

2017

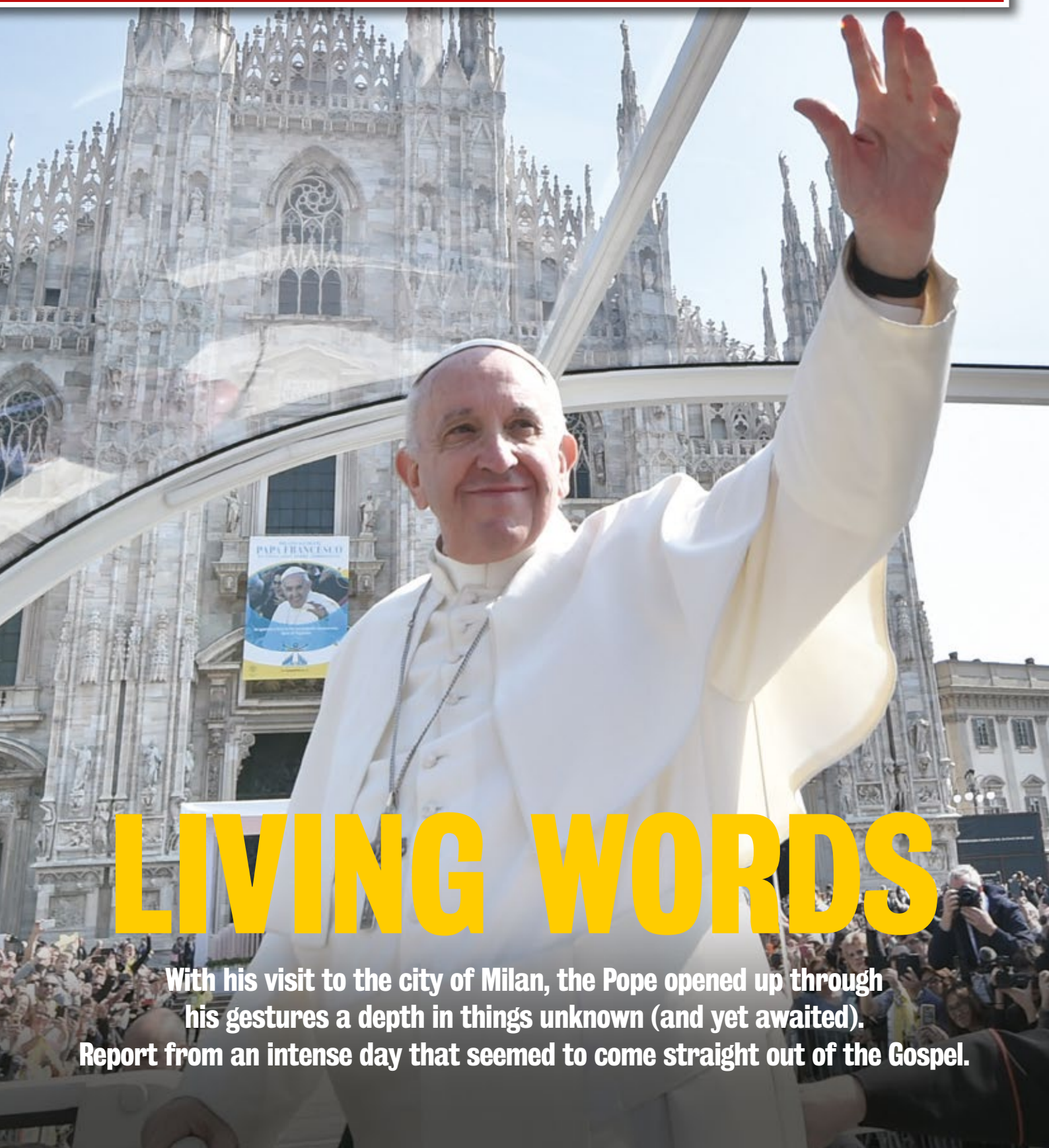
COMMUNION AND LIBERATION INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

# TRACES

04

VOL. 19

LITTERAE COMMUNIONIS



## LIVING WORDS

With his visit to the city of Milan, the Pope opened up through his gestures a depth in things unknown (and yet awaited). Report from an intense day that seemed to come straight out of the Gospel.

**Editorial Office:**

Via Porpora, 127 - 20131 Milano

Tel. ++39(02)28174400

Fax ++39(02)28174401

E-mail: [traces@traces-cl.com](mailto:traces@traces-cl.com)

Internet: [www.tracesonline.org](http://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

**Photo:**

GettyImages: 6-8, 12; L. Giovanazzi: 4

Osservatore Romano: cover, 9;

K. Antunes: 10; Contrasto: 14/15;

Fraternità di CL/ G. Pomelli: 16-19

**Publishers (editore):**

Editrice Nuovo Mondo srl

Iscrizione nel Registro

degli Operatori

di Comunicazione n. 26972

© Fraternità di Comunione

e Liberazione for the texts

by Luigi Giussani and Julián Carrón

## POPE FRANCIS

# THE GOSPEL, HERE AND NOW

A report on the visit of the Pope to Milan.

A page from the life of Jesus and His disciples,  
lived by millions in the span of a few hours.



<b>Editorial</b>	The One Who Leads History	<b>3</b>
<b>Letters</b>	Edited by Paola Bergamini	<b>4</b>
<b>Close up</b>	Pope in Milan <b>The Gospel, Here and Now</b> by Davide Perillo	<b>6</b>
<b>Brazil</b>	Giustizia <b>Risk and Redemption</b> by Alessandra Stoppa	<b>10</b>
<b>CL life</b>	University students <b>What is Irreducible?</b> by P. Bergamini	<b>14</b>
<b>Testimony</b>	United States <b>Doreen's Candle</b> by Anna Leonardi	<b>20</b>

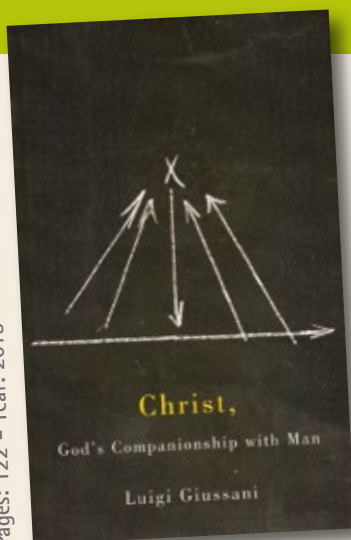
## LUIGI GIUSSANI

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.

MCGILL-QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY PRESS



# THE ONE WHO LEADS HISTORY

**T**here's a simple way to understand what it is that the Church brings to the world: just look at what happened when Pope Francis visited Milan. Crowds everywhere, all day long. A million people, according to the counts. And it was a joyful crowd, happy, smiling despite their weariness. Not the weariness from the travel and hours out in the sun at Monza Park waiting for the Mass, but the weariness that comes from life, the weight of the ordinary burdens and anxieties with which daily life unfolds. "And yet every one of those fellows down there must have his own devil to torture him," as Manzoni's Unnamed said, watching the crowds that ran out to meet Cardinal Borromeo. Great—so that Saturday at the end of March was just like the book. But what were all those people expecting to get from the Pope? The solution to their problems? The untangling of every knot, of every burden?

