



**EASTER 2017**

Miracle of miracles, my child, mystery of mysteries.  
 Because Jesus Christ has become our carnal brother  
 Because he has pronounced, carnally  
 and in time, eternal words,  
*In monte*, upon the mountain,  
 It is to us, the weak, that it was given,  
 It depends on us, weak and carnal,  
 To bring to life and to nourish  
 and to keep alive in time  
 These words pronounced alive in time.

Charles Péguy

# HOPE IN AN EMBRACE

*This month's editorial is a letter written by Julián Carrón, President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, for the upcoming visit to Milan of Pope Francis. The text was published in the Italian daily Corriere della Sera, on March 1, 2017.*

**D**ear Editor: as I think about Pope Francis's trip to Milan, a page from a book that's very dear to me, and that readers of the *Corriere* know well, comes to mind. I think it describes how many of us feel these weeks leading up to his arrival: full of curiosity and anticipation.

"As the light grew steadily brighter, he could make out crowds of people moving along the road at the bottom of the valley, some emerging from the houses, but others coming from farther afield. They were all flocking in the same direction, to the right of the castle, towards the exit of the valley. They were all wearing their Sunday clothes and walking very briskly. 'What the devil's up with them all?' [...] The Unnamed stayed where he was, with elbows on the window-sill, intent on the procession below. There were men, women and children, in groups, in pairs, and singly. One man would catch up with someone walking ahead, and would fall into step alongside him. Another would come out of his house and pair off with the first passer-by he saw; they would go on together like friends setting out on a pre-arranged journey. Their movements clearly showed a common haste and a common happiness. [...] He stared and stared, his heart filled with a growing curiosity, and something more than mere curiosity, to know what it was that could give the same powerful happiness to so many different people. Soon afterwards, the bravo came back to report. The day before, Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, the Archbishop of Milan, had arrived. [...] When the master of the castle was left alone again, he continued to stare down into the valley, more gloomily than ever. 'So it's all on account of one man!' he thought. 'They're all hurrying happily off to see just one man. And yet every one of those fellows down there must have his own devil to torture him. But none of them has a devil like mine; none of them has just passed a night like I have. What is it about that man which makes them all so happy? [...] If he knew the word of consolation for me, now! And why shouldn't I go too? Why shouldn't I?... I'll go, and I'll talk to him' (A. Manzoni, *The Betrothed*).

**We too are tortured by preoccupations.** But it's precisely the awareness of our boundless need that can make us attentive to the smallest signs announcing the possibility of an answer. We too, like the Unnamed, may be amazed that it's a man, a single man, who is the key to resolving our preoccupations.

For me, the Pope's arrival in Milan is the opening of this possibility once again. And with the Unnamed, I say to myself, "I will go," to meet the person who has words "of consolation," who can reawaken my hope.

My hope is that all of those who will go to see the Pope might relive this startling experience of encounter that Manzoni describes:

"As soon as the Unnamed entered the room, Federigo went to meet him with a calm and friendly expression, and arms outstretched, as if to a welcome guest. [...] The Unnamed [...] raised his eyes to that man's face [and] felt himself more and more penetrated by powerful yet gentle feelings of veneration [...]. Federigo [...] stretched out his hand to take that of the Unnamed. 'No, no!' cried the nobleman. 'Keep away from me—do not soil that innocent and virtuous hand. You do not know all that this hand of mine has done!' But the Cardinal seized it with loving violence, saying: 'Do not prevent me from clasping that hand which is to right so many wrongs, which will perform such widespread good works, which will raise up so many of the afflicted, which will offer itself, unarmed, to so many enemies in peace and humility.' [...] The Unnamed freed himself from that embrace [...] saying, 'O truly great and

truly merciful God! Now I know myself, now I understand what I am! My iniquities stand in front of my eyes, and I am revolted by myself—and yet... and yet I feel a comfort, a joy... yes, yes, a joy such as I have never known during all this repugnant life of mine!” (A. Manzoni, *The Betrothed*).

**Who wouldn't want to** receive this kind of embrace from Pope Francis? That embrace that we saw repeated throughout the Year of Mercy, and that will come in the flesh to our Ambrosian diocese in just a few weeks? As Cardinal Scola noted: “Meeting the Pope in person—even if it's in a crowd—receiving this gift [...] is a life-changing experience” (February 11, 2017).

I hope that our amazement at the Pope's charity toward us will push us to desire to be like him; that we can experience the power of mercy for ourselves and for society, a mercy that converts us—wherever we are—into hands that right many wrongs, perform good works, raise up the afflicted, and offer themselves unarmed in peace and humility, even to enemies.

Fr. Giussani, a son of this diocese, once said, “Each of us, seized by this great Presence, is called to be a re-builder of destroyed houses. [...] Each of us is, every day—if only he adheres to it with sincerity—the goodness of Jesus, His will for the good of man who lives in these sad and dark times.” This is the origin of “the spectacle: portions of a people, of a society that is different, defined by a new climate [...] in which mutual esteem becomes possible” (*L'Osservatore Romano*, February 11, 1997). And we all know how much need there is to receive a gaze full of affection to be able to face the incessant, daily challenges of life without fear. **T**

## CLOSE UP NOBODY EXCLUDED

On the cusp of Pope Francis's visit to Milan on March 25<sup>th</sup>, Cardinal **ANGELO SCOLA** speaks about what Francis is teaching the Church (and him), and how he has seen his city change.



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**Editorial Office:**  
Via Porpora, 127 - 20131 Milano  
Tel. ++39(02)28174400  
Fax ++39(02)28174401

**E-mail:** traces@traces-cl.com  
**Internet:** www.tracesonline.org

**Editor (direttore responsabile):**  
Davide Perillo

**Editorial Assistant:**  
Anna Leonardi  
**From New York, NY:**  
Holly Peterson

**Graphic Design:** G&C, Milano  
Davide Cestari, Lucia Crimi


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## “WHY DO THEY CARE SO MUCH?”

