children were so joyful they couldn’t contain themselves, and seeing their happy faces, we relived the experience of the Resurrection.”

BEFORE THE SHEIKH. The most dramatic incident came eight months after their kidnapping. The entire prison camp was moved to Raqqa, the capital of the Islamic State. ISIS had started demanding money from the relatives of the hostages. Now they upped the ante and asked the Assyrian church to pay a ransom to free them. At one point during the negotiations, the militants decided to force their hand with a number of executions. They selected six prisoners, dressed them all in orange, and took them out to the middle of the desert. Martin Tamras was one of them. “I don’t know why they chose me,” he says. “Maybe because, when the *sheikh* came to our cells and pushed us to convert, I looked him in the eye and tried to disarm every word he said.” For Martin, every gesture and every word comes from a single source: his love for life. His own, that of his children, and even that of his enemies. Those

“Prayer became the center of our days. We realized that it kept us human.”

days before the scheduled execution, he did all he could to get his hands on a copy of the Bible, even though everyone thought it was impossible. “I realized that I needed Jesus in order to stand up and face our jailors.” In the end, the “gift” was given to him by the sheikh himself. “He told us, ‘This way I can

show you all the contradictions in this book.’ I don’t know if he’ll ever understand that by leaving it in our cell, he had opened up the spring that was the source of our strength.” >>

» The power of this conviction was brought to a decisive level for Martin the day he faced the execution squad. “Before making us line up, they closed us in a little hut. Fear filled all our hearts. In a moment of weakness, one of us said, ‘We have to convert, it’s our only chance.’ That’s when I saw that Christ was all we had left, that the only true chance for salvation was to hold on tightly to Him.” Their guards left some dry bread and water on the ground as a last meal. “I’m not a priest,” Martin says, “but I took them, blessed them, and asked the Lord to remain with us through those signs.” Everyone ate and drank. Then, they placed their lives into the hands of the executioners. “There, on my knees, I thought, ‘If Jesus wants me with Him, I’m ready to follow Him.’” But he felt no bullet. Three bodies fell to the ground: his cousin, his doctor, and a man from another village. “Then, they made us bury the corpses. As I was digging, I thought about how salvation had become a reality in that hour. I had watched those men become martyrs, supported by the certainty that life is something no one can take away from us.”

ON THE PHONE. The execution was filmed, and the video was sent to those who were negotiating the release of the prisoners. Among them was Caroline, Martin’s wife, who works for Caritas in the diocese.

Some weeks before, she had become one of those in contact with the militants. “In the prison camp, Martin had recognized a Syrian man among the leaders whom he knew from before,” Caroline explains. “They managed to speak to each



TOGETHER. The Tamras family in photos taken before the kidnapping. Since February 2016, they have lived together in Al Hasakah city because their village was destroyed.

other and Martin won his respect.” As a result, the man called Caroline: he wanted to give her news about her family and offer to negotiate with her. It wasn’t easy. It had taken months for her to put aside her resentment at what they were doing to her family. But as she spoke to this man on the telephone, the last remnants of anger dissolved, along with any strategies.

Before the execution, he blessed the bread and water: “I asked the Lord to remain with us.”

“I just started looking for that ember of humanity that still had to be burning in him under all the ashes. I fanned that ember for months, waiting for his human heart to begin to beat again.”

A sincere dialogue opened up between them. One day, he confided in her, “I see that you have faith. A

few days ago, my son was born, but he’s sick. What can I do so that he’ll get better?” She told him, “Pray to God and take care of all the people who are there with you. Seek the good!” Then she sent him a vial of blessed oil from St. Charbel Makh-luf, the 19th century Lebanese saint who is venerated in many Eastern Christian communities. He thanked her saying, “You are a good person;

if you’d convert, you’d go to paradise.” Caroline persisted: “Any good that you see in me was given to me by Jesus. Therefore, you have to respect it, as I respect your religion.” That was the last exchange they had. Since February 22, 2016, the day the hostages were all released, Caroline has heard nothing more from or about him.

