



## FROM MY LIFE TO YOURS

**Fr. Luigi Giussani died ten years ago. What does his  
charism communicate to those who meet him today?**

# THE DEAREST PRESENCE IN OUR LIFE

*This issue's editorial is a letter by Fr. Julián Carrón, President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, written to all the Movement for the audience with Pope Francis on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015.*

**D**ear Friends,  
As you all know by now, Pope Francis has granted our request for an audience in Saint Peter's Square for the tenth anniversary of Fr. Giussani's death and the sixtieth anniversary of the beginning of our Movement. The gratitude that invades our life for the Holy Father's gesture of pater- nity is such that we do not want to come to the gathering without having prepared our hearts suitably. Therefore, I encourage you to start now, personally and together, to pray that the Holy Spirit prepare us for this great event, so that each of us can be in the best conditions for embracing what he will tell us for the personal and communal journey that awaits us.

We have all been educated to recognize the figure of Peter as the foundation of our faith. "The face of that man [Jesus] today is the unity of believers, ... His mysterious Body, also called 'the people of God,' guided and guaranteed by a living person, the Bishop of Rome" (Fr. Giussani). We are happy to be able to express to the successor of the Apostle all our devotion and gratitude for the way he supports our faith every day with his continual testimony and through his magisterium, so pertinent to the challenges of the present.

Without his figure, which manifests the aposto-

lic succession so eminently, our faith would be destined to succumb among the many interpretations of the Christian fact generated by man. What simplicity is needed to recognize and accept that the life of each of us depends on the bond with a man in whom Christ testifies the perennial truth of today in every historical moment! How disproportionate it seems that everything should have its substance in the bond with the fragility of a single person, chosen for this mission! And yet, our own experience of how life blossoms in the degree to which we follow him, precisely this confirmation constitutes the greatest resource for our unconditional adherence to the Pope, one necessarily expressed in the sincere and humble desire to follow him in all simplicity, so convinced are we that in following him, we follow Christ.

The more I delve into these reflections, the more my thought goes to Fr. Giussani, who educated us to look to the Pope because of his unique importance for our life. As the years pass, so grows our gratitude for the gift of his person, his testimony and his total dedication in accompanying each of us so we may become increasingly mature in the faith. This is how he has drawn us to Christ, making Him ever more fascinating, so He becomes the dea-

rest Presence in our life. The time that passes, the historical circumstances we find ourselves facing, our willingness to be “guided” by Fr. Giussani, make him ever more authoritative in our eyes. Living intensely the reality in which he was immersed, he gave ahead-of-his-time judgments and offered us precious indications for facing questions and scenarios that are before the eyes of all today but were unimaginable before. How could we not spend this tenth anniversary of his death overflowing with gratitude to him for having introduced us to an undreamt of fullness of life!

Our *sequela* of the charisma that fascinated us can become increasingly faithful through our *sequela* of the Pope and the bishops united with him. This is why we are going to Rome. Not for a celebrative encounter, but only out of the desire to learn from Pope Francis how to be Christians in a world in such rapid transformation. I am sure that the Pope’s knowledge of Giussani through his writings will enable him to offer us points of judgement, indications and suggestions consonant to our journey.

I beg you to pray to Our Lady every day that each of us may be ready to receive every indication the Pope will give us for living ever more deeply the charisma that seized us, so the goal for which the Spirit kindled the charisma in Fr. Giussani can be accomplished: making present in every periphery, that is, every sphere of life, the fascination of Christ, His unique attraction, through the materiality of our existence. “Christ draws me completely to Himself, such is His beauty” (Jacopone da Todi).

I also ask you to continue praying daily for the Pope, according to his intentions.

With deep friendship,  
**Fr. Julián Carrón**

Milan, January 28, 2015



The exhibition

## FROM MY LIFE TO YOURS

On the tenth anniversary of Father Giussani’s death, an exhibit has been realized. Through texts and images, it tells the main features of the Italian priest.

Download and print the exhibit at [www.clonline.org](http://www.clonline.org).

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Comunion and Liberation  
International Magazine - Vol. 16

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**Graphic Design:** G&C, Milano  
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**Photo:** F. Brunetti: cover;  
Reuters: 6-7, 10;  
Gettyimages: 8; M.Ramos:  
12-14, 21; J. Severson:  
12; Dagata: 12-13;  
E. Marsolek: 12/15;  
N. Erickson: 14; E.Ciol: 16-  
17; Fraternità di CL: 19, 21;  
Osservatore Romano: 19,  
20; La Camera Chiara: 20;  
G. Cassani: 22;

**Publishers (editore):**  
Società Coop.  
Edit. Nuovo Mondo  
Via Porpora, 127- 20131 Milano

Reg. Tribunale di  
Milano n°. 740 - 28 ottobre  
1998 Iscrizione nel Registro  
degli Operatori di  
Comunicazione n. 6.147

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**PARIS/1: THE OTHER IS A GOOD, THIS IS THE HOPE**

*This is what a friend writes after the massacre in Paris and the demonstrations throughout the country.*

👁️ I did not go to the demonstration. I would only demonstrate to propose and defend something that I recognize as true for me. It is not a religious problem, because if there were an authentic exploration of true existential questions, these things would not happen. But how can one grow in the midst of a human desert? I lived in Melun, which could be described as a “desert.” A group of drug dealers would burn trash barrels to create a scene, and would greet each other with the sign of Islam so as not to be inferior. I had to remove the heaters from the entrances of the buildings to prevent



loitering. These loiterers, in order to fill their emptiness and relieve their boredom, would find fun in frightening the weakest, and in destroying everything, including their own homes. They stay because they do not know

where else to go. The police know practically all of these young people: they are in and out of jail, either for minor infractions or for more serious offenses. They belong to Islam, but only a formal Islam, not to a religion; they have no connection with the ultimate questions. Their thirst is so great and their need is so deep that, in this desert, these youth are literally captured by the smallest trace or semblance of solidity of any ideology (given that what we are talking about is not a religion). This seems to be a refuge in the face of a humanity in ruins. I once read on a basement wall, “I do not want Paradise once I’m dead, but here on earth.” To that cry, I said to myself, “Jesus, how much they desire You.” This is the same cry of my heart. I was so struck by what last year’s assembly said about preference. The first preference about myself is the amazement of having been created, of getting up in the morning and being, of having this needy cry within my heart. Only by starting with this gratitude can I look upon the other as a good: my husband and my children, my neigh-

**PARIS/2**

**NO PRESUPPOSED JUDGMENT: NOW THERE IS JUST ME**

**D**ear Fr. Carrón, I thank you for the apparent silence after the events in Paris. I was tempted to continue browsing the CL website or *Traces* magazine to find “the judgment” with which to close the human wound generated by these events. But the conveyor belt was idle and no one had taken my place on the road that I had to travel, nothing allowed me to close the affair with merely an *a priori* judgment. It was truly I who had to speak and react in front of colleagues, I who could not be content with much-dreaded solutions to resolve the problem, I who became aware that in these solutions there was no trace of consideration of the subject of those solutions. I lived the experience of correspondence of the School of Community with my own personal experience.

**Silvio, Chioggia (Italy)**



## NEW YORK ENCOUNTER

### A DAY WITH FRANK

On the second day of the New York Encounter Lorenzo and Ernesto tell me, “We are looking for a car because we want to go to see Frank.” I replied, “Well I have a car, but I don’t know who Frank is.” Lorenzo started telling me about him: he had been homeless until he met an unknown priest, and this encounter changed his life. After some very dramatic events, his life seemed to be pretty normal, he was married, had two kids, everything seemed great... and then the doctors found a mass in his pancreas. As we were driving, Lorenzo called Frank’s wife, Rita: “We are coming to see Frank, it’s Virginio, Ernesto, Maria, and Lorenzo.” When we got to the hospital for palliative care Rita welcomed us and told Frank, “Hey, your friends from Boston are here: Virginio, Maria, Lorenzo, and Ernesto.” This is the first thing that really struck me: an hour before I didn’t even know who Frank and Rita were, but as I walked in Rita introduced me in the same way that she introduces Frank’s old friends. The simple fact that I was there, that I went there with the others to visit Frank, was enough for me to just be Maria. At the beginning I had a hard time being there in front of this family and the huge mystery of their suffering. All I could do was sit in silence. Then Rita asked Frank if he wanted us to pray together, and we prayed the rosary together. Maybe for the first time, I had some consciousness while saying the words I was saying. Frank was not able to talk to us, but he understood everything, even up to the point that when Lorenzo whispered, “Maybe we should go and let you rest?” Frank opened his eyes and said “No, no.” I proposed that we sing. Rita asked us to stay there so she could go to Mass so we just stayed with Frank singing some songs (and I have to say that Frank was really patient with us because we are not the best singers). This morning, I received a message: “Good morning Maria, just to let you know that Frank passed away peacefully today at 7:30 a.m.” I was not desperate. For the first time in my life, I am in front of the mystery of death and all I can say is: “Thank you, thank you for this immeasurable gift that I received yesterday.”



**Maria, Boston (USA)**

bors, the young people who get drunk and party all night. Last year, I went to Cometa (the experience of a group home for families in Como, Italy) and came back changed. For the second time in my life, I saw a present and lived communion—the communion with Christ present, the only communion that can liberate me, as indicated by the very name of our Move-

ment. Thanks to the School of Community, I saw that the first thing to live out is the preference about myself and my personal relationship with Christ. This is not something inward-looking, but something present that makes itself known through the road that He has put before us, the Church, and in each person, because He gave His life and is present in the other, regardless of the

awareness that person might have. There is violence even within me, within us, even though it does not go so far as to physically commit massacres. Our only hope for saving us from this third world war that is at our doorstep is to discover that the other is a good for me and that I am in need of the other.

**Elena, Paris (France)**



**US &**

**ISLAM**



## Terrorist attacks, fear, outrage, and our hymns to freedom... We quickly forget everything that happens, but is it possible to not become slaves to reactivity? What can we learn?

BY WAEL FAROUQ

Friends' faces are appearing once again on social network profiles, after days of being hidden by the black square that framed “*Je suis Charlie*” or “*Je suis Ahmed*.” Charlie, who had captured the world, is no longer drawing widespread interest. His presence in our memory will slowly fade into the background along with other slogans, such as “Bring back our girls” and “I am a Nazarene.” These slogans fill our lives but they take us nowhere. By “nowhere,” we don’t refer to the inability to change what happened, but rather—and this is what pains us—the inability to change something inside of ourselves, as if we were unfeeling corpses immune to being wounded. We enthusiastically try to identify with those who live through these incidents, we vent our outrage in every direction, but we can’t seem to connect the events to our own human experience. To put it another way, we aren’t active subjects, because we remain prisoners to the reactivity described by Luigi Giussani in *The Religious Sense*: “How shallow is an action that is born from a purely instinctive reaction! [...] Human dialogue and communication are rooted in experience. Indeed, where does the aridity, the feebleness life shared in community come from if not from

the fact that too few individuals are able to say that they are committed to experience, to life as experience? It is this retreat from life as experience that causes us to chatter rather than speak. [...] Reactivity burns bridges with tradition and history, and renders sterile our impetus towards the future (though this impetus can remain as anger directed at nothing, as

we read in the *Divine Comedy*: ‘Flegias, Flegias, you cry into a vacuum’ (Dante, *Inferno*, Canto VIII, v. 19). Reactivity reduces our capacity for dialogue and communication because these are rooted in experience which must be guarded and matured by memory and judged by intelligence according to those characteristics, those needs which constitute our humanity.”

Outrage is the cry of a voice terrified by nothingness, the voice of hollow men, as T.S. Eliot writes: “Shape without form, shade without color / Paralyzed force, gesture without motion.”

Behind these slogans of outrage, there is no “I,” only a “gesture without motion” that wanders, following the herd, having lost the capacity to form a judgment. Outrage is a reaction; sorrow is a response. We are angered by abstract offenses, but for people, we grieve. If we put stock in an idea (or ideology), we get angry; if we love, we grieve. Pope Francis invites us to mourn, to weep: “With the heart of a son, a brother, a father, I ask each of you, indeed for all of us, to have a conversion of heart: to move on from ‘What does it matter to me?’ to tears: for each one of the fallen of this ‘senseless massacre,’ for all the victims of the mindless wars in every age. Weeping. Brothers and sisters, humanity needs to weep, and this is the time to >>



### WHO HE IS

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» weep” (Homily at the Military Memorial of Repiduglia, September 13, 2014).

Outrage, like love, is blind; but it’s blind because it does not see what is good. Sorrow is a judgment that builds up a memory of the present to guide the future.

**RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE?** Amidst the noise of outraged voices, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran told *Avvenire*, “Religion is not the problem; it’s part of the solution.” It sounds like a strange and shocking response to what happened. These days it’s almost taken for granted that religion is the primary source of violence in the world. If the West had not separated religion from the public square, we would still be living in a vortex of violence. “Just look at the Muslims!” some think.

The truth, which you rarely hear from the popular media, is that violence justified by religion accounts for a very small percentage of the violence that plagues society today. Terrorism in the name of religion accounts for less than 10% of all terrorist attacks (Europol Report, 2014). A study released by the University of North Carolina indicates that between September 11, 2001, and the end of 2013, the victims of “Muslim-American” terrorism numbered 37, while the victims of homicide numbered 190,000—of which 14,000 took place in 2013 alone (Charles Kurzman, *Muslim-American Terrorism in 2013*, University of North Carolina).

Some secular researchers maintain that banishing religion from the public square has even caused an *increase* in the rate of violence. Karen Armstrong, for example, in a 2014 interview for *Salon* magazine, criticized the dominant view that violence is a result of religion. She asserts that attacking religion is an excuse for Westerners to overlook the fundamental role that violence has played in establishing their societies, along with the role that



their societies have played in planting seeds of violence in other places. According to Armstrong, if you consider that sacred truths are those for which people are ready to give their lives, then in a certain sense the State has replaced God: today it is no longer acceptable to die for your religion, but we admire those who give their lives for their country. We are all involved in violence, she says, adding that no State, no matter how vocal in claiming to love peace, would justify disbanding its own military forces. Therefore, she concludes, when people single out religion as the cause of history’s biggest wars, they are grossly oversimplifying. Violence is at the heart of our lives, in one form or another.

There are many Quranic verses that teach Muslims how to react to one who mocks Allah. They all require believers to respond to evil with good. There is not a single verse that prescribes punishment for blasphemy. “And it has already come down to you in the Book that when you hear the verses of

Allah [recited], they are denied [by them] and ridiculed; so do not sit with them until they enter into another conversation” (*Sura* 4:140). Another verse states, “And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though

he was a devoted friend,” (*Sura* 41:34). “And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth easily, and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace,” (*Sura* 25:63).

In fact, the Quran states that the defense of Islam, from the Book to the Prophet, is in no way left in the hands of Muslims,

but is left to Allah alone. “Indeed, we are sufficient for you against the mockers,” (*Sura* 15:95). “Indeed, it is We who sent down the Quran and indeed, We will be its guardian,” (*Sura* 15:9). Accordingly, the caliph Umar b. al-Khattab (634–644 C.E.) wrote, “Let the infidel perish, keeping silent in this regard.” With this, I’m not trying

**┌ Sorrow is a judgment that builds up a memory of the present to guide the future. ┐**



access to technology that, for some, has definitively separated reason from religiosity. This is in contradiction to what Islam holds as one of its distinctive characteristics: the lack of an ordained clergy, and a key principle that says, “Consult your heart... even though people have given you a legal decision (fatwa).” The criterion of the heart is the highest authority when judging how a person should act.

Contemporary Islamist culture, both in its practice and intellectual life, has become nothing more than a prison crystallizing the values of Islamic civilization. Religious traditions have become more important than religious experience; formalities have become more important than people, with their minds, hearts, and consciences. This is what has made it possible to kill and to die for an ideology, because they have already accepted to sacrifice the dignity of the person in exchange for the ideology. The timing of the fatwa on divorce for one who is asleep just before the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* is not merely a coincidence; rather, it is emblematic of the abandoning of reason, which naturally leads to undervaluing human life.

**EMPTY VALUES.** In the 1930s, the Japanese considered Emperor Hirohito equal to a god. He had led them to a full economic rebirth and constructed military forces strong enough to dominate a large portion of the world. After the shame of Japan’s loss in the war, Hirohito’s title retained the divinity proper to the office, but the words ceased to mean anything, because he had led them to the destruction of other nations before leading to the destruction of his own. In fact, the Japanese began referring to him as “the sacred nothing” (Patrick Smith, *Japan: a Reinterpretation*, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011).

“Sacred nothing” is the term that best describes the values of Western civilization today. On both a cultural and a >>

to propose the “true Islam.” This is what I believe in, and it does not negate other faiths, as it does for those who call themselves Muslims and think Islam is nothing more than a license to kill. The matter is much more complex than a few verses inviting us to live peacefully and a few others calling for war, and its tragedy is much more profound than the futile ideological debates.

**DIVORCE IN YOUR SLEEP?** The day before the attack on *Charlie Hebdo*, the Egyptian newspaper *Aqidati* (“My Creed”) published an article by Dr. Abdel Abul Abbas, a council member of the al-Azhar fatwa, responding to the question, “What does sharia prescribe for a man who says the words of divorce in his sleep? Should his wife consider herself divorced, keeping in mind that there would be no divorce for someone who is asleep, as it requires a full act of will?”

This is just one of the millions of fatwa teachings pronounced each year in the Islamic world. The subject matter and the sheer volume are reflective of the nature and volume of requests for clarification; observing them, one might

think that these Muslims had lost the capacity to judge. Instead, for all matters related to conforming their lives to what they believe, they have delegated the responsibility of thinking to clerics. At the same time, these clerics who carry the weight of thinking for the rest of society consider themselves to be the true link between the holy ancestors and the children of modern society, the very voice of the great Imams of the past (which is itself the source of their authority). Their sole task is to preserve the purity of Islam as it was lived by their ancestors, which is also how Allah wishes for men to live it out in the present. In the past, before the overabundance of media and communication channels, fatwa teachings were just the opposite: they were general norms. Each person had to exercise his interpretive reason to understand the connection between a fatwa and the circumstance he was living. Today, modern means of communications give just about any person a way to access a fatwa tailored to their unique situation. As a result, these individuals no longer have to think, debate, and use reason to apply a general teaching. Modernity has given

» practical level, values have been emptied of their meaning, even those that are held to be as “sacred” as ever, as is the case of the value of freedom. Unfortunately, this phenomenon applies not only to the failed transmission of values to cultures external to ours, but has meant an emptying of their meaning in our own culture, both at an intellectual and a practical level.

**PASSIVE NEUTRALITY.** Contemporary culture now revolves around the ephemeral. There is nothing that holds a definitive meaning, because reality is fleeting, and so our attention has shifted from *being* in the world to *passing through* or *becoming* in the world. It's the world of the transitory and ephemeral. The major ideologies have collapsed, but our fear of others has grown. Nihilism has begun to retreat, but in its place we see a passive neutrality toward everything. The prefix “post” has been added to every word that stood for an element of human knowledge (post-industrial, post-historical, post-colonial, post-modern, etc.); a symbol of our incapacity to give a meaning to our present condition.

Jürgen Habermas attributes all of this to the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. Indeed, all the social challenges that we find ourselves having to face can be traced back to the fundamental incapacity to find meaning in life, and religion is a primary source of meaning. Postmodernists claim to have freed humanity from the prison of polarities (such as good and evil, presence and absence, I and other), but the truth is that we've gone from seeing each set of polarities as opposites to actually equating them, resulting in the incapacity to form a judgment. From this flows a break in any authentic interaction with reality and the collapse



More than 2,000,000 participated at the demonstration held in Paris on January 11<sup>th</sup>. Along with them were 40 international heads of state.

of any barrier between the individual and collective identity.

Post-modernism fought the battle against the exclusion of the “other” or of “difference” perpetrated by modernism, only to find no other way forward than by excluding “diversity.” It's common opinion that peaceful coexistence is impossible unless we exclude ethics and the religious experience from the public square. This, however, means the exclusion of difference and, in cases where the religious experience is one of the most significant factors of one's identity, the exclusion of difference actually becomes the exclusion of oneself.

So has this secular extremism managed to reach its goal? There is not a major European city today without a “parallel society” in which Muslim immigrants live. Frantic attempts at the integration of immigrants have, in the end, only managed to make cultural and religious distinctions invisible in the public square. In France, a law was passed that prohibits the display of religious symbols in public. Accordingly, France became a State whose Constitution protects difference and religious pluralism, but whose laws have criminalized their expression. The attempt to exclude diversity from the public sphere has made it so that assimilation, and not social interaction, is now the rule for immigrants relating

to their new societies. This fact, along with other “subjective” factors, has led to the creation of parallel societies in conflict with the surrounding environment, which remains, for them, strange and foreign.

**CONTEMPORARY ADAM.** In this cultural context, if one were to ask, “What is freedom?” the answer would be, “Whatever you want it to be.” Still, a freedom that could be anything is nothing. True freedom has a defined face and limitations which can be found in human experience, and cannot be authentic in a person if we have stripped away their identity, history, and reason for living. It would become a mere form emptied of content and would contribute, along with contemporary Islamic culture, to the exclusion of the person and her unique experience and identity. If this is the case we pass from a “sacred nothing” to “nothing is sacred,” because nothing is sacred so long as we put a form at the center of our attention while marginalizing the person. In the Quran, just as in the Bible, Adam begins his relationship with the world by naming things. In contrast, each day the contemporary Adam loses a little bit of his world because he is forgetting the names of things, no longer gives names to things, and has even lost all interest in naming them. Today's man has become a post-Adam. Tragically, this is just the moment when the challenges we face make it more urgent than ever to return to the religious sense, to personal experience. To the true Adam. **T**

True freedom has a defined face and limitations which can be found in human experience.

# Julián Carrón. **The Challenge of True Dialogue after the Attacks in Paris**

**We offer here an article written by the President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation and published in the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* on February 13, 2015.**

**D**ear Editor, Since the events in Paris happened, there has been a great deal of discussion; nobody has been spared a sense of bewilderment or fear. The numerous analyses offered have brought forth interesting points for reflecting on and understanding such a complex phenomenon. But a month later, now that the routine of daily life has taken over again, what remains? What can keep these disturbing events from rapidly being erased from our memory? To help us remember, it is necessary to discover the true nature of the challenge posed by the Paris attacks.

We Europeans have what our forebears desired: Europe as a space of freedom where each person can be what she or he wants. The Old Continent has become a crucible of the most varied cultures, religions and visions of the world.

**The events of Paris document** how this space of freedom should not be taken for granted as self-perpetuating: it can be threatened by those who fear freedom and are willing to impose their own vision of things with violence. What response is required for such a threat? It will be necessary to defend this space with all the legal and political means possible, starting from dialogue with the Arab nations disposed to impede a disaster that would hurt them as well, and to build a juridical framework that guarantees authentic religious freedom for all. But this is not enough, and the reason is obvious. Those who carried out the massacre in Paris did not come from abroad; they were second generation immigrants, born in Europe, educated and formed as European citizens, as a great many others who have long dwelt in our countries. It is a phenomenon *in fieri*, in virtue of the constant flows of migration and the demographic growth of the populations who reach here from all parts of the world, driven by hardship and poverty.

For this reason, the problem is primarily within Europe and the most important part is played here at home. The true challenge is cultural, its terrain daily life. When those who abandon their homelands arrive here in search of a better life, when their children are born and become adults in the West, what do they see? Can they find something able to attract their humanity, to challenge their reason and their freedom? The same problem exists for our children: do we have something to offer them that speaks to their search for fulfilment and meaning? In many young people who have grown up in the so-called Western world there reigns a great nothingness, a profound void that constitutes the origin of the desperation that ends up in violence. Just think of the Europeans who go to fight in the ranks of terroristic formations, or of the lost and disoriented life of many young people of our cities. This

*In order to remain a space of freedom, Europe must host the encounter between different proposals for responding to each person's quest for meaning. It is an opportunity for everyone, Christians included.*

corrosive void, this far-spreading nothingness, requires a response. In front of the events of Paris it is sterile to mount opposition in the name of an idea, no matter how right it may be. We have learned after a long journey that the only way to truth is through freedom. Therefore, we have decided to reject the violence that has marked moments of our past. Today none of us nurtures the dream of responding to the challenge of the other with the imposition of a truth, whatever it may be. For us, Europe is a space of freedom; this does not mean an empty space, void of proposals for life, because nothing can live off of nothingness. Nobody can stand, have a constructive relationship with reality, without something that makes life

worth living, without a hypothesis of meaning.

So then, this is the true element that will decide the future of Europe: whether she will finally be the place of a real encounter between proposals of meaning, different and numerous as they may be, as happened for centuries in some countries of the Middle East where different cultures and religions were able to live in peace, but now where Christians are forced to abandon their homeland because the situation has made their life impossible. In this way, however, the problem is not resolved, only shifted aside.

**Now the verification for Europe begins.** Space for freedom means space for saying in front of everyone, individually or together, who we are. Each makes available for everyone their vision and their way of living. This sharing will enable us to encounter each other on the basis of the real experience of each person, and not on ideological stereotypes that make dialogue impossible. As Pope Francis said, "Dialogue begins with encounter. The first knowledge of the other is born from it. Indeed, if one begins from the premise of the common affiliation in human nature, one can go beyond prejudices and fallacies and begin to understand the other according to a new perspective."

This historical situation offers an exceptional opportunity to everyone, Christians included. Europe can constitute a great space for us, space for the testimony of a changed life, full of meaning, capable of embracing that which is different and of awakening its humanity with gestures rich in generosity.

Inviting all Christians to nurture the desire for testimony, Pope Francis underlined that "in this way alone can the liberating message of the love of God and the salvation that Christ offers be proposed in its strength, beauty and simplicity. One can only move forward in this way, with an attitude of respect for people." Do we Christians still believe in the capacity of the faith we have received to attract those we encounter, and in the living fascination of its disarming beauty?

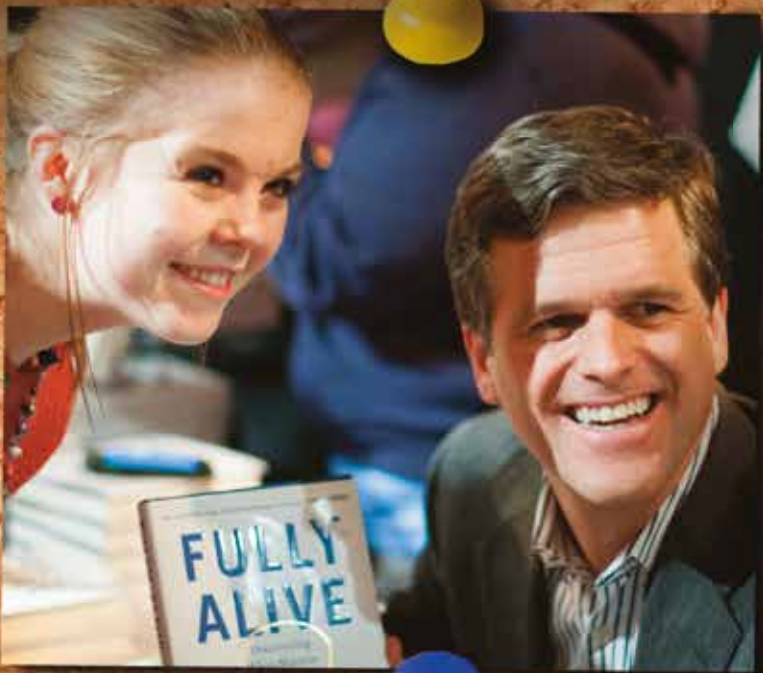
NEW YORK  
ENCOUNTER



# THIS IS



# IT!



**Three days “in search of the human face.” With scientists, business managers, students... and many other people from all walks of life. From the exhibit on Millennials to Cardinal Dolan and his vermouth, it was a (surprising) journey into a theme which, these days, means entering a debate.**

BY MATTIA FERRARESI

**Y**ou can plan an event (as evidenced by the unfortunate title “event planner” that crept into common usage some time ago), but it is impossible to plan an encounter. An encounter is unpredictable. It can’t be decided around a conference table, because it exceeds the sum of its parts, like a math problem that you rework a thousand times but never adds up. At the New York Encounter, you see the unpredictable fruit that exceeds your plans, the calculation that just doesn’t add up is right in front of your eyes. You don’t plan it; it happens.

This year the theme was “In Search of the Human Face,” an exploration of the topic of identity, a question underlying many of the debates in America today. The title was inspired by a quote from Fr. Giussani: “There is nothing so mesmerizing as the discovery of the *real* dimensions of one’s own ‘I,’ nothing so surprising as the discovery of one’s own human face.” From there, we just followed what happened.

This is how the three days (January 16-18) in the Big Apple went by: with talks, exhibits, and world-renowned professors; familial meals over plates of pasta amatriciana; music and witnesses; a common interest in what is noble and transcendent; and the >>

» simple work of an army of volunteers (over 300) clothed in purple t-shirts, all in a gleaming new location in the heart of Chelsea, amidst its artists and post-industrial lofts. Still, all these factors fall short of explaining what happened to Dr. Brad Stuart, a declared atheist who was invited to speak about caring for the elderly. “I can truly say that participating in the New York Encounter, even for a day, was an event that changed my life.”

**NOT MISSING A MINUTE.** When he saw “The Beautiful Road,” the documentary put together to mark 60 years in the life of the Movement, he was overwhelmed: “This is it! This is what I was looking for.” And to think that, when he had seen the New York Encounter website and all its references to the Church, he had thought about backing out. In the end, he was so engrossed in the documentary, so intent on not missing a minute, that he forgot about lunch. He had been invited because of the thoughtful and human way in which he encouraged care for elderly patients in their homes, rather than transferring them to hospitals; and that day in New York was what finally broke down his preconception that the humanity he engages in his work is at odds with Christianity.

It’s the same point that the Archbishop of New York, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, expressed with an incisive joke in his introductory remarks, speaking of Fr. Giussani’s charism. “For [Fr. Giussani], God and man were not like oil and water, but more like gin and vermouth.” A total change of perspective. As Stuart and others said later, “If this if the Church, then I’m interested.” An encounter happens like this, an overwhelming impact and a surprised



**NYE BY THE NUMBERS**

- 27 talks**
- 5 exhibits**
- 34 speakers**
- 5,500 attendees**
- 325 volunteers**



**Looking at the human face, we see the traces of an Other. To recognize those traces takes us on winding roads.**

response. It’s the same reaction that we saw in Martin Nowak, professor of Biology and Mathematics at Harvard. He participated in a roundtable on human evolution, about the place where the human face literally emerged, which could be reduced to determined biological processes or could be considered using a wider lens of reason. “One thing I know after these two days is that I have to study Giussani,” the scientist told us. What is a human being? This is the question

that has always fascinated paleontologist Richard Potts, director of the Human Origins Program exhibit that has drawn over 25 million visitors to the Smithsonian Natural History Museum. We saw the question expressed

as an intimate and personal entreaty by those who gave witnesses explaining how they, in their various circumstances, were changed by their encounter with the person of Fr. Giussani, even if they did not meet him in person. Only thanks to this could Kim Shankman, Dean of Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, say that her 16-year-old son John, who spent long days in a coma after a car accident (see *Traces*, January 2014), “is a witness of the positivity of reality,” because he “belongs to an Other who will save him.”

Looking at the human face, we see the traces of an Other. At times, the attempt to recognize those traces takes us on winding roads as we grasp at what strands of truth we can find. One such attempt is the effort to create “new rights” to fill in the gaps missing when we don’t account for that Other, explained Marta Cartabia, Vice-Presi-



**CARDINAL SEAN O'MALLEY.** The Archbishop of Boston, pictured here with a group of families, is a perennial figure at NYE. On the left, a scene from the closing concert. Below, to the left, Archbishop of New York, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, gives his introductory remarks.

verify this hypothesis of the Eternal entering history? In the final talk of the weekend, Fr. Julián Carrón spoke again about the infallibility of the heart. The heart doesn't leave us in our uncertainty; it recognizes a correspondence that is objective, though "we have to learn how to use this criterion." It's a question of educating our freedom, because "God's method is to beg of our freedom, to pass through it to reveal Himself." Our problem, Fr. Carrón explained, is "poverty of heart. It seems so small to us, but it is everything. And, pay attention, it's a problem of knowledge, not of ethics. It's not a question of coherence, but of relationship." Like a child who "is certain when he is with his mother, not when he becomes more capable."

**FRANK AND THE EYES OF ANGELS.** The heart is like the human chord that resonated in those who witnessed and were a part of what happened at New York Encounter: the experiences that overwhelmed and left them in wonder, whether in ways that caught the attention of many, or were written in the smiles of the volunteers who greeted you at the doors; the teens

who spent the whole weekend cooking; in the inner conversions seen only by the eyes of angels; or in the mystery of suffering like that of Frank Simmonds. He was one of the leaders of the New York CL community, with a past that included heavy drug use and prison time. He was among the faces in the

video marking the Movement's six decades. After years of battling cancer, he passed away on Monday morning. He waited until after the Encounter to take his leave for his encounter with the Mystery. **T**

dent of the Constitutional Court of Italy, and Jennifer Nedelsky, University of Toronto Professor of Law. Alternatively, "you fill the emptiness of existence by constantly being connected"—another substitute for the infinite connection for which we all long, as described and unpacked by sociologist Christian Smith and researcher Donna Freitas.

**THE KEY.** "Understanding our humanity means understanding our dependence," said Cardinal Sean O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston, in his presentation on disabilities. He spoke alongside Timothy Shriver, founder of the Special Olympics, who carries the traces of his Kennedy family ancestry in both his way of speaking and his square jaw. JFK was his uncle, but he spoke more about Rosemary, his aunt who was born with a severe disability and from whom he learned "unconditional love." Jean Vanier, theologian and

founder of the L'Arche community of homes for people with disabilities, gave his contribution to the discussion with a moving video interview.

Saying that the human face becomes visible in our dependence is a precarious but captivating hypothesis. It challenges our human reason at every level, as Msgr. Lorenzo Albacete reminded us in the 2004 video "What is Man That You Care for Him?", which was projected as an homage to the dear friend who recently passed away. He spoke, as always, of the mystery of the Incarnation. "The key to the Christian life is this," he said: "Before becoming the center of the cosmos and of human history, Christ was a lump of blood in the womb of a woman." What tools do we have to

**Saying that the human face becomes visible in our dependence is a captivating hypothesis.**

A black and white photograph of Fr. Luigi Giussani, a man in a dark sweater, walking on a rocky, uneven path. He is looking down at something in his hands. The background is a steep, rocky hillside.

**FR. LUIGI GIUSSANI  
(1922-2005)**

# UNTIL DESTINY

Ten years have passed since his *dies natalis*. In this time, many have learned about him, some for the first time, through the experience of the Movement. In this article, we would like to describe his contribution to the Church and the world today.

Subiaco, on the road  
toward the Hermitage of  
Blessed Lorenzo Loricato.





Ten years ago, on February 22, 2005, Fr. Giussani died. This is an important date. In such circumstances, the person is often celebrated with gatherings, conferences, and convocations, but when the spotlights have been turned off, the image of the person has already faded a bit, and is destined to weaken further as time goes by. The case of Giussani is different. Something unexpected is happening. Instead of blurring, the face and figure of Fr. Giussani become sharper with the passing of time. New details emerge, aspects whose importance one grasps better. Unexpected encounters and facts happen.

Three years ago, the opening of the cause for his beatification was requested, and Cardinal Angelo Scola accepted. In 2013, *The Life of Fr. Giussani* (Rizzoli) was published in Italy, and now this significant and very beautiful biography by Alberto Savorana is being translated into English and Spanish. The articles that follow give an idea of what Fr. Giussani is generating now, what his charism is within the Church of our time.

An exhibit about him, "From My Life to Yours," is in circulation, and can be downloaded from the CL website. On the anniversary of his death, a DVD with some of his talks will be distributed. In many countries the video about the sixty years of the Movement is being presented. All these things are going on as CL is preparing for the meeting with Pope Francis on March 7<sup>th</sup>. Through the grace of God, Fr. Giussani is truly alive, and "more a father than ever."

# “A Patrimony for the Entire Church”

The collaborator of five popes tells how Fr. Giussani changed his life, and those of others.

by Guzmán Carriquiry\*

**W**ith moved gratitude, I treasure in my heart and memory the gift of the encounter with Fr. Giussani. The first meetings were occasioned by the process for the pontifical recognition of Communion and Liberation, which I had to follow in my work for the Pontifical Council for the Laity. I was first struck by the passionate way he showed an interest in my life, my family, my work, in a surprising embrace of my humanity; and then further struck by his writings, by friendships with those who followed him, and by an increased closeness to the experience of the Movement. At the time I could have thought, with the

vain self-sufficiency of the “adult layperson,” an “undersecretary” of a dicastery of the Holy See, that my Christian formation was already straight and solid. Instead, I experienced glad surprise and enthusiasm when these encounters illuminated more clearly for me the nature of the Christian event, showed me all the more their reasonableness, beauty, and attraction for my life, and educated me to an approach open to all of reality.

**A NEW WAY.** Following first-hand that great phase of energy and impetus of the “movements” in the life of the

Church, I could perceive well—and this is amply documented—those relationships of lively personal esteem between Fr. Giussani and Saint John Paul II, and then between Fr. Giussani and Pope Benedict XVI (and with both, long before they became Popes). Fr. Giussani educated his followers to an attentive and intelligent obedience to the

Magisterium of the Successors of Peter. However, it is necessary to examine how much the brilliant theological and educational thought of Fr. Giussani actively contributed as a factor of influx in this Magisterium. Rino Fisichella has dared to say that Joseph



Guzmán Carriquiry.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO MARCH 7<sup>th</sup>

### ACCOMPANIED BY THE CHURCH

AS WE AWAIT THE AUDIENCE IN ROME WITH POPE FRANCIS, HERE IS AN OVERVIEW OF THE ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN THE MOVEMENT AND THE POPES.

*Young people of our time, do you want to acknowledge that Jesus is the Savior? Is He the Master? Is He the Good Shepherd, the guide, the friend of our life? It is a matter of leaving that state of doubt, uncertainty, and ambiguity in which such a large part of contemporary youth finds itself and agitates. The contemporary world opens new paths for you and calls you as bearers of faith and joy. Christ is with you! Today and tomorrow: Christ forever.*

**Paul VI**

to the young people in Saint Peter's Square, Palm Sunday, March 23, 1975



At a conference in the Eighties.

Ratzinger became the most “Giussanian” Pope, underlining their profound similarities in proposing the great Catholic tradition to people of our times in a new way. And how can I not recall when Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who is not one for protocol or formal

homage, said that reading Fr. Giussani had been important for his priestly life! In Fr. Julián Carrón’s attention to following the words and gestures of Pope Francis, one recognizes not merely a duty to obedience, but deep reflection about the Spirit of God’s

call to the charism of the Movement today, to its history, and to the renewal of its educational, missionary, and charitable drive.