That was evidently not the case. At closer glance, it's quite impressive. The expectation focused on that person who, in his essence, like every man, is so transitory and yet so decisive in that he incarnates the Church, and was an expectation of something even greater than a solution to problems. An expectation that's perhaps unconscious but still great, because it encompasses all other expectations.

**And the Pope responded.** He embraced every problem and anxiety, one by one, doing what the Church has always done: broadening our perspective. Redirecting us to our relationship with God, our dependence on Him and on His mercy. He did it consistently, with every question that was posed to him. The peripheries? They are, first and foremost, the place, "to encounter the Lord, to renew the mission of [our] origins, to [return to] the Galilee of the first encounter." Evangelization? It is joyful, but it is God who is acting; He "catches the fish," because, "It is He who leads history." How to educate our children? By keeping in mind the example of "the gratuitousness of God." And he continued responding to other questions, leading up to the phrase that, in a way, summarized all the rest because it broadens our gaze, turning everything on its head: "We must not fear challenges, this must be clear. How often do we hear lamentations: 'Ah, these days, there are so many challenges, and we are sad...?' No. Do not be afraid. Challenges must be confronted like bulls, seizing them by the horns. And it is good that they exist, challenges. It's good, because they enable us to grow. They are the sign of a living faith, of a living community that seeks its Lord and keeps its eyes and heart open."


**This is what the Church brings.** Not the solution to all our problems, but "open eyes and hearts." In other words, that "true attitude" that makes it possible to face them, as Fr. Giussani said. Religiosity, the awareness that we depend on God. "It is He who leads history." And this gives us a new outlook that doesn't distance us from reality or make us retreat from things. On the contrary, it pushes us to enter in even more by giving us energy and room to breathe, by helping us to perceive a weight—a depth—in daily affairs that we had never imagined.

**As a result, the most common word** among the people of Milan was "hope." Before and *after* Francis's arrival. The problems are still there, for all of us. But the Church is also there, Jesus's "eternal words" are still "alive in time," as Charles Péguy writes in the text chosen by CL for this year's Easter Poster. The problems are still there. But we can discover a sense of satisfaction in facing them. T



# LEBANESE

## THE POPE, THE LINE, AND THE STATION MANAGER


 What a great man, this Pope, and what a great event, the Mass with a million in attendance. How wonderful, to be part of a people such as the one that filled the park in Monza. On Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00pm, with my heart filled with joy and gratitude, I head to the train station to return home with my friends from the Milanese parish of Sant'Ignazio. The trip turns out to be more complicated than planned. Along with the very predictable lines to leave the area where the ceremony was held, there is a long wait to enter the station. Evening falls as the crowd control barriers contain the throng of thousands of pilgrims. The wait becomes longer than expected, the first complaints are heard, some of them are curses aimed at the organizers for not having provided adequate services. After a splendid day of sunshine, the weather turns and it begins to rain. And there we are waiting. But when will we be able to get on the train? Discontent grows, two people almost come to blows over a matter of "precedence," many take it out on the station manager who's trying to do her best to organize the departures. "What kind of disorganized mess have you made? You should be ashamed! (We are in Lombardy!) Why doesn't the train arrive? Will we all be able to get on, or will we have to wait for another one? And until when? We've been here for two hours..." Tempers flare, and I, too, allow myself to be caught up in the commotion. I'm



just about to add my question to the many that rain down from all sides on the woman. The station manager doesn't bat an eye. She turns toward the person berating her and says, "I've been here since 7:00 this morning. They called and asked if I could lend a hand with managing the trains. It's now 8:00pm and I don't know when I'll get home tonight. All without pay, as a volunteer. But you know what I say to you, dear sir? Even in this situation, I'm sure that I would do it again. I am actually happy to do this service." A few words that leave everyone speechless. Silence falls; no one dares to respond. When I finally board the train, it occurs to me that all the beauty experienced in the afternoon risked being buried by the anger and confusion of those moments. We needed those few words; we needed her, the station manager in her thirteenth hour of volunteer work, to get us back in the game. I needed her to make me take note again of what had happened to me a little earlier, of the gift of participating in something great that had filled my heart but that I risked forgetting.

**Giorgio, Milan (Italy)**

## "DADDY, IS YOUR JOB A GOOD JOB?"

 Regarding your magazine cover on work... I work in human resources. Last week, in the wake of certain events that happened to me and my friends, I published the attached post on LinkedIn. In less than three days, there were 18,680 views, 179 people who had shared it with their network, 15 public and as many private comments that told me simply that this is the way they would like to be treated. Here is the post:


Yesterday afternoon I got a WhatsApp message from my seven-year-old daughter who wrote from her grandmother's cell phone, all in capital letters: "Hi Daddy: is your job a good job? I want to know for when I grow up. What time are you coming home?" Dear daughter, your WhatsApp has awakened me from the drowsiness of daily life. When am I happy at work? Why did I choose this type of work? The answer is not to be taken for granted and it's different for everyone. My answer is this: to foster people's well-being in a place where they spend most of their day, to give them the opportunity to learn new things, to grow, to put their talent at the disposal of the company, to grow a company's business through the industriousness of its people. To everyone, the equation "happy workers = a profitable company" is ever more evident. I work to give mothers the possibility of balancing their professional and private lives: motherhood is a value in the workplace also, not a limitation (even neuroscience says so). I work to help my colleagues grow, by transmitting to them competence, love, pas-



sion, and an understanding of the role of human resources. To give family time to colleagues by putting in place flexible benefit and wellness plans. To sometimes communicate unpleasant things, but always with great respect toward the person I have in front of me. To strive to implement equitable compensation policies that also take merit into account. To involve colleagues in challenging, new, and always stimulating activities that make them proud participants, not so much in a business, but in a project. To be always more human. To arrive home for dinner with my family (for me, this is imperative) tired, but happy to have contributed to making a little piece of the earth more beautiful.

**Marco, Concorezzo (Italy)**

## IN FRONT OF THE WATERFALL, FREE TO TIE MY HAIR BACK

 When I decided to go to the CLU vacation, my main motivations were the hikes, the games, and the possibility of meeting new people. So, I hadn't decided to go for the usual reasons—Mass and encountering young people who, for all their differences, had their faith in common. Added to that, I had never had a direct “connection” with Christ or God. I have always believed, but I don't go to Mass or pray regularly. The first day of the vacation, at Mass, I sat in the back and paid attention to the music and the people. I noticed that most of them paid close attention to what was happening. This fascinated and intrigued me. The next morning, we went to the beach for group games. I was on the green team and noticed right away that,



like myself, many wanted to win. We didn't lose respect for the adversary, but we were nonetheless competitive. Before the games, I thought that everyone would “behave,” but that day I realized how intensely human we can be. Later, we attended Mass in a chapel near the beach and there I prayed. The third day, we went on a hike to a waterfall. It is that day that stands out for me because at a certain point, one of the leaders asked us to maintain silence during the hike. I think some were praying and others were observing nature. I was warm and was sweating a lot and I wanted to tie my hair back. Under “normal” conditions, I would not have put my hair up in front of so many people because I have a hearing impairment. I've always been very self-conscious and haven't revealed my hearing aids in public since middle school. I don't know exactly what went through my head, but at a certain point, I put my hair up. At that very instant, I had various sensations, of embarrassment, of nervousness, but above all, I felt free. I perceived that when I thought about who was looking at me, I was wasting time; I was in a beautiful place so I stopped paying attention to the looks from others. In

front of the waterfall, I felt a sense of victory and I wanted to keep my hair up. Never again would I give up my freedom because of feeling insecure. In the afternoon, I had the courage to share my experience, and I never would have imagined that such a thing could touch others. One of them, Milena, thanked me and told me that Christ was there with me. Then I remembered when one of us had said that Christ preached freedom. I began to see this Man in another way, as if He were closer to me. Bracco asked if I would tell my story the next day during the assembly because he thought it would be a great gift for everyone. At first, I accepted but up until the last moment, I wavered between yes and no. In the end, I took the microphone and spoke. It seemed to me that I was even more free. Afterwards, I cried a lot. But I cried because I had won. I know I'll have other victories, but for me, this one was exceptional. At the end of the assembly, others came to tell me their stories. Some told me that I shouldn't worry too much because I am beautiful. For the first time, I realized that we are all brothers and sisters.

**Larissa, Salvador de Bahia (Brazil)**

**5 CLOSE UP**



**THE GOSPEL,  
HERE AND NOW**





**A page from the life of Jesus and His disciples, lived by millions in the span of a few hours. The Pope's visit to Milan, filled with a preference for the very least that engaged everyone. Each and every one. Including Cardinal Scola's prayer for the future: "May this gratitude teach us to walk."**

BY DAVIDE PERILLO

**P**ure Gospel. Nothing more, nothing less. Looking back, at the end of this intense day, followed via live stream and social media, and the hours spent at Monza Park for the Mass, the lasting impression is this: it was a page from the Gospel. Lived by millions within a few hours. It was March 25<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of the Annunciation and the day of Pope Francis's visit to Milan. Covering a hundred kilometers of road, a packed schedule with six stops, sparked by a preference for the very least and the peripheries. Everywhere he went, he was embraced by a crowd, making him "feel at home." But the main attraction was his person, his way of living the faith. His being Peter. His words and gestures came together and opened up a new dimension, a depth in things unknown and yet awaited. By each person and in every heart.

It was clear from the start, when he went to the *Case bianche* (White Houses), the neighborhood in the Forlanini area. Periphery through and through: danger and dignity, many wounds and an abounding humanity. The Pope expressed his gratitude for the handwoven stole he received: "This gift tells me that I have come as a priest, chosen by the people and at the service of the people," while the small statue of Mary, recently repaired, reminded him "that the Church is in constant need of restoration, because we form the Church, and we are sinners, all of us. Let us let God restore us through His mercy." His words are said with the same intensity with which Our Lady runs to meet Elizabeth: "It is the Church that beseeches, that does not wait inside the city, but goes out to the peripheries, to meet everyone, even those who are not Christian."

As the Pope did, visiting three families. He entered the home of Nuccio, 83 years old, and his wife, »

» two years younger, who was not home: she had been sent to the hospital due to complications with her eyes. Francis takes the phone and calls her: “Mrs. Adele? Good morning: how are you? The usual aches, right? It is important to keep going. And to offer them to God...” He hugged Dori, whose husband has been bedridden for years after a stroke. They looked at each other, and Francis blessed him with a smile. Dori’s husband even asked him to bless the sandwiches, made the night before, “to be given to those who could not be here. For us, today was a day of hopefulness.” But Pope Francis also knocked on the door of Abdel, who offered him dates and milk, as is the custom in Morocco, and he was touched that the Pope drank with him, took a selfie with his daughter Nada, thanked his wife Hanane who “helps out at the parish,” and accepted with a smile the drawing of young Mahmoud of children playing between a minaret and a steeple. “That man is a saint, even for me, being Muslim,” said Abdel afterwards: “This day changed my life. You were changed too, weren’t you Nada?”

**THE MESSAGES OF THE PRISONERS.** Then there was an encounter with a defined *before* and *after*. Actually, Christianity begins in this way, always. It is a “constant event,” a constant “initiation of actions,” as the Pope reminded the religious at a meeting at the Duomo.

A simple moment: three questions and three answers, linking together the prepared texts. What came out of it were words and phrases worth repeating and studying well. These are not just instructions that the Pope gave to the Church: they are the description of what happens when faith is lived. The “joy of evangelization,” knowing well that “evangelization is not synonymous to ‘catching fish’: it is going, traveling far and wide,

witnessing... and then the Lord, He ‘catches the fish.’ When, where, and how we do not know.” There are always challenges in the present reality, “and it is good that they exist, because they make us grow. They are a sign of a living faith, of a community that looks for the Lord and keeps its eyes and hearts open.” Differences are enriching; in fact the Church has always been this way, “and the Holy Spirit is the Master of diversity.” The Pope concludes with an answer to reassure a nun: “We cannot understand the logic of God. We are simply to obey it. And this is the path that you must choose.”

In the square outside the Duomo, the *Angelus* takes place. Following this was the most anticipated visit: at the San Vittore Prison. Two-and-a-half hours, in which few pictures were taken (of the gates being opened, of

exchanged greetings and gazes, of the table where about one hundred prisoners sat for lunch, more or less how it would have been at the house of Zacchaeus with the tax collectors), and the amazement of those who were there. “During the many years I have been here, I have never heard a prisoner say: I am happy to be here,” explains Luigi Pagano, superintendent of prisons in Lombardy: “and today many said just that.”

They expressed the same sentiment in different ways, in notes written to the Pope to say “thank you.” From Khalid (“The luckiest, because I sat right across from him and he gave me half of his breaded cutlet”) to José Alberto (“He made me understand that we have not been forgotten, though we are here, and that there is always the possibility to start again.”); from Paloka Melsed (“If every person



**DATES AND THE PHONE.** Here, the Mass celebrated in the park of Monza. Right, some moments from the visit to the “Case bianche” (White Houses): with the family of Abdel and Hanane; with Nuccio and the call to his wife Adele, who is recovering in the hospital.





on Earth had the chance to see you, even just once, evil would not exist.”) to Gennaro (“I do not believe in the Church, but I do believe in signs and events, and today I see in the eyes of many here a new light. Perhaps this is what this man brings: new hope.”).

The same thing happened in Monza Park, where the Pope was awaited by thousands of hearts. One million, to be precise. Coming from all over the Lombardy region and beyond: on buses, trains, and bicycles. Many also came on foot, like the crowd that climbed Mount Tabor, or walked along Lake Tiberias.

**WHY IS HE LOVED SO MUCH?** It was not a crowd; it was a people—several mentioned this, struck by the joy that could not be found elsewhere, so full and widespread. The amazing display of humanity in the rows

near the front, on the left facing the main stage, filled with hundreds of people with special needs. Why does this people love their Pope so much? This is a question often asked in the newspapers recently. Many different answers, and all of them are right. Because everyone, in the end, has his *own* reason for loving him that is very personal. He has the answer to *their* longings, their suffering, and their path. Their own stories. Each one felt tenderness and fear, listening to that voice that started off exhausted and little by little, as the event carried on, grew in energy and volume.

The homily was clear and concise. It reminded everyone “of the most important proclamation in history”: the Angel’s annunciation to Mary. A surprising announcement, beyond our comprehension, because “the encounter with God” happens “in the places where we would least expect it, at the margins, in the peripheries.” It is a method that goes against our plans. But it is amazing to *watch it happen* as Pope Francis describes it: “God Himself is the one who takes the initiative and places Himself, as He did with Mary, in our homes, in our daily struggles, in the midst of all our worries and our desires. At the center of our cities, our city squares, and our hospitals, we can hear the greatest exclamation possible, ‘*Rejoice, the Lord is with you!*’” Just like in the Gospel. But it is also what is right there in front of you.

For this reason, Mary’s question is our question: How can this be? “How can this happen in a time of great speculation? Is the hope of Christianity possible in this situation, here and now?” The Pope’s answer, three words featured in the homily—“memory,” the “people,” “the impossible becomes possible”—open up a path to be explored. But the image that remained with most people came moments later on the jumbotrons: the

Consecration. Those long, endless seconds spent by the Pope kneeling, with his head resting on the altar, as John’s rested on Christ’s chest, in a hallowed silence.

Angelo Scola, Archbishop of Milan, had long awaited the visit of the Pope, and stayed by his side from beginning to end. When the Cardinal thanked the Pope at the end of Mass, it was clear that the Cardinal was moved. “Today all of us can experience the truth of the well-known affirmation of our patriarch Ambrose: ‘Where there is Peter, there is the Church, and where there is the Church, there is no death, there is eternal life.’” Followed by: “May this gratitude teach us to walk.”

This, in fact was the topic in the last part of the day at the meeting in San Siro. Eighty thousand youth, parents, and catechists. Pope Francis quickly got a second wind in front of questions like David’s, who asked how to grow in “friendship with Jesus,” talked about the “people who helped him believe,” like the “priest from Lombardy who baptized me and who accompanied me throughout my life until I entered the novitiate.” When he is asked the question that, deep down, we all have regarding our kids (“How to transmit to them the beauty of the faith?”) he emphasizes one truth: “Children look at us. They see our joy, our sorrow, and our worries. Therefore, take care of them, take care of their hearts, their joy, and their hope. If you communicate the faith and you live it fully, it is transmitted.”

Simple. Like what he said about *dominguear* (observing Sundays), about taking Sunday strolls after Mass, and spending many hours with our children because “‘wasting time’ with them is also a transmission of the faith. It is gratuitousness, the gratuitousness of God.” Who watches over you and searches for you. One by one, just as Francis did. **T**





Valdeci Antônio  
Ferreira.



# RISK AND REDEMPTION

**At the most recent Meeting of Rimini, there was an exhibit on Brazilian prisons run by the prisoners, a phenomenon that has now spread beyond the borders of Brazil.**

**What is their secret? The leader of APAC, VALDECI ANTÔNIO FERREIRA, tells why “wagering on freedom” challenges the system.**

BY ALESSANDRA STOPPA

**M**ário Ottoboni, the founder of APAC, always premises his words about his experience by saying, “If you don’t have an open heart, you won’t understand what I tell you.” This also holds true when you listen to Valdeci Antônio Ferreira, his disciple.

Ottoboni is a Brazilian lawyer who in 1972 founded the prisons without police, uniforms, barbed wire, without humiliating body searches, weapons, guard dogs, or handcuffs. Those who enter there do so as human beings, and are always and exclusively referred to by name. “The redemption begins with the name,” says Ferreira, the executive director of FEBAC (the Brazilian Federation for the Assistance of Prisoners), who is responsible for the application of the method which has gained recognition in countries beyond Brazil, Italy included.

APAC stands for the Association for the Protection and Assistance of Prisoners, but in the beginning it was the acronym in Portuguese for “loving your neighbor, you love Christ.” It was born as a concrete response of civil society, among a group of Catholics, to the suffering they found in the prisons, and today involves governments and the judi-

cial sector. The APAC exhibit at the Meeting of Rimini last year left thousands fascinated by the method, the goal of which is exactly that of the prison sentence itself: to rehabilitate the prisoner. In the APAC prisons, which are more like communities than places of incarceration, rehabilitation passes through a life of work, spirituality, discipline, and study. Regardless of the crime or the sentence, those in a process of rehabilitation are responsible for managing the center and their own itinerary, and their relationships with the volunteers and their families.

We met Ferreira at the most recent Assembly of CL Leaders in Latin America, where he was invited to share the experience of his life and of this simple revolution that is challenging the failure of one of the most violent and overcrowded prison systems in the world, one which returned to the front pages early this year because of a wave of revolts, with prisoners decapitated and burned by their cellmates.

“The press talks about it because about a hundred people lost their lives all at once,” explains Ferreira, “but in the Brazilian prisons, someone dies every day, through suicide, violence, or illness.” Ferreira was a metalworker who knew nothing about prisoners. “I still don’t know »

» anything,” he says. “I’m an apprentice, and I want to die as an apprentice.” A Combonian lay missionary, he has dedicated the last 33 years of his life to prisoners, ever since at the age of 21 he met APAC.

### What is the problem of today’s prisons and the prison system?

Society makes a very big mistake when it thinks that simply incarcerating someone solves any problems. A prisoner is a social problem. He is a wound, because he is the result of unstructured, broken families, the absence of relevant public policy, and the drug trade. But society does not take responsibility for the problem. This is convenient because it doesn’t want to touch the wound and risk seeing that we could all very well be in the prisoner’s shoes. As Saint Augustine said, “There is no evil that one commits for which there is not already someone else who is capable of committing it.”

### Why?

A person abandoned behind bars will be released to wound society again because prison has not resolved his personal problems. In Brazil, but not only here, there are grave problems inside the prisons, including a very strong presence of the criminal clans that split their power among the prisoners. They control all the goings-on inside and outside. They occupy the void left by the State. Prisoners necessarily must join one faction or another. It is a system of corruption that involves everyone. And so they remain prisoners forever, because they may leave the prison, but the prison will not leave them.

**You assert that the APAC method will have an impact on the prison system in this millenium, and that no matter what happens, after this experience, it will not be the same. Why are you so certain?**

Because God is tired of this misery, of



**PROTESTS.** A revolt in the prison of Alcaçuz, in Brazil. Right, an APAC center (“If you could examine a person inside and out, certainly nobody would call himself innocent”).

seeing His children suffer so much. APAC is a dream of God, His answer to this suffering. The dominant mentality wants the prisoner to suffer or die. This is such a deeply rooted preconception that it will not be rooted out overnight. Maybe it will take centuries. But this work is growing, and it is growing at the foot of the Cross. In the itinerary of spirituality, which is one of the twelve pillars, we do “the journey of the prisoner,” a Bible study of the Gospel of Mark in eight sections. We don’t preach who Jesus is, but the person in recovery discovers it himself, experiences it himself. We are applying this in 44 APAC prisons and in three regular prisons.

**You are the one who put the Itaúna APAC keys in the hands of the prisoner José de Jesus: he was sentenced to 56 years in prison and had already escaped 12 times. He was the one who, asked why he didn’t escape from the APAC, answered, “Nobody runs away from love.” It is difficult to believe that the change truly happens only because of love.**

But that’s the way it is. We escape from many things in life, but not from true love. “Nobody runs away from love” is true on one condition: if you have a living experience of love. When I gave José the keys, he experienced this love. It is an experience that can take three years or an eternity to mature. Or it can happen in the blink of an eye.... It’s something you can’t explain.

### Why did you give him the keys?

José needed a gesture of trust that could win him over, so that he could travel the road of freedom. The same thing happened, for example, with me in the case of Washington, another prisoner in the process of rehabilitation. He was very aggressive and we had a lot of difficulty with him. He didn’t want to do anything and his attitude spread to the group. We were about to transfer him when there was one of the Days of Spirituality and he was there in the front row, just because he was obligated to be there. We were in the auditorium of the lockdown area in which there are eight doors that open and close in a sequence.





When I asked, “Why don’t you escape?” he jumped up and answered, “Because the doors are locked.” So I ordered them to be opened. One by one. “So why don’t you go now?” “Who’s to guarantee that there won’t be someone outside to get me?” “You don’t believe me? Go outside and bring back a sign that you’ve been ‘out.’” He got up and went out. Absolute silence. They were the longest five minutes of my life (laughter). Washington came back with a small branch in his hand. I asked him, “Why did you return? You have a long sentence,” but he began to laugh. “Nobody ever trusted me.” Love can rehabilitate everyone, starting with someone’s name and an encounter.

### **What is the love of which you speak?**

It is the mercy of a God who bends down over us. Love has many faces. The first is joy—joy is the fastest way to reach the heart, to enter the innermost depths of the person. The other face is sacrifice. The person who loves also gives up something. I spend a lot more time with those who are in the process

of rehabilitation than I do with my own blood siblings or my mother. But the sacrifice is never all at once.

### **Did you believe right away that the method—betting everything on freedom—truly worked?**

The first time that I brought the prisoners to the APAC National Congress—there were various prisoners from different structures, considered among the worst—I couldn’t sleep for worrying that someone would escape. One night, two nights... On the third, a friend asked me, “Since when are you the one who controls whether they escape or not?” Well, I still didn’t believe 100% that there was nothing to worry about. I trusted and I went to sleep. The next morning they were all there. I understood that it was true. It’s like in those hallways where the lights turn on a section at a time as you walk. The experience of God is like that. You take a step, and the light goes on, and you walk up to there. When you reach the darkness, then you have to take another step. It’s the same thing in the APACs.

### **Doesn’t anyone escape from the APACs??**

Yes, it has happened. A very few cases, but yes. And why? Because they did not have that experience of love.

### **So it’s not enough just to apply the method.**

No. Those who break from crime don’t do so because the methodology was applied completely, but because a bond of esteem and friendship was created. This is what changes a person. The bond is created in many ways, sometimes the simplest ways. A person in the process of rehabilitation has a toothache, and you call the dentist, and then the prisoner tells you, “I suffered from toothaches so much in the other prisons before this one...” For us, it’s not enough for a man to

change his behavior. The change is exterior, but inside there is a volcano of rebellion, of desire for revenge. The mentality has to change, and this coincides with the change of heart.

### **And for you, when someone escapes or slides back into crime...**

I never ask myself, “Valdeci, how many people have you rehabilitated?” I ask myself, “Valdeci, have you loved?” Eugenio, a 23-year-old, completed his sentence, and when he was released he got back into drugs. They killed him. In front of his corpse, I said to myself, “my love has failed.” Over time, though, I’m coming to understand that love never fails. God will not be overcome by our evil, because He never tires.

### **Today the method has been exported outside Brazil, and also to Europe. How did this happen?**

There are different experiences. In Chile, for example, there are already 48 prisons with APAC pavilions. These sectors are completely different from the others: beautiful, clean, where each prisoner has his own room. They are oases in the desert. In Colombia we have begun an APAC for women prisoners. Out of 1,800 women, 40 are there. In other countries, like Holland or the Czech Republic, there are experiences with prisoners at the end of their sentences. In any case, in most countries, from Uruguay to Hong Kong, the method is applied partially, with features adapted to national legislation. In Italy, there is an experience in Rimini, because we don’t have the resources to go elsewhere. The tree is in Brazil, but the seed falls in other places, far from the source. How to maintain the bond with the origin is an open question. We don’t know what will happen, but APAC is not ours, not Ottoboni’s, not mine, not the Itaúna Tribunal’s... It is at the service of all humanity. **T**









**CL LIFE**

# WHAT IS IRREDUCIBLE?

**The students and the encounter with Christ that overtakes their lives. All of life. Studies, family, joys, difficulties. One hundred college students from all over Italy in one of their regular gatherings to dialogue with Fr. Carrón. Where there's no room for theories. A few highlights below.**

BY PAOLA BERGAMINI

A tap on the gas pedal and the little blue Toyota slips into the last parking space. Four students climb out, stretching their legs, too long for the car. “Hey, Carmen, how are things down there in Apulia?” one of them asks. “Good, I think. I was in Liège, Belgium, last week, visiting a friend who’s studying abroad there.” “Not bad! Do you need us to take you to the airport after?” “No, thank you. I’m going back on an overnight train. It was cheaper!”

It’s early afternoon, Sunday, February 26<sup>th</sup>. The courtyard out front of the Sacred Heart Institute, at the edge of Milan, is full of university students—a few of them out of breath after rushing across the long footbridge to get here. The air is abuzz with hellos, questions and laughter. Then, a single voice. “Come inside, we’re starting.”

At 2:30, the main auditorium was full of about 100 students who come from all over Italy a few times a year to meet with Fr. Carrón for the CLU National Diaconia. Others participate from various other countries through a video connection. The theme: how life is overtaken by the encounter with Christ. All of life. Which means studies, family life, friendships, romantic relationships; all the difficulties, all the joys.

It’s an intense dialogue entered into in absolute freedom. “Pure freedom,” as Fr. Giussani defined it, inviting the CLU students to deepen their relationship with him, “to let this pure freedom correspond to your understandings, your criteria, your action; this will make you overflow with peace.” The dynamic hasn’t changed. There’s no room for abstract theories, only for experience, which is made concrete in the stories and the volley of exchanges between Carrón and the students. It’s an event that’s happening, an event of surprising humanity you have to watch in action. We’ll try to describe it by shar-

ing a few passages from the dialogue.

“What a beautiful day I spent with you, I couldn’t have hoped for anything more. A true Friend has come for us, I couldn’t have sought anything more.” Claudio Chieffo’s song *Di Più* [Anything More] introduced the meeting, then they were on their feet to say a Glory Be and a prayer invoking the Holy Spirit.

Carrón lays a few blank sheets of paper and a pen on the table. Next to him, Carmine Di Martino (“Dima” for short)—a philosophy professor who, with Fr. Stefano Alberto, leads the group of university students in CL—kicks off the conversation. “We’re here following a journey we’ve made: the Exercises, the work of School of Community, Julián’s interview with *Jot Down* [available on *Traces* website]. We’ve said: ‘Only Christ fulfills my desire.’ But it’s not enough to repeat it like a magic formula. What does it mean within the stuff of life?”

**Carrón.** So, we know the question: how can we recognize Christ within human reality? Where have we seen Him? Come on, speak up!

It’s time to pass the microphone; the students begin making their contributions. Carmen, Melisa, and Giacomo speak about the passion for their studies that still isn’t enough; a fight with a friend and the surprise at finding that every strategy falls through if you eliminate the Other; the confusion surrounding the clashes between the police and union demonstrators at the university; and a friend who gratuitously offers to help study for an exam. All facts, all experiences seeking to give an answer to the question. They don’t censor things. Carrón takes notes, but after a while slams the pen down on his desk.

**Carrón.** When is it that we see how a presence contributes to our relationship with reality? Come on, wake up!







**We've said: "Only Christ fulfills my desire." But it's not enough to repeat it like a magic formula. What does it mean within the stuff of life?**



**If we aren't in awe, like the last one to arrive, we won't even see what's happening. If we don't remain like children, we slide into "what we already know," set formulas.**



A boy in the third row stands up. Hi, I'm **Cedo**. I go to the University of Milan. Actually, mine is a question.

**Carrón.** If you're willing to risk a response, go ahead.

**Cedo.** I'm willing. A few months ago, I met another student. He doesn't go to CL meetings and events, he just spends time with us. He's had a difficult family life, colored by some problems so serious that, when he told me, I found myself helpless to respond. Over the past few months, he's become much more joyful and he's taking his problems more seriously than he ever has. A few days ago, he invited us to a poetry event near his house, in a rough neighborhood. I went, and I have to admit I was a little scared, a little uncomfortable; I had walked into a totally different world. All my experience, my certainty seemed to be wavering. That wasn't the case for my friend, who was really happy and kept introducing me to everyone. See-

ing him so happy and so certain made me think that, no matter how little I'm aware of it, there's something great in our midst, something irreducible is happening. My question is this: is that really true? How can I continue to experience this "irreducibility" more and more, to become more aware of it?

**Carrón.** Why is it *irreducible*? Tell me in a word, the rest is superfluous. One word!

The responses begin. "I'd say desire, but I'm not sure." "Because the divine..."

**Carrón.** All fluff. One word! Why is it irreducible?

Faces tense up in thought; you can hear a few murmured responses. From the back: "Because it's not something that we make happen."

**Carrón.** And how do you know that? Don't dodge the question, because you'll never manage if you do. We can't move forward without taking the

question seriously.

Another boy says, "I don't understand the question."

**Carrón.** Cedo, you explain.

**Cedo.** OK. I see that often I'm unsure, but my friend is happy.

**Carrón.** You waver, but the other is happy. Why do you say something is *evidently* irreducible?

A frenzy of intersecting attempts at a reply follows. Students forget to say their names first. Another boy tries; they continue fumbling forward. Carrón's voice takes on a sharper tone. There's no going easy on each other in such a frank and familiar kind of friendship.

**Carrón.** Do you see me right now?

**Student.** Yes.

**Carrón.** What's irreducible between you and me?

**Student.** The fact that you're there.

**Carrón.** You see me because I'm here? What's irreducible be- ➤➤

» tween you and me?

**Student.** A presence.

**Carrón.** Come on guys, don't pile on empty words! How can you see me? Because of the light! We see because there's light; that's what's irreducible, even if we're not aware of it. Now, Cedo's friend is not somebody who sees a "presence" around every corner, but he's happy. Not because of thoughts in the air, but because of something he's seen. Cedo, you may doubt your own certainty, but the Mystery responds to you through the presence of an other, who's the last to arrive, but is happy. An other who is capable of recognizing the irreducibility. Just like John and Andrew in front of the Pharisees. What was the proof of that in them?

**Student.** They felt a correspondence.

**Carrón.** The point's not clear. If you all talk like this, Christianity seems unreal, a fantasy. Who experienced the proof?

**Student.** Andrew's wife.

He hit the nail on the head. Carrón opens his arms wide.

**Carrón.** Andrew's wife experienced what happened to him in the way he embraced her! This is real. Sometimes we—and I'm the first to do it—forget ourselves and feel uneasy. But the Lord has pity on us and gives us these new "Johns and Andrews," like Cedo's friend, to help us start over from the beginning each time, because the experience of something different, something other that enters into our lives, is always *for* us, always. Right now. This is why the Gospel says, "If you don't become like little children..." If we aren't in awe, like the last one to arrive, we won't even see what's happening. If we don't remain like children, we slide into "what we already know," set formulas. Life slips through our fingers. Now, where have we seen this recently? Let's help each other.

**Felice.** I'm from Catania. Now I understand something that happened to



**Do you see how the Mystery causes things to evolve? This is the step: I don't understand a fact just because it happens. It took Cedo's question, and turning it around to all of you.**



me a few days ago. I went to the airport to pick up two friends from Catholic University who help out with the life of our community. Speaking with them, in that less than half an hour in the car, I regained an awareness of myself. I had the same experience as when I met the Movement through Fr. Ciccio Ventorino. His words are still engraved on my heart: "Life's worth living because it's possible to be happy." The authority with which he said this to me has stuck with me, after 10 years. And now, with those two students, the same thing happened again.

**Carrón.** Do you see how the Mystery causes things to evolve? This is the step we have to make: I don't understand a fact just because it happens. It took Cedo asking his question, and turning it around to all of you. Oth-

erwise you wouldn't have understood what happened. Now, I'll ask you another question: what does this have to do with the task of the Church, as it is described in the School of Community reading?

**Felice.** Its task is to re-awaken the religious sense.

**Carrón.** All right. You gave me the definition. Let's take it one step further. Here's the issue: Cedo and Felice didn't recognize a step that they needed to take, but they recognized it when I explained it. What does all this have to do with the School of Community? Felice needs to go home fully conscious of the reasons it's worth coming to Milan from Catania.

Francesco, Max, Giulia, Emanuele, Masse: further contributions. Some mention events, others experiences, about studying for exams, a girlfriend, a soccer game. No definitions allowed. The group inches closer and closer to a response with an overwhelming focus. Eyes look up from smartphones and notebooks where notes are being taken, so as not to miss a thing.

**Carrón.** I don't have any kind of manual to look up the answer. You're all recounting wonderful things. But if Felice hadn't come here, he wouldn't have become aware of what he told us. The Church is a fact that constantly opens you up to grasp what has happened to you. Do you understand, Felice? It's a place where you can recount everything and go a step further. The Church has this function: to help you understand what happens. So we don't miss out on anything. What happened to Cedo is a gift from the Mystery, made possible because we participate in the life of the Church. Facts happen and make us happier. We have to let ourselves be generated by what happens. Don't settle. The Church introduces us to this



fire that continuously calls to us. Is that clear, Felice?

**Felice.** Magnificent! One more fact: the next day, I wanted to take our two friends from Milan somewhere beautiful, to see the stormy sea. A *Sturm und Drang* experience. Reading the looks on their faces, I realized that they weren't interested. We spent all afternoon at the university, studying. At one point, I suggested to one of them that we could take a break, but she was so happy with what she was studying—translating St. Ambrose—that she said no.

**Carrón.** What makes it possible for St. Ambrose to be so engaging? Felice is surprised by the fact that his friend was so engaged by what she was reading. And the same goes for a physics problem or an article of the criminal code...

**Felice.** I was looking for something beautiful, something picturesque. But they stayed there studying, happily!

**Carrón.** Another tile in the mosaic. The Mystery responds to your need by sending you two friends *happy to do what they're doing*. This is Christianity: "It was not for the thirty pieces of silver, but for the hope that He awakened in me," as the song about Judas says. We can choose to follow Him or not, but we can't erase what we've seen. Felice's friends, and Cedo's: people who are irreducible.

As the students speak, he has time to drink a glass of water as he jots down a few lines, a name on his paper... So as not to miss anything, him along with them. First Andrea, and then Francesca, ask Fr. Carrón a question—framed differently—to which he does not respond with a formula. He turns the question back on them.

**Carrón.** Why is it more crucial to ask questions than to give answers? Jesus, when everyone walked away, said to his disciples, "Do you also want to leave?" Is he taunting them, is he en-



**This is the Church's task: not a companionship that resolves our problems, but one in which our certainty in the faith can grow, where life becomes interesting.**



couraging them to leave?