Today, the Tamras family lives in a rented apartment in Al Hasakah. Their village was completely destroyed. No one has been able to go back and live in their home. Tommy and Josephine went back to their studies at the university, Charbel went back to high school, and Martin and Caroline are back at work. Along with their house, they lost everything from their past: pictures, books, clothes, everything. “And our future is also uncertain. Today, things are peaceful, but we don’t know what will happen tomorrow,” Tommy says.

Martin watches his son as he speaks, his gaze both serious and full of compassion and he adds, “In this trial that we’ve been asked to live, we’ve seen our faith grow. If we ask the Lord for help, it’s possible for us to love everything. Every circumstance, and even our enemies. This is our hope for every man and woman in this country.”

EMBRACING THE UNEXPECTED

On June 17th, the 4th edition of the **LONDON ENCOUNTER took place. An occasion for scientists, theologians, and common people to tackle a challenging topic: to look with sympathy at what we can't foresee.**

BY GIUSEPPE PEZZINI

What does it mean to know? This question which opened the London Encounter 2017 is only apparently unrelated to the theme of its fourth edition, “The Adventure of the Unexpected.” Asking the question was Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury and theologian, and most importantly patron and inspirer of the event. He chaired the first session, in a crowded con-

ference center at the heart of a wounded city.

MISUNDERSTANDINGS. “In our culture today there is a great misunderstanding of the nature of knowledge. In spite of everything, we still have the idea that knowledge is hanging a label produced in our mind on something that is out there. One of the aims of our project [the London Encounter] is to help us to disabuse ourselves of that mythology, »»



EXHIBITS AND ENCOUNTERS. In these pages, some moments from the fourth edition of the London Encounter. About 700 people visited the event.

» which is inapplicable even in the areas where it seems most persuasive, such as science.”

The reference alludes to one of the three original exhibitions of the London Encounter (“Eureka! The Unexpected in Science”), prepared in collaboration with Ard Louis, Professor of Theoretical Physics at the University of Oxford, together with many scientists he met with over the year. Featuring the discovery of the Higgs boson, exoplanets, and non-Euclidean geometries, this exhibit shows that many of the great scientific advances resulted from fortuitous events or unexpected intuitions, prepared for and followed up by free men.

Knowing is a human journey, it is part of our growth as persons who are able to take risks, to be changed.

“As shown by the exhibition”—points out Williams—“even in the most complex and demanding areas of scientific advance, we are not simply opening our eyes wide, giving names, and mapping what is in front of us. There are leaps of intuition, risks, habits to be developed, especially the habit of risk-taking. Knowing is a human journey, it is part of our personal growth as persons who are able to take risks, to be changed, to be enlarged.”

According to Williams, there is an obvious connection between that kind of risk-taking and the risk-taking exemplified in holy lives, which was the content of the second original exhibition prepared

for the London Encounter about eight British Saints.

Williams continues, “Holy lives are not lives that keep all the rules, but are lives that tend to be characterized by risk-taking, by stepping out from the obvious and the safe in order to grow in love, openness and ‘connectedness.’ To be a scientist or a saint (or both), models of an easy life are not going to be very helpful.”

AT THE FRONTIERS. Indeed, as highlighted by Mary Morgan, Professor of Philosophy of Science at the London School of Economics, who spoke with Williams, “There are dangers for those who work at the frontiers of the unexpected.”

“Often we have the experience,” continues Williams, “when we discover something, an unsettling detail in the corner of our vision. To have the freedom to allow that



SPEAKERS AND FRIENDS. The theologian Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, presented this year's theme.



detail to come into focus is one of the things emerging as important in various areas of research, and in knowledge in general.”

The whole London Encounter 2017 is an illustration of this human journey, through stories of men and women who have embraced (or not) the unsettling and unexpected in their lives. Like Ian, the father of a son with Down’s syndrome and witness to a surprising joy, or Samara, the improbable founder of hospitals in Syria, both speaking in the afternoon talk, together with our friend Rose. Or Cicely Saunders, an English doctor and pioneer of palliative care, to whom the third exhibit of the London Encounter was dedicated. Or Javert, protagonist of the original play which concluded the Encounter: one of the “miserables” of Hugo’s novel, Javert recounts his

human derailment in front of the unexpected mercy of Jean Valjean.