 Two years ago I met the Movement through a college friend, but at first, I didn't understand anything during the meetings they had. But then in January of last year, I travelled to Huánuca with the young people from the Movement and I was able to meet the leaders, who among many other things, sang Italian songs with a special sensitivity, spoke of Luigi Giussani (I didn't know who he was), and treated me as if they had known me forever. I saw in them an absolute happiness. These people followed Christ with an intensity I had never experienced. I returned to the university and without realizing it, I fell back into my normal routine; the only thing that could make me happy was to be on center stage. The days passed and I became very rebellious, I contradicted everyone, and this caused arguments with my friends and family. Then came the vacation of the Movement, this time at Ocopa. I set aside enough money and I went. Once again I was fascinated by the gaze of these young people, especially Miguel, a priest with a gift for reaching hard-hearted guys like me. Inside, I had conflicting feelings and a question—“What will happen now?” First, they welcome me and then they forget me. I went home a little sad, preoccupied, because I no longer wanted to be the same guy as before. They proposed that I do School of Community via Skype, but I didn't participate because I was bored and didn't understand.




They proposed it again and the following week I joined the Skype call, and I heard them talking about the magazine, *Huellas*—I was impressed by the theme of not building walls and of being open to dialogue. When I logged out, I asked myself, “Why do they care so much about offering me their friendship?” I picked up a copy of *Huellas*, I went on YouTube to find out more about Fr. Luigi Giussani and I stayed up watching his videos until 9:00 in the morning. From that day, my whole way of being changed; I was more alert in front of reality; I didn't want to miss anything. The following week, I went to see a priest friend, the chaplain of the Catholic University who had invited me to visit him at the university campus ministry office. While we were talking about the Gospel story of Zacchaeus, I stood up and said; “I, too, have been looked upon like Zacchaeus in Communion and Liberation, with eyes of mercy, and this gaze has broken open my heart, has made me free, sure of myself, no longer fearful. It has given me a new life that introduces me to reality and makes me embrace all of it.” This priest, whose name is Ser-

gio, said to me, “Luis, today I have learned a lot from you.” A few days later, he asked me for the magazine, *Huellas*. Now my goal is not to have the best job in the world with the best salary, or to have a ton of titles or recognition; the only thing I desire is to follow this infinite beauty that leaves me unsettled.

**Luis, Chiclayo (Peru)**

## DAD'S LETTERS AND MOM'S SONG

 Dear Fr. Carrón, my brother, Luca, was in a motorcycle accident and was killed on impact. When I went with my parents to the morgue, there was only room for pain and for the image that will always remain with me of his face, a face that was bruised, yet smiling. It is a smile that along with the pain accompanies me. The days after were very difficult: my other brother, Pietro, who lives with his wife in the United States, arrived, and I felt like a child on Christmas Eve, in trepid anticipation of receiving the gift of his hug. We had to wait another day before we could go to see Luca in the funeral home. Even that second time, I felt like I was dying. Through my tears, I went to get another hug from Pietro who whispered to me, “Matteo, that is only the body, now Luca is part of a greater Love among us.” Our minds cannot think of such a thing, it can only occur to us if we have encountered Christ. This helps to better explain one of the letters my father wrote during that week. He hadn't written in forty years, but he wrote: “Today, around you,



## HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR

### NORMAL BEWILDERMENT

**W**e invited several students who do not participate in GS to join the video connection of the assembly between David Prospero and the high school seniors preparing for the exit exam. Here is what a girl wrote to us afterward: “I found this meeting very useful and interesting from various perspectives. Like many other kids, I’m constantly worried about the future, the choices that I, that we, are called to make. At times, I think I should know the answers to all these questions, although I realize that is not possible. I was reassured to understand that this sense of ‘bewilderment’ is normal. One of the topics that was addressed and that touched me deeply is the fact that we are infinite and ‘larger’ than the reality in which we live. I thought of poets like Leopardi, who perceived the need to constantly expand the limits of themselves through poetry (to be infinite within the finite); it is a very beautiful image. ‘Within the question about the future, about the after, there is the dizziness, tension, expectation about the present.’ This sentence made me reflect; I had never considered the fact that it’s not the arrival, but the journey, the path, that is wonderful. We would like it all and now, every answer, every certainty, as if someone else should tell us what to do, since choice frightens us, without allowing us the satisfaction of the discovery. I’m the first to make this mistake. A yearning to desire opened up before my eyes, a courage that causes me not to be frightened anymore at the thought of failure.”



**Nicola and friends from Ancona (Italy)**

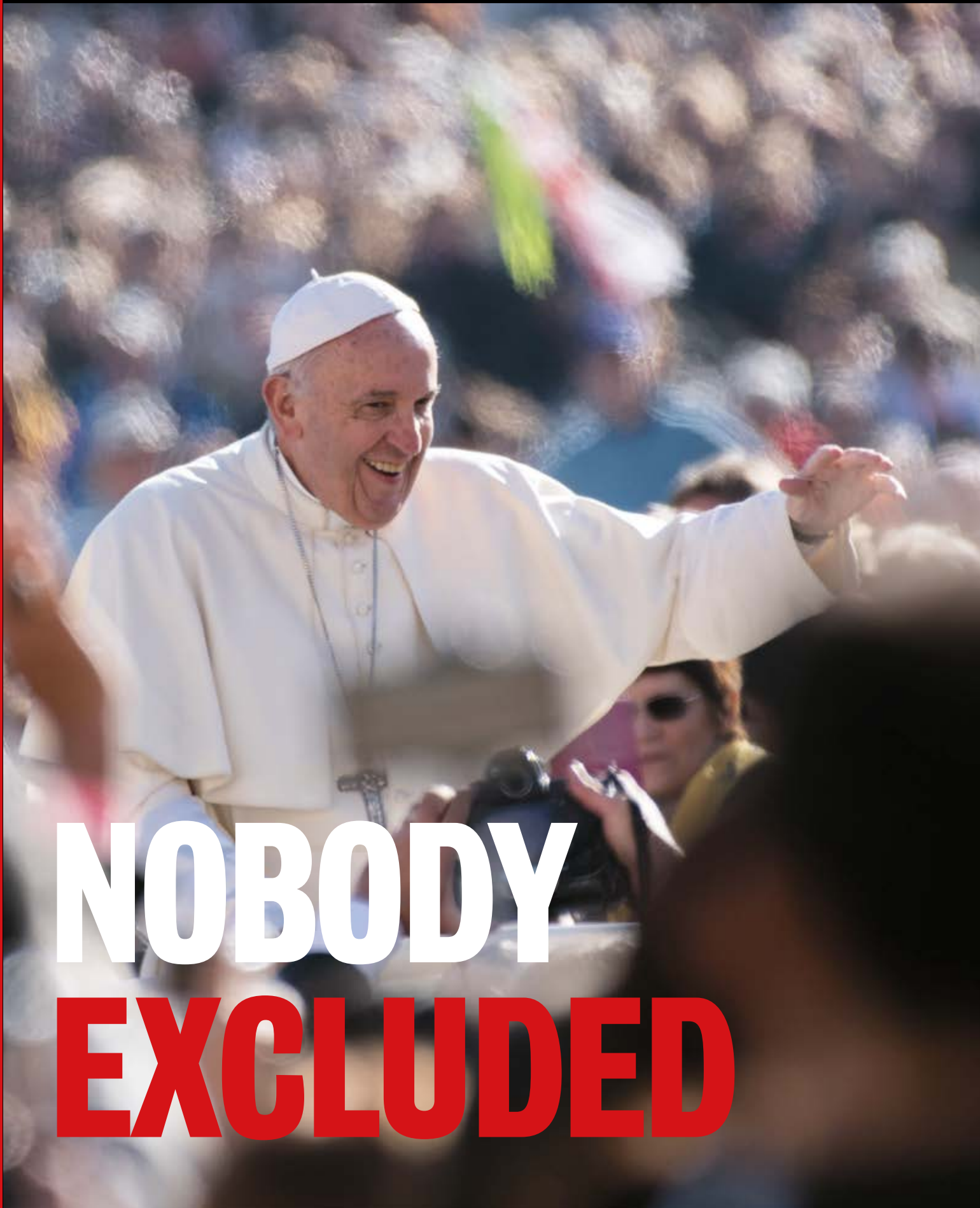
flowers, so many flowers and you in the middle with your open arms. On each tomb a cross, on yours, there you are, and in that context, you best symbolize the cross: *In hoc signo vinces...* Do you mean to tell me that’s really the way it is? Do you mean to convince me that the symbol of death vanquishes death itself? Isn’t that perhaps a contradiction? Your sacrifice is my cross, a pain without equal. Take me by the hand, soften the bitterness of this cup and help me to see that in front of the wood of the cross you are there with your arms now free, you

open them to embrace me every day of my life.” A few years ago, our family underwent an indescribable suffering, a suffering that we never spoke of again, a suffering that caused each one of us to take his own path, distancing us from each other. Luca, by his death, is now rebuilding our family in Christ; otherwise how could a father write such a thing? How could a mother sing at the cemetery in front of her son’s coffin? Outside the church, I was able to smile as I hugged my friends; I felt and still feel within the pain a joy that is not human,

not the fruit of my imagination, but is His presence that fills our broken hearts. My mother wanted the *Angelus* to be printed on the back of the funeral prayer cards, “because life always begins again with a yes, like Luca, in his quiet way, has done with his yes.” My mother has always known that before we were hers, we were children of Another. When God needed Luca, He did not hesitate to take him to Himself; he took Luca, but to my family He has given a solid foundation once again—Christ.

**Matteo, Varese (Italy)**

**✓ CLOSE UP**



**NOBODY  
EXCLUDED**



**On the cusp of Pope Francis's visit to Milan on March 25<sup>th</sup>, Cardinal ANGELO SCOLA speaks about what Francis is teaching the Church (and him), and how he has seen his city change.**

BY DAVIDE PERILLO

A gift and a “pro-vocation,” like this, with a hyphen, something that involves us down to the roots of our being, that calls upon our freedom in a deep way. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, Pope Francis will visit Milan for ten jam-packed hours, from his 8 a.m. arrival at Linate Airport until 6 p.m. when he ends his gathering with the confirmation candidates at the Meazza Stadium, and begins the journey back to Rome. In between, he will stop at the Case Bianche of Via Salomene, a troubled area on the outskirts of the city, visit and have lunch at the prison of San Vittore, meet with the religious of the cathedral and pray an *Angelus* in the square, and finally, celebrate Mass in Monza, an eagerly awaited gesture that is expected to draw a huge crowd.

For Angelo Scola, who has been the Archbishop of Milan since 2011, it will be one of the most important moments of his episcopate. Last November, having just turned 75, he presented his resignation to the Holy Father, as provided for in Church policy. But when he speaks about Francis's arrival in Milan, he uses words that have nothing to do with the idea of a celebration or an epilogue: >>



MARCH 25, 2017

POPE FRANCIS  
IN MILAN



**MILAN, ITALY.** The Mass in Duomo Cathedral, celebrated by Cardinal Angelo Scola on the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Fr. Giussani, founder of Communion and Liberation Movement.

» “expectation,” “desire,” “conversion,” and “pro-vocation.”

**What is the meaning of Pope Francis’s visit? With what spirit are the city and you, personally, anticipating it?**

The Pope’s visit is a great privilege for Milan. Ours is one of the few European metropolises to be visited in these years. There is great expectation and great desire to encounter him. For me personally, it is a gift and a provocation to live the task entrusted to me with authenticity. In addition, the Pope’s visit summarizes and concludes the journey we have proposed in these years on the theme “Evangelize the Metropolis.” We have had among us Cardinals Schönborn, Onaiyekan, O’Malley, and Tagle, each of whom has helped us to understand better what it means today to announce Jesus in the big cities. The teaching of the Pope, which also draws upon the richness of his experience as Archbishop of Buenos Aires,

will without a doubt be of great help.

**You have often had the opportunity to speak about the Pope with the Milanese from all walks of life: the people, the “working class,” the “ruling class,” Christians, and also secular people. How do they see Francis and what do they expect from him?**

Without a doubt, the people feel great fondness for Pope Francis, precisely because of the way he presents himself personally. In the language of the Gospel, you would say he is “one who speaks with authority,” and without sparing himself. I would like everyone, without distinction between people and ruling class, Christians or secular, to look at the Pope with great interest. What do they expect? This is more difficult to know. But everyone is expecting one thing because we are certain of receiving it: the announcement of the mercy of God.

**What is the pontificate of Francis**

**teaching the Ambrosian Church? How has the Church of Milan changed—if it has changed—in the last four years?**

It seems to me that our church, like all the churches, is learning the radical evangelical decision to abolish all forms of exclusion. With his actions, even before his words, Francis shows that Christ wants to encounter everyone, nobody excluded. In this sense, the Pope’s way of living the Petrine ministry is helping us to rediscover the truly catholic, universal dimensions of our faith and the capacity that the Gospel possesses to speak to people of every condition and culture, every place and time.

**And you? Has your way of being a shepherd changed as well?**

For me, as I said, the Pope is a daily “pro-vocation” to recognize that you cannot truly be a shepherd unless you give everything, not sparing yourself in anything; and notwithstanding your smallness, becoming one with the total dedication of Christ, the Good Shepherd. There is only one



**Angelo Scola.**



# “BE ONE, THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE”

Excerpts from the homily of Cardinal Angelo Scola at the Mass in the Milan Cathedral for the twelfth anniversary of the death of Fr. Giussani, founder of Communion and Liberation Movement.

**L**et us ask ourselves: to what extent is eternal life the horizon of our days? The Servant of God Luigi Giussani educated not a few generations to look upon eternal life not only as the final goal, but to recognize its advance payments *here and now*, in the *hundredfold here below*. The hundredfold is that irruption of the eternal into daily life that cannot be confused with the empowerment of our own forces or our objective desires. It is a stable newness that nourishes and gives personal, ecclesial, and social existence the sweet savor of a gift.

**Our fixed point.** The *hundredfold here below*, as the down-payment on eternal life, is a relationship with Christ present: “*Omnia nobis est Christus*,” affirmed our father Ambrose. Christ, His thought and His feelings, are everything for us. A seventeen-year-old already understood it a few months before his death when he wrote, “*Once you have excluded a false and distraction-laden middle way, either you reject Christ or He becomes your fixed point*” (Marco Gallo, March 19, 2011). Your fixed point!

**An accessible beauty.** Neither weary striving, nor pain, nor any kind of trial, not even death itself, are objections to the happiness of eternal life that is, I repeat, the other world anticipated by the hundredfold here below. Our fascination for it is not extinguished by painfully bored melancholy

or its opposite, blithe nihilism, which frustrate the innate thirst for beauty in every man and woman, a beauty that is at once total and accessible, humanly knowable and lovable.

**Work and resurrection.** A first trace of the beauty of eternal life in the present to which I would like to refer, because it speaks to a particularly provocative accent of the charism of the Servant of God Msgr. Luigi Giussani, is our way of staying within the reality that in the general sense we can call “work.” In Fr. Giussani’s words, work “is a collaboration to bring about the ever-brightening dawn of the Resurrection to all the creative relationships that man lives with time and space [...]. [B]y the operative grace of God’s Plan, work fills the space between Christ’s resurrection and the final resurrection” (L. Giussani, *Why the Church?*, McGill-Queens, 2001, p. 291).

But there is a second clue to the beauty of eternal life in the present. It is the ecclesial communion. In these years, I have insisted a great deal on how the life of the Church, above all of our widespread Ambrosian Church, must express itself according to that multiformity in unity that is precisely hers. The method of Christian life thus lived exalts the power of the charism of Fr. Giussani, a charism of total openness, starting from every baptized member of the faithful. “Be one, that the world may believe,” Jesus told us (cf. *Jn.* 17:21).

way to become one with Christ: recognizing and feeling first of all that you are the object of His mercy. “We become witnesses when, through our actions, words and way of being, Another makes Himself present,” Benedict XVI wrote in *Sacramentum Caritatis*. We see this clearly in the Pope. In our times, Providence has granted us Popes who truly have lived this way, each according to his own temperament—from the paternal and intelligent affability of John XXIII to Paul VI’s acute and painful sense of the contemporary world, to the indomitable “do not be afraid” of John Paul II, to Benedict XVI’s accurate teaching and prophetic gesture of renunciation, to the arrival of Pope Francis. All of them have shown us what it means to be witnesses of Christ’s dedication until the very end.

As you have said often, Milan is *Mediolanum*, “the middle land”; for ages, a place of encounter and cross-pollination. Seen from here, what is the meaning of the Pope’s insistence on dialogue and the »

**» culture of encounter?**

I would like to stress right away the meaningfulness of the expression “culture of encounter.” One cannot reduce its call to a nice sentiment of hospitality; instead, it must become our permanent and daily way of judging and decision-making, that is, the style of our being human. Education to the “mentality and sentiments of Christ” is crucial. I believe that the Pope’s insistence on the “culture of encounter” is stated precisely in this sense. To use Saint Paul’s words, what is needed is *metanoia*, conversion of our way of thinking and feeling to the way of thinking and feeling of Christ Himself.

**What does it mean to “think and feel like Jesus”?**

It is not something you sit down at a conference table and explain! To know what it means to “think and feel like Jesus,” you need to look at Jesus who thinks and feels, sharing the daily life of women and men. Where? In the life of His friends, in witnesses. When I visit parishes, associations, and the various works of the Church, I am often moved because I see in the life of the people I encounter certain features of the Gospel I read that morning as I celebrated Mass. I see Jesus’s “Woman, don’t weep” present in the way many embrace suffering. “Neither do I condemn you: go and sin no more,” said to the sinful woman, is the daily content of the dialogue priests have with those in need of forgiveness... and so on. From the Gospel to the life of witnesses, and from the witnesses to the Gospel: this is the way you learn what it means to “think and feel like Jesus.” This is the focus of my pastoral letter *Educarsi al pensiero di Cristo* [*Educate Yourself to the Thought of Christ*].

**Another theme that is dear to the Pope is the peripheries. Half of his visit will be dedicated to the Case Bi-**



**anche [a poor area on the periphery of Milan with low-income housing projects built in the 1970s and abandoned factories, bordered by the railroad and a gypsy camp] and the prison of San Vittore. Why?**

The Holy Father’s attention to the peripheries is profoundly pedagogical. In giving priority to the encounter with those considered the least important, those who are the neediest, he teaches us the value of each person. His attention to the poor makes the “for everyone” in the Gospel shine out for all to see. As we were saying before, Christianity abolishes the principle of

exclusion. In addition, starting from the peripheries is a sociological choice, but even before that, it is the choice of a point of view from which to look at all of reality. This is what the Pope himself reminded us in the letter he recently sent to Fr. Carrón: “this poverty is necessary because it describes what we truly have at heart: the need for Him.”

**In what directions can the Church of Milan and that of Italy “go outwards”?**

It seems to me that the key is found in learning deep down what Frances



whose traces can be found among Christians themselves. Breaking down walls is the natural consequence of the recognition that the truth is not first of all a set of doctrines and rules, but the very person of Jesus who illuminates all of reality and enables us to embrace it all the way.

**You have chosen “the people” as the underlying theme of the great work of preparation. Why do you consider it so central?**

The insistence on the people of God is very present in the Pope’s teaching. Thus, the first response is simple: we consider it central precisely because we follow the Pope. Also, the reference to the people, which in Pope Francis is born of his experience in Argentina, may be seen here in Milan in the tradition of popular Lombard Catholicism. For us, saying “church” means saying the people, the people of God. It is a dimension of our faith that has not been lost, even if it certainly needs to mature and become more conscious and operative. Also, emphasizing the theme of the people is a response to a worrisome “sign of the times.” One of the most dangerous directions of our Western culture, I always repeat, is narcissistic individualism. Instead, every person is structurally an I-in-relation. Jesus, with His Cross and Resurrection, came to reveal to us the origin of trinitarian love and to introduce us into the experience of communion with God and others. We are called to rediscover the gusto and fecundity of this belonging, for us first of all and for all our fellow human beings.

**If you had to say it in a sentence, what is the Pope showing us? What is the key to his magisterium?**

In the words of the Pope himself: *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Misericordia et misera*. The mercy of God encounters our misery and ransoms it: this is the joy of the Gospel. **T**

drew from Benedict XVI and never tires of repeating: Christianity is communicated by attraction, not proselytism. In the way we Christians love, work, rest, respond to the needs of others, experience illness and death, remain open to encounter everyone and to build with them... a new humanity emerges that can touch our fellow human beings. Precisely for this reason we are called to “go out,” to live the gift of faith in front of everyone with everyone.

**What are the “walls” within Italian society and the Church that should**

**be torn down? What are the “bridges” that should be built?**

To my mind, the fundamental wall that should be torn down is that of ideology. Even if we are in the third millennium of our history, and a lot has been said and written about post-modernity, post-truth, etc, a very strong ideological component still remains in social life. Not according to the old labels of right and left, secular and Christian. The barrier that is still difficult to break down is a conception of truth that has nothing to do with freedom. This is the root of all fundamentalism, even the fundamentalism

**AFRICA**

# **DESIRE NEVER SLEEPS**





**KENYA.** A vacation of CL young people.

**“This is the future of Africa.” How can a priest say this to the youth standing before him? In mid-February, about one hundred African youth gathered for the Spiritual Exercises. To be free to be themselves.**

BY ALESSANDRA STOPPA

**A**rnold recently began his university studies in international marketing in Kampala, Uganda. At 19 years old, his vision is impaired: he is blind in one eye and the other is damaged. When he came to Italy some months ago, he wanted to visit the tomb of Fr. Luigi Giussani. He left a note with a prayer. “I asked him that my heart may desire as his does.” He did not ask to be able to see. “Life is full of people who see, but how many among them are happy?” Even now, as he thinks back, he has no regrets; he is at peace: “Our desire takes us far. Not our eyes.”

Arnold knows what he wants; he wants to desire. It can be frightening, to have that heartbreaking need for everything, that “emptiness inside,” says Esther, 18 years old. She and Arnold were among the hundred or so youth at the CL Spiritual Exercises for university students in Eldoret, a city located half way between Kampala and Nairobi. Esther says: “I do not want to get rid of this emptiness.”

Why are these students so attached to their longing? **>>**

## AFRICA

» Their life changed when they encountered Christianity. “Even though nothing changed,” says Rose Busingye, a CL community leader in Africa. They have not become rich. They still eat one meal a day, they still walk for miles on dirt roads, and still have broken families. “I want to escape one thing, I want to avoid another...” Rose continues: “In spite of what they have lived and still live through, they do not want to escape anything. And I follow them.”

People came from Uganda and Kenya, but also from Burundi, Angola, and Mozambique to spend three days with Nacho, Fr. Ignacio Carbajosa, who traveled from Spain to lead the lessons and assemblies under the main theme: “You are the desire of my soul.” Those from Kampala traveled eleven hours, while those from Nairobi traveled nine. To pay for the event, they washed cars at their parishes, in the midst of the drought plaguing their countries. They came even though their universities were shut down due to a strike of professors, a situation that could go on for months.

**GLADYS’S PATH.** For young Kenyans, once they finish high school, the concept of attending university (for those who are accepted) means finally getting to do what one wants. This means class by day and every imaginable transgression by night. This is the norm. But Fr. Gabriele Foti, a missionary with the Fraternity of St. Charles Borromeo, thinks of Alex, Patrick, Maria, and the others who have begun to share in an experience that is unfamiliar in this context: “Studying together, doing School of Community, taking

**To pay for the event, they washed cars at their parishes, in the midst of the drought plaguing their countries.**

their life seriously, and even discussing the emotional scars, which are brutal here, at all levels.” Bonds are formed by blood, ethnicity, and tribe, and bonds of friendship are rare. “Especially with adults.”

And yet, in Eldoret, the youth are constantly asking questions, during the assembly, at meals, during breaks, and into the night. “In this culture, the youth are not allowed to meet the gaze of an adult until they get married,” says Nacho: “It is clear that these students have met people who engage their freedom. As I think about the educational crisis here in Africa, but also in Europe, it amazes me to see that there are youth who live this way: mature and free personalities and a faith that is becoming their own, through which

they face life. Not only do they look you in the eye, but they also look at their own hearts”—unafraid to face their own questions.

Gladys belongs to a large and problematic family that lives in the slums of Kireka; she hated her alcoholic father so much that she hated herself. “For me, life did not make sense. I was just waiting to die.” She is 17 years old. When she met the Movement, she discovered that she was loved so immensely that she began to love her father, even when he was drunk, and to do School of Community with him. As a result, he began to open up, like a child, to the possibility of a new life. “I thought that my desire originated and ended in me,” she says: “Instead, I understood that it is the possibility of a relationship with the One who makes me, who calls me through my own desire.” Every night, before going to sleep, she asks for only one thing: “I want to



**PILGRIMAGE.** The students from Nairobi on the way to the sanctuary of Komarock.



meet You again tomorrow.” In the morning, she asks to look at reality with hopefulness. “To get to school, every morning, I have to cross two wide roads in which the cars race by, without any consideration towards us students who are walking across. This is something that has always made me angry and upset. Now I know that when it happens, God is telling me: ‘Gladys, learn to be patient.’ Even through this, with the cars, and in everything, God is educating my heart.”

“Sometimes we think that School of Community is too challenging for the youth,” says Nacho: “On the contrary, they grasp everything. They take it very seriously. The good news, the ‘Word that saves,’ comes neither from introspection nor ideology, but only from Christ, through the Church. They have been told that they are valued. And this is verified in experience: a *human person*, with an irreducible ‘I,’ that >>



**MERCY.** At some of the universities in Nairobi, the CLU offered an exhibit dedicated to the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The year before, they offered an exhibit on the life of Fr. Giussani.



**THE HORIZON.** The university students and other friends from the Kenyan CL community. The young people attend one of the two major universities in the capital or the St. Kizito Vocational Training Institute.



**TOGETHER.** Rose Busingye, leader of CL in Africa, with some of the students from the Luigi Giussani High School in Kampala and some women from Meeting Point International.



**ELDORET.** A few pictures from the Spiritual Exercises. Above: Fr. Adriano with José and Horacio from Angola; below, Nermi, from the Mozambique community. A snapshot from the Exercises, held February 10-12.

» depends solely on God; it is the *Kingdom of God*, the possibility of knowing the meaning of things, and that life has a positive destiny.”

**WITHOUT A GANG.** Giorgio Vittadini, a dark-skinned young man whom Rose named after a friend of hers, grew up in the Welcoming House, a home for abandoned children. He went to the Spiritual Exercises for the first time: “I had soccer practice, but when I read the title, I just *had* to go. I wanted to know what the desire of my soul is.” He heard Nacho say: “We do not discover our true desire by means of an analysis, but through a particular event that happens to us.” He then looked back on his life. “All of the beauty is given to me by Rose and the others in order for me to grow. There is someone who is fighting so that I may live. God is reaching me;

He became flesh for me.”

Arnold and his family are now living in a part of town controlled by a gang. Virtually all of the youth in the area are part of it. “I wanted to remain myself,” he says, “With one name: ‘I.’ They are always there, in the street, standing around, with nice clothes, watches, cell phones.

**“When I read the title, I just had to go. I wanted to know what the desire of my soul is.”**

Things that every guy would want. “But I felt that I had something that they didn’t have.” They began to single him out, to call him names, and to become aggressive. All of them turned against him, just because he was not one of them. One day, he realized one of them was following him. He picked up his pace. But the other guy still caught up with him. “What’s up, man?” He kept talking to Arnold and then said, “I want to be your friend. I need a friend like you.” At first Arnold thought he was joking: “Don’t you

already have friends in the gang? What do you want from me?” The other guy answered, “You are happy and sure of yourself, without a gang. Me, without the gang, I couldn’t... I would feel like nothing.” “In that moment,” Arnold recounts, “I understood the difference between a friendship and a gang. I am happy because I am loved, because I belong to Someone who makes me free, who makes me myself.”

As the students speak, a thought passes through the mind of Fr. Adriano Ukwatchali: “The future of Africa is here.” Originally from Angola, he began to participate in the Movement a few years ago. Here in Eldoret, José and Horacio, two law students from Benguela (Angola), are with him. For them, this is a first in more ways than one: first Spiritual Exercises, first time outside of Angola, first plane flight... Fr. Adriano says: “Above all, it is the first time that they hear desire talked about this way. They told me: ‘We had never asked ourselves why we





had this infinite desire inside.’ They are stunned to listen to the discussion about life, about faith having to do with life. And then they can’t believe that people who do not know them helped them pay for the trip.” Still, he is the one most touched by everything happening in these days: “The way we were welcomed with great care, the unity among people of different origins speaking different languages, the secretary of the Nuncio to Uganda who acted as our interpreter, the discussions... Most importantly, our participation together in the Eucharist. That was the center of it all.” Why does he see the future of Africa in these young people? “Because of the effort that they put into their life. They do not take part in the apathy of Africa; they want to change it. You can tell by the questions that they ask. They have understood the meaning of life and want to follow it without taking anything for granted.”

Cristine is 16 years old. She describes how she has put so much energy into trying to fulfill her

desire, but has never managed to. “My desire is limitless!” she says happily. “For me, it’s like being reborn, learning that this desire is the only way I can truly live.” She was struck by the way Nacho spoke about our need to give thanks. “If someone asked me, I would say that the person I want to thank is God. He came to meet me in the most concrete way possible: Fr. Giussani revealed the beauty of living and communicated it to others. I don’t understand everything... but I don’t care. I’d never go away, because I would lose something that is very difficult to possess: myself.” But if God gave us everything we desired, would we still look for Him? It’s just one of the many questions that Prim, 17, carried with her to the exercises. She relates a dream she had recently: “I desire even when I dream; desi-

re never sleeps!” she says, making everyone laugh, and then says in all seriousness, “He is the one who made me with this nature. And who is saving me already, as I am desiring.” It’s the same thing that surprises Freddy: “When I read the title of the Exercises, I immediately concluded: ‘Yes, you, Lord, are

the desire of my heart, because without You everything is small. It’s easy, I get it.’ But the next moment, walking for an hour in silence, the real drama started, right in that silence—I wouldn’t have this desire by myself. It’s there because an Other has it for me, because God is saying to me, ‘Freddy, you are the desire

of My soul. I created you to share this desire, this love that I have for you.’ I don’t know what will happen tomorrow, but as long as I am breathing, I want to fully live this desire that constitutes me.” **T**

**“These young people do not take part in the apathy of Africa; they want to change it.”**



**CL LIFE**

# WITH THE GUSTO OF THE JOURNEY

**What predominates in the awareness of our worth? What aspect of our work satisfies us? Where do we expect salvation to come from? The Assembly of CL Leaders in Italy addressed these questions, the “fear of nothingness,” and the “hurry to solve things ourselves,” in three days of dialogue with Julián Carrón.**

BY DAVIDE PERILLO





**“W**hat dominates in us now? In this moment that is so challenging for us, what is the main awareness we have about ourselves? What is our dominant thought, as Leopardi said?” The question came at the very beginning, in the meeting room of the hotel in Pacengo, Italy. Outside, the countryside was soaked in the mist and humidity from Lake Garda. Inside, 360 people from all over Italy had gathered for the national Assembly of CL Leaders led by Julián Carrón. This time, there was not the usual short title, but a theme on which the leader of the Movement has been insisting for a long time: what does it mean, as Fr. Giussani said, that “a particular story is the keystone of the Christian conception of the human person, of our morality, our relationship with God, and with life”? What method does this suggest? What does it say about the Church, faith, the way the divine communicates to today’s world, and about the “epochal change” facing us?

There were many new faces, and the average age was younger than in recent years. The intensity of the work emerged right away, and this time made us use all the space available in these pages to try to follow the theme, beginning with that question: “What dominates now?” It is not a sentimental, “introspective” question, Carrón clarified right away. “The awareness that prevails defines our position in reality whether we are conscious of it or not: how we face the day, look at our children, enter the classroom or operating room, deal with challenges. This is where our cultural position emerges.” And thus it is worthwhile to start from there and from the issues that arise from that question, because asking “what dominates” also means reflecting on the last year.

This journey opened Saturday morning with the assembly. Carrón

began with the theme and this question: “In the things we have seen happen in this recent period, what factors of the ‘method of God’ begin to emerge? The first thing we are called to do is to look at what the Mystery causes to happen in order to regenerate the life of the Movement, and thus the lives of each of us.”

He gave an example, relating a conversation he’d had with a young teacher. She discovered herself entering a particularly rambunctious class “with no respect for the kids. And they read it in her face.” She tried everything to subdue them, changing the desks around, separating cliques, but nothing worked. Then something happened. “A preference for one of them, one of the most obstreperous. He perceived it right away, and began paying attention in class.” A little bit at a time, the climate in the classroom changed. “Do you see? None of our unsuccessful strategies can keep the Mystery from passing through a crack that opens up where we least expect it. It is striking: it happens almost *in spite of us*. But these things occur and we do not bat an eye: we fail to realize how important they are. They do not change our mentality.”

**NAMES AND THINGS.** The first contribution to the conversation also related to school. Mariella, a high school teacher, talked about her amazement at the blossoming of Student Youth in her school. A young man at her school was thunderstruck by the summer vacation. His classmate had the same encounter but it happened in a different place and he came to it by a different road. They met up again at school and everything began from there. They invited their friends. It was a strange situation in which those who were new talked about an experience and the others recognized it as being alive in words that were already known (“Our people gave names to things, >>

» and the others gave things to the names.”). Mariella posed to Carrón the question that the students had asked her when they requested “not to do School of Community on the books from before, because it’s boring.” The response, she recounted at the assembly, was dazzling: “Since when do you have a problem with the books? The question I don’t know how to answer is what to do when nothing happens. But when it happens, it’s simple: follow it and don’t force things.” The rest took form bit by bit. “They began asking questions. One of them took notes and passed them around: a text was born. Then another one said he was not capable of loving, and charitable work was born. The truth is that in this change of epoch, you shouldn’t rush, but I’ve always been in a hurry.”

**“EVERYTHING, RIGHT AWAY.”** An example like this “is crucial,” Carrón stressed. “Otherwise we fail to realize what the Mystery is doing and we insert everything into a framework: I think the kids are ‘mine’ and I set them up the way I think best...” Instead, “the method is different. The one protagonist is Christ, and we respond in front of what He does.” Davide Prosperi, sitting next to Carrón on the stage, chimed in. “We’re focused only on what we can do ourselves, and this is the problem of our age. The first certainty that has collapsed is dependence on others, yet we are not the ones to make our life and our destiny.” He read the letter sent by a girl after a meeting with high school seniors: “We want everything, and right away, all the answers and certainties, and at times feel like someone else should tell us what to do, because we’re intimidated by the choice before us, and don’t allow ourselves the pleasure of discovery. I’m the first one to make this mistake. But in front of my eyes, I see the



**THREE DAYS.** The National Assembly of CL Leaders, February 17–19 in Pacengo del Garda, Verona, Italy.



opening of a willingness to desire, a courage that is not frightened at the thought of failure.” “Here, this is what it is all about,” observed Carrón: “It is the reawakening of the gusto of the journey, even at the risk of erring! We think that salvation is finding the answer to our problems, while instead, salvation is the gusto of discovery.”

Participants told other stories. Pigi asked a question, in the words of an e-mail from a high school girl: “I come to Student Youth because it cheers me up, but I already know that later I’ll be down in the dumps again, because in life, in the end, there is no answer. We often do things that may be beautiful, but that do not bring truth. There are things that affect us and change our conceptions, while there are others that only bring the emotion of the moment.” “Good: why?” responded Carrón and, “Let’s leave the question open.” This same question was asked by Costantino in a different way, refer-

ring to the words of a friend. “He told me that the problem of his life is the fear that in the end, evil will win out. I understood him. When reality pushes hard, you feel like you get lost...”

“Your colleague identified the question well: the fear of nothingness,” observed Carrón. Carrón went on to speak about a conversation he’d had with a Spanish scientist some time ago, a rationalist, an agnostic, “the Enlightenment in flesh and blood,” who could not fathom the importance of a particular story and who shared the same fear expressed by the high school girl, that everything “ends badly.” But, he said, “there’s something that I cannot explain with my scientific reason, something that leaves everything open: my children.” A fact. To which, gradually, as the conversation continued, another comment was added: “You use reason in a different way from me, but I cannot say that you are idiots.” Another fact, irreducible.



“What does this have to do with Pigi’s question?” asked Carrón: “Why does a fact call into question his entire scientific framework? You see, the problem is that we look at facts, but we do not recognize their origin. We do not realize what power lies in this method of God, which passes through the human, not outside it.”

So this is the true challenge, he added: “Don’t stay at the level of appearances. We think we respond to problems with our strategies.” When Massimo told him about a change of attitude, so that “in front of a colleague I couldn’t stand, I began to wonder, ‘Lord, why do you put him in front of me?’” Carrón answered, eliciting another step, “Stay in front of the question He asks you! The Mystery gives you this colleague who ‘is a pain in the neck’ for you, but is for your maturation. Don’t shift everything elsewhere. Deal with this fact without separating God from reality, because He is the

one who gives it to you. Otherwise the dualism begins there: ‘This guy is a pain in the neck, but there is God...’ And in this way, what changes?”

**WHAT SATISFIES YOU?** *Within reality. And through the human.* That is where the Mystery makes Himself present. Given that there is a point of reality that provokes everyone without distinction, in the afternoon the assembly continued on the subject of work. It is “a problem in which we cannot cheat, not with ourselves and not with others,” noted Carrón.

“It is an opportunity to see in action what predominates.” This touched a raw nerve, to judge by the number of hands that shot up to ask to speak. Lorenzo talked about his work in a

psychiatric ward, and the challenge of the case of a young man whom everyone judged to be hopeless, and whom Lorenzo himself did not want to follow, until a colleague turned everything upside down, saying, “We are the ones who need him, because if we do not accept him, slowly but surely we will not take anyone anymore...” “I realized that we could not decide in this way: we cannot know what the Mystery will do with him over time.” Carrón pursued the question immediately: “And in this way you realize that Christ acts through the human: from the gaze that you discover upon yourself. ‘We cannot know’: this is the meaning of the Mystery in front of life.” It is liberating. “You no longer fear ‘not knowing,’ or feel that you have to resolve the problem on your own.”

The stories and questions multiplied. Ciccio from Bologna recounted the problems he had been having at work, his sleepless nights and his fears. “Then, a friend at a dinner asked me, ‘do these difficulties make you feel like a failure? Don’t you think that it is a call from the Father who loves His dearest son?’” Ciccio’s perspective suddenly changed. “I experienced freedom in the midst of something

very difficult. The fear did not go away, but I have the desire, the curiosity to pass through the small door. My own perception of myself has changed. I am not defined by what I manage to do. I am wanted and loved, and this generates a gladness that I didn’t have before.” Carrón commented, “This is a

“I come to GS because it cheers me up, but I know that later I’ll be down, because in life, there is no answer.”

very clear example of what we are saying. The Church is a human place that instead of resolving problems throws you back to them again, re-opens the question. It may seem like noth- >>

» ing, but what happens is a liberation. If we do not realize this, we do not understand the contribution that faith makes. We want to close our outlook, while the Christian event re-opens it.”

That evening featured four testimonies about charity. People spoke about the Food Bank and the Food Drive at the end of November, AVSI and the hospitals in Syria, the Sisters of Charity of the Assumption and their work in the peripheries, and the CL community of Varese’s mobilization to welcome refugees.

**THE HEAD OF THE WARD.** Carrón took up again the foundational question that had emerged in the assembly: “The thing that gnaws at us the most, in the end, is the doubt expressed by our friend Costantino: ‘I’m afraid that nothingness will win out.’ This is the deep dimension of the challenge that the collapse of certainties sets before us: it is the fear of nothingness.” For this reason, he continued, “awareness of the situation is crucial for grasping the answer. If we do not understand that this is the point, we’ll go ahead with our usual habits and our attempts to ‘do something.’ But in front of this situation, how does the Mystery respond?” We are “dependent on the Mystery, moment by moment.”

To explain this point, he referred to a Giussani text from 1993 with an eloquent title: *Something That Comes Before*. “The event of Christ becomes present ‘now’ in the phenomenon of a different humanity” that corresponds to our needs like no other, wrote Giussani. “Instead, we change the method,” Carrón noted. “My community, my CL university students... We remain at the level



**CHARITY.** The four testimonies: left, Carlo Petroni (from the Varese community); Giampaolo Silvestri (AVSI general secretary); Julián Carrón; Mariangela Marognoli (from the Sisters of Charity of the Assumption) and Andrea Giussani (President of the Italian Food Bank).

of appearances and think that we can manage everything ourselves. But you are not the thing that corresponds to the other person who encounters you. Through a different humanity, the other person encounters Christ.”

From that point on, everything he said deepened the understanding of “the gaze upon reality as the way the Mystery draws me.” He spoke about the task of the Church (“She draws us to the right attitude, as happened for Ciccio: someone asked him a question, challenged him, and unleashed the energy in him to face the problems.”).

He spoke about what blossoms from that, because as Giussani said, “It is impossible that from the experiences described up to this point a new subject is not born, a new protagonism in the world,” and thus “gestures and initiatives of charity,” “new activities for the unemployed,” and so on. This new subject follows history, the needs and the context that history establishes, “with an equilibrium, watchfulness, and patience that one other-

wise would not have had.” Like Saint Paul: “Who would ever have thought of facing the problem of slavery by writing a note in which he asked a friend to welcome that slave as if he were a brother?” asked Carrón. This is the method: not to hurry up and do it ourselves, but to follow what the Mystery does through us. This is what happened to two parents whose son was in intensive care. In a letter they wrote to Carrón, they said, “The head of the ward told us that since we have been in the waiting room, work has gone better in the hospital. ‘Before, to deal with the pain of the parents, I had to put on a mask of cynicism.’” There it is. In a world in which all the usual frameworks have been overturned, “this presence, this irreducible diversity is what we have to acknowledge.”

Carrón closed by reading a line from Gregory of Nyssa: “The soul is struck and wounded by the desperation of never obtaining what it desires. But this veil of sadness is removed when she learns that the true possession of the One whom she loves lies in never ceasing to desire Him.” This is “the event of the relationship between the human person and Christ: a love that does not take away longing and does not extinguish desire,” but instead, re-awakens the gusto of the journey. **I**

**“The challenge that the collapse of certainties sets before us is the fear of nothingness.”**

# JULIÁN CARRÓN

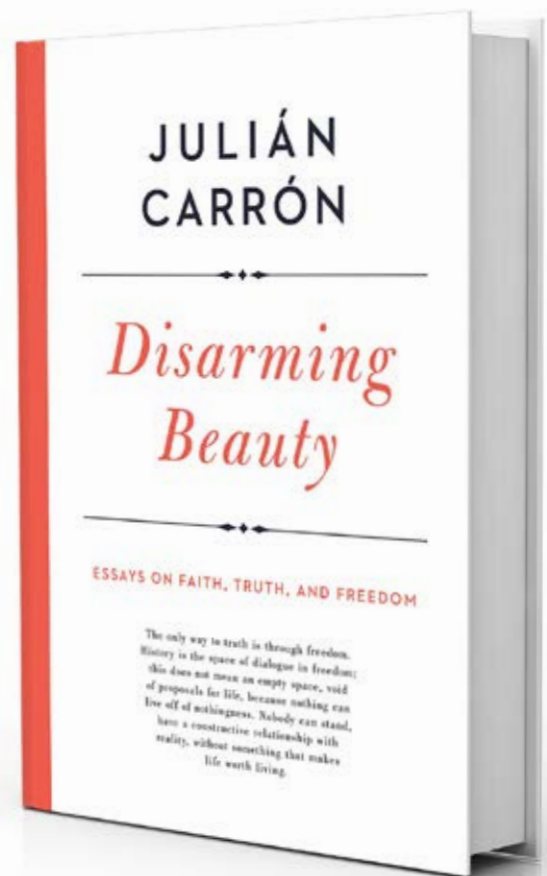
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