**Giuseppe.** I have an example that can help explain.

**Carrón.** Tell us.

**Giuseppe.** After the Exercises, I told you that I believed in the fact that there is something that responds to my desire. That it was true for everything, except for my mother's illness. It seems impossible for me to be happy in my relationship with her, she who raised me, who helped me to ask myself who I am, to seek and to get to know Jesus. You answered me, "Why don't you believe that this is the perfect path that Jesus planned for you, for your heart, to draw you to Himself?" That question totally changed my perspective. You added, "The only opportunity you have to respond is within the relationship with your mom."

**Carrón.** Perfect. What did you learn?

**Giuseppe.** That, 90% of the time, I can't find the solution to problems because I'm not asking reality.

**Carrón.** What does this have to do with the School of Community reading? We'll return to that question next. We'll meet again in 10 minutes.

There's a break. Music starts playing, and a few people come up to the front for a hug or to say hello. Most of the students go out to the courtyard. Time for a cigarette, for a quick chat. "Where are you going for dinner after this?" "Shoot, I have an exam in three days. Well... I'll come but leave early." At five o'clock, the auditorium is full again for the synthesis.

**Carrón.** Jesus, God's response to man, challenged his disciples with questions. And then, since they didn't understand, he performed miracles. Giussani educated us to see that it's in our relationship with reality that questions arise. It's not enough to give Jesus answers; He wants us to understand. And this happens again today; it's what happened to Cedo, to Felice, to Giuseppe. We see Jesus's tenderness in this. The Mystery gives us many "Johns and Andrews"—all the examples you gave—who lead our gaze back to the origin. This is the Church's task: not a companionship that resolves our problems, but one in which our certainty in the faith can grow, where life becomes more interesting, without having to forget anything of ourselves. This is what makes Christianity interesting. But in order to see it, you have to be like children, in awe at what happens, because they're the only ones who truly appreciate it. If you're interested, let's start to ask for this, because otherwise even the most amazing thing will not be enough for us. **T**

# DOREEN'S CANDLE

**His studies at Bocconi University, the first flight to the U.S., and the discovery that “faith is enough to really live as men.” **LORENZO PATELLI**, professor at the University of Denver, tells his story, and how life “begins again, starting from the facts.” Like when a Chinese student knocked on his door...**

BY ANNA LEONARDI

**T**he late winter sky above Denver promises more snow before the season is finished; after all, it is the “Mile High City” that, at an altitude of 5,280 feet, catches the icy air blowing down from the Rocky Mountains. Lorenzo Patelli has lived here since 2011, after bouncing back and forth for a number of years between the “Old World” of Europe and the New World. He is currently a professor at the University of Denver’s College of Business.

Born in 1977, a native of Varese and

a graduate of Bocconi University, he set off to live in the U.S. for the first time in June of 2004, on a direct flight to Los Angeles. He had a draft of his doctoral thesis and a six-month visa in his bag. “I sent emails to the business schools at many of the best American universities, asking if I could continue my research on multinational companies there,” he says. “A professor at the University of Southern California responded, asking me, ‘What do you need?’ and I said, ‘A desk and a telephone.’ ‘Okay, we’ll be waiting for

you.’” The atmosphere won him over from the start. “I had the sensation of having landed on another planet,” he remembers. “The rules of the game were completely different, but, more than anything, there was this extraordinary energy and seriousness. Personal initiative had a value, in fact, it was the driver for every project. And, then, I was impressed to find both the sense that life is beautiful and the desire for friendship was alive and well.”

Lorenzo is a *Memor Domini* and, when he was in Los Angeles, he lived





Denver, Colorado.

in a house with three other Italians and a Chilean who followed the same path. “They all worked like crazy, but they weren’t sucked in by the context. There was a sense of newness in them that was still there even after 10 years of life in America. There, I saw that faith was enough to really live as men. And that just increased my desire to move there permanently.” And that’s precisely what happened: after a short stop at Erasmus University in Rotterdam (The Netherlands), and a longer one at Benedictine College in Kansas, he received a job offer from the University of Denver in 2011. The decision to move yet again, after years of wandering, wasn’t easy. There wasn’t even a *Memores Domini* house in Denver. Every hesitation was overcome by a question that Fr. Carrón posed during a conversation between the two

of them. “Look, you can hold out and stay in a place without loving it, or you can go somewhere and truly fall in love with the place to which you belong. Which do you prefer?”

It was a real turning point. Lorenzo, who had reduced everything to the pragmatic question, “should I go or not?” was able to see another measure. “So I decided to let loose of the ties to Kansas—where I had everything: job, community, house—and take to the open sea again.”

His first traveling companion was Fr. Giussani. “His biography had just come out. Page after page, I saw how everything, including the Movement itself, started with simple facts in his life: the confessional, an encounter on

a train, a student’s objection in class... Most of all, I saw that he never distanced himself from these facts; he went back over them and spoke about them to others until he understood the depth they contained. It was the same for me, I didn’t have anything more sophisticated. I woke up in the morning and had the day in front of me.”

It was a second turning point which led, one day at a time, to a number of encounters.

**LIGHT YEARS AWAY.** The first was with Doreen. She was a 27-year-old who came to the U.S. from China to do her Master’s. One morning, she came to Lorenzo’s office. She’s only about five feet tall, but full of personality. “She wanted to know if I had a project she could work on. So I put her in touch with Mike, one of my students, the only one in CL, so they could split the work.” The two hardly had time to get to know one another before she, having seen on Mike’s Facebook profile that he is Catholic, asked him about it. He mentioned it to Lorenzo while they were riding a ski lift on one of many Saturdays spent on the slopes. “Like a good American, he was reticent to give any kind of explanation. At that point, I told him, ‘Invite her!’”

The first opportunity was a Lenten retreat. Doreen went, with no prior knowledge or cultural reference point. It was light years away from what she knew. The first she had heard about Jesus was from a Protestant family who had hosted her.

At the end of the day, Mike came over to her and she told him, “I understand what the topic is: it’s life.” A few days later, Doreen came to Lorenzo’s office again. “Professor, how are you such good friends with Mike and those two girls doing international studies?” “We share something that has happened to us, the gre- »



Lorenzo Patelli.

» at encounter we've had in our lives." As he spoke to her, he turned to a whiteboard and drew the diagram Fr. Giussani used to describe the Incarnation: a bunch of arrows pointing up at an "X" and one single arrow shooting downward. Doreen sat down and stared at the "X." Lorenzo invited her for a study weekend.

Over the weekend, the students watched the video of a witness by Elvira Parravicini, a neonatologist who directs a "comfort care" program for infants diagnosed with life-limiting illnesses. That night, Doreen couldn't sleep. "I had never thought of life in those terms. About the infinite value each of us has," she told her friends after they asked her about China and the plague of abortion. "That evening I realized how faith introduces a new way of looking at things," Lorenzo explained. "That comes before being in agreement on major issues. Right there and then, she didn't understand all the reasons abortion is wrong, but she started to be surprised by the fact that there is more to reality than our instinctive reactions to it."

The friendship between the two steadily continued to grow, motivated by Doreen's continuous need to understand what she was seeing. Like, for example, when some of the *Memores* from Los Angeles came to visit Lorenzo. "I hadn't explained my vocation to Doreen; it still seemed too complicated for her." They invited her to spend some time in the mountains together. The next day, Lorenzo tried to better explain things, but she responded, "Yesterday, I was watching you all day. I understood why you live the way you do. It is because you are happy." That was the beginning of Doreen's desire to become Catholic. She was baptized at the Easter Vigil in 2016, with Lorenzo as her godfather. She, like all the other catechumens, was given a lit candle, which she chose to decorate with the "X" and the arrow that Lorenzo had



**HIKING AND BARBECUE.** From the top, clockwise: Doreen decorating her candle the night of her Baptism; a snowy hike with friends visiting from Los Angeles; lunch and a hike during the community family vacation in Colorado.

drawn on the whiteboard.

There's another encounter that has marked Lorenzo's five years in Denver. In the fall of 2013, he received a call from the CL office in New York. They told him that there was a man in a prison just a few hours from Denver who asked to receive *Traces* magazine. His name was Jim; he was 45 and had been in prison for 20 years. Lorenzo made plans with a few friends to go visit him. "It took months before we managed. There was a lot of bureaucracy, being a medium-security prison," Lorenzo said. So after a bit of red tape and a three-hour drive, the time for their first meeting arrived. "As soon as we walked in, we realized right away that nothing was going to go as we had thought. We couldn't take anything with us: no books, no magazines and no pictures. And even our clothes were wrong: no sandals, no tank tops, no wearing green or orange because those are the colors of the prison uniforms." The four of them got back into the car to find a store to buy new clothes. In the end, there was only a little time left

to spend with Jim. But he overwhelmed them with his story: the crime, his imprisonment, his return to faith, the Master's in Theology he earned by mail, and the support groups he started for other prisoners. "We thought we were going to visit someone who needed our help, and instead we saw a man who was fully alive, sustained by his faith," Lorenzo remembers.

**BEING AT HOME.** They started to write to him, and other friends from the Denver community arranged to go visit him. At the prison, all the coming and going started to attract attention. After one regular Saturday afternoon visit, the guard, as he escorted the visitors out of the meeting room, mumbled, "How the devil can there be young people who are so kind?!"

But the greatest surprise was for Jim. He continued to change after he met these friends from Denver. One evening he had to go back to his cell, and, as the "liturgy" of the prison prescribes, he was to repeat a set phrase into the intercom: his name and his





request to go “home.” Because they call the cells “home,” even though, in the entire penitentiary, there’s never been an inmate who willingly agreed to call it that. “That night, however, Jim left everyone speechless,” Lorenzo said. “He told the guards, ‘My name is Jim and I’m going home.’” He explained why in a letter: “Because freedom is feeling at home in every circumstance.”

Six months ago, Jim left the prison; he was unexpectedly released on parole. Now he’s at his mother’s house, just a few minutes away from Lorenzo by car. “We go to see him often. When he wrote that he was getting out, I was overcome with anxiety. I thought we’d have to start to help him with his job search, with money, with everything. However, just like when we met him the first time, it became clear that the point wasn’t to resolve all his problems, but rather to

continue to be for each other an opportunity for the Mystery to bring us closer to Himself.” Jim articulated this in the letter he wrote before getting out: “You’ve already given me what I need the most, which is the knowledge that there’s someone waiting for me out there; I know that I am loved.”

**“I was watching you all day. I understood why you live the way you do. It is because you are happy.”**

The capacity to love is something that can be traced far back in Lorenzo’s life. He remembers a moment from his college years. At the time, he was dating a girl from Varese. He took off from Milan every Friday evening and came back, sad, each Monday morning. “For the five days a week I was on campus, I kept my distance.” Then, getting back to his apartment one night during his junior year, something happened that would leave a mark. “My roommates were all asleep. The house was totally dark. Except one of my friends was awake,

studying in a corner of the living room. He greeted me with a smile and said, gesturing toward my friends’ rooms, ‘But how come they, who are of such interest to Christ, don’t interest you?’” At first, the comment stung, then it started to become an interesting provocation, though it seemed like an unrealistic ideal. “Over the years, I’ve recognized that that phrase was something that started to stick with me, that made me think. It was calling me, within the things I was doing.”

**GROOMING THE SLOPES.** Today, though Christmas is long over, it’s the words of St. Bernard on the CL Christmas poster that “groom the slopes” for all that will happen in Lorenzo’s day: “He wanted to come among us, when he could have simply settled for giving us help.” A few weeks ago, he received an e-mail from one of his students, Steve, asking for an extension on an assignment. He had to go home to Arizona to see his father who was terminally ill. “I answered, ‘Steve, don’t worry, do what life is asking of you. I’ll pray for your father. We’ll be in touch.’ He responded immediately, ‘Your words mean more than you know.’ And he was right! Because I don’t really know how I can help the people that I meet. I can’t have a set strategy.” And Steve must’ve recognized this, because after his father’s funeral, Lorenzo’s was the first door he knocked on. “I only said one thing to him: to always come to class. Even if he felt sad, even if he wasn’t prepared. Because both he and I need reality in order to live; we need each other. That’s where it all happens.”

Just as the “X” on Doreen’s candle indicates. These days, she asks her friends often, “But if I go back to China, would the memory of what I’ve lived be enough?” The first time, Lorenzo stalled; the second, he said, “No, it won’t be enough. God doesn’t change methods. He’ll continue to come looking for you, through a particular history.” **T**

# JULIÁN CARRÓN

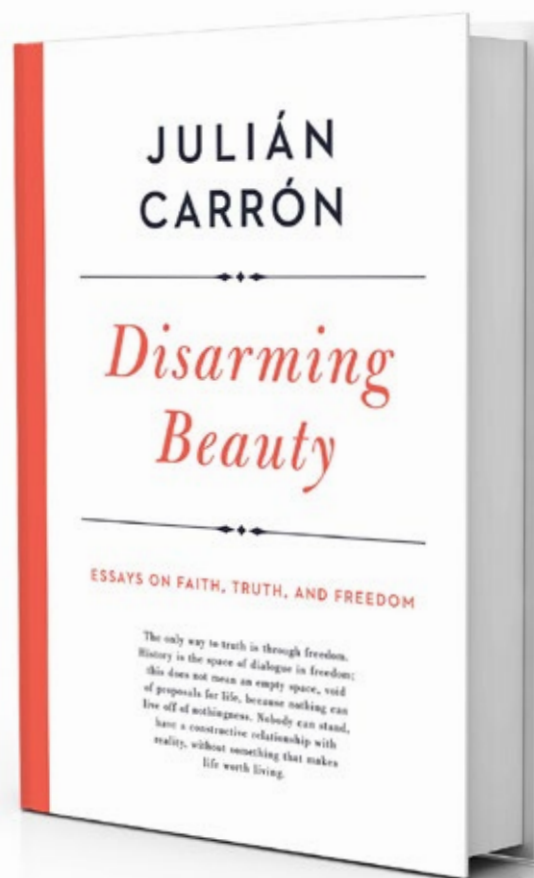
## *Disarming Beauty*

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.

Adapted from talks given by **Fr. Carrón**, these essays have been thoroughly reworked by the author to offer an organic presentation of a decade-long journey. They present the content of his elaboration of the gospel message in light of the tradition of Fr. Giussani, the teachings of the popes, and the urgent needs of contemporary people.



[Catholic Ideas for a Secular World book series](#)

**Available in May 2017**

[Pre-order the book now](#)

<http://undpress.nd.edu/books/P03345>

**246 pages • \$25.00 usd cloth**



UNIVERSITY OF  
NOTRE DAME

NOTRE DAME PRESS