Embracing the unexpected, which is “to know,” is never an automatic process: Javert’s drama is the drama of life, as has been verified by the people involved in the preparation of the London Encounter, involving long hours and often laborious work, full of the risks and mistakes mentioned by Williams.

ADVENTUROUSNESS. But how can one take risks in such an uncertain world, in a historical context where unexpected tragedies are again becoming part of daily life? How can one really take a risk in a moralistic culture which has

obliterated the idea of sin?

Williams concludes: “The only possibility is the embrace of a community that educates us not to be afraid of making mistakes, which tells that mistakes are real, but that they are not the end of the world. Philosophically, we can say indeed that human beings are beings that make mistakes and learn from them. Wanting a humanity free of mistakes-making is to engage in a very dangerous illusion.

The adventurousness we speak of is that of the process of discovery of what kind of beings we are. These Encounters every year are in several ways essays of finding out what it is like to be human.” **T**

“Wanting a humanity free of mistakes-making is to engage in a dangerous illusion.”

FILMS FOR SUMMER

The Movement suggests watching these three films this summer: *Sully* directed by Clint Eastwood, *The Shawshank Redemption* directed by Frank Darabont, and *Fanny and Alexander* directed by Ingmar Bergman. Here are the reviews.



Eastwood: Those 208 Seconds and the X-Factor

SULLY

BY CLINT EASTWOOD, WITH TOM HANKS AND AARON ECKHART. USA, 2016

“Everything is unprecedented until it happens for the first time.” It’s a great line for a movie, but this one was said in real life. You may have spent your whole life trying to “be in control,” but the real test comes when reality imposes itself and you have 208 seconds to decide. It’s the story of Captain Sullenberg, who successfully landed his Airbus 300 on the icy waters of the Hudson River on January 15, 2009. It’s a true story. “Like a miracle,” it amazed the city of New York and all America and brought a celebration of the human spirit at a time it was depressed by the economic crisis. The “doctors” of the law (the National Transportation Safety Board, which

carried out the investigation of the event) skeptically said, “It had never happened before,” revealing that their minds were already made up that Sully was mistaken and should have followed regulations, even though he saved all 155 of his passengers. But Sully was not mistaken. He was not mistaken because he was able to read the signs of reality; he trusted his experience without stopping for calculations (if he’d calculated, they’d all have died). He did this because he’d been trained: a lifetime of flying amidst the clouds while keeping his eyes wide open to the world around him, and taking to heart all the good things in his life and the lives of everyone. He did it because it wasn’t just for him. In this story, there was an “x-factor without which it wouldn’t have worked,” as the NTSB commission admits at the end of their investigation. No, Sully answers, the x-factor was all of us together, the crew, the passengers, the first responders, his family. Humanity. Realism is not born from a sentiment; it’s the awareness of being part of a people.

Darabont: The Best of Things is Freedom

THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION

BY FRANK DARABONT, WITH TIM ROBBINS AND MORGAN FREEMAN. USA, 1994

Mozart takes the prize for being the star of the most epic scene in this movie full of epic scenes. It comes when Andy, the innocent “lifer” who refuses to let himself be “institutionalized,” to become part of the scenery at the prison, locks himself in the director’s office and plays *The Marriage of Figaro* over the loudspeakers. Sublime melodies that float above the gloomy penitentiary, above inmates and guards, victims and offenders, and act as the wings of freedom. His friend “Red” Redding is no longer the boy who committed a murder; he’s now an old “lifer” himself. He had said to Andy, “My friend, hope is a danger-





ous thing. Hope can drive a man insane.” Andy responds with the music. “There’s somethin’ inside that they can’t get to, that they can’t touch.” “What are you talkin’ about?” Red asks. “Hope.” He says hope, but the best word for it is freedom: you can’t get rid of it, even if it frightens you. The title of this film (based on a story by Stephen King) speaks of “redemption.” Not the kind of atonement a prison can offer, but instead the redemption of the “I.” Andy is no better than Red, who cynically says, “We’re all innocent in here.” He is weak; he suffers unspeakable atrocities. But there’s one thing he has in addition to a sharp mind: he doesn’t give up, because hope is “the best of things.” He has a desire that takes into account all that is put into his hands. In prison, it’s not much, but he doesn’t let slip a single crumb of the good he finds. “Get busy livin’ or get busy dyin,’” he says. The reason Andy doesn’t give up is not because he’s better than the others, but because he has Red. Red doesn’t give up because he trusts Andy. Wings will fly so long as they have a person to whom they can go.



Bergman: Eyes Beyond Their Little World

FANNY AND ALEXANDER

BY INGMAR BERGMAN.

SWEDEN, 1982

Film is not exactly a dream, one French critic said, but rather a *rêverie*, a dream with one’s eyes open, in which reality, fantasy, and the power of suggestion all run together. Is this the purpose of art? It’s not by chance that legendary film director Ingmar Bergman titled his autobiography *The Magic Lantern*, as he was the maker of dreams. Bergman’s *Fanny and Alexander* featured the lavish colors and images of one of the greatest cinematographers, Sven Nykvist, a magnificent soundtrack, rich symbolism, and moments of fantasy. It garnered a shower of Oscars. It was Bergman’s attempt to summarize his vision of art and of life, which was always torn between the search

for truth and his resentment toward the strict practice of the Lutheran faith in which he was raised. The film is (partially) autobiographical, set in Uppsala at the beginning of the 1900s. A well-to-do family is celebrating Christmas, with the two children soaking in that enchanted world. Their dad runs a theater, and he loves it because it’s a “little world” that “sometimes succeeds in reflecting the big one [outside].” With a scene change, the father dies, and the mother is remarried to a Lutheran bishop. Their new house is like a prison. Is seeing life with the dream-filled eyes of a child enough to save you? In one of the key dialogues, the uncle Gustav says, “We have not come into the world to see through it...We are not equipped for such excursions. We must live in the little world. We will be content with that.” This is a life that tries to obliterate one’s desire, where happiness is in relishing “good food, gentle smiles, fruit trees in blossom.” The last scene of the movie focuses on Alexander, whose eyes seem to be searching for something beyond.

JULIÁN CARRÓN

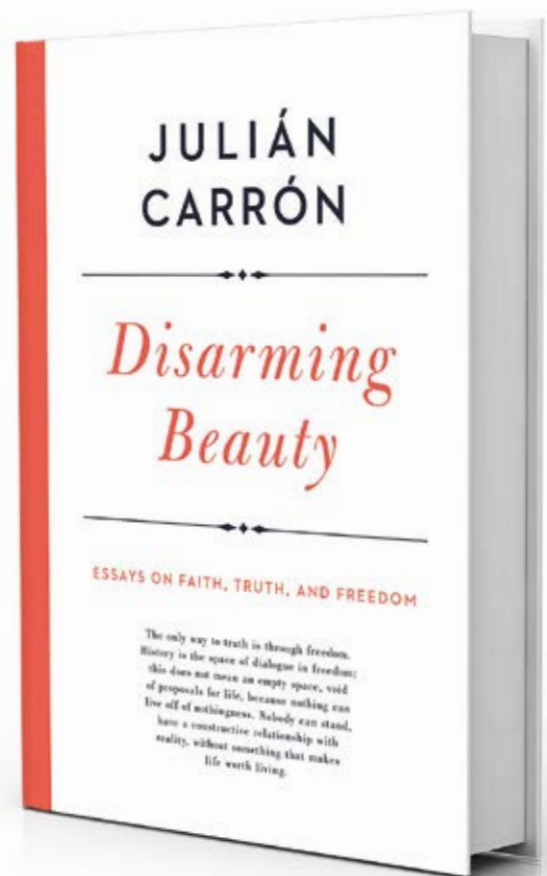
Disarming Beauty

ESSAYS ON FAITH, TRUTH, AND FREEDOM



In *Disarming Beauty*, Julián Carrón addresses the most pressing questions facing theologians today and provides insights that will interest everyone, from the most devout to the firm nonbeliever. Grappling with the interaction of Christian faith and modern culture, Carrón treats in very real and concrete ways what is essential to maintaining and developing Christian faith, and he invites an ongoing conversation about the meaning of faith, truth, and freedom.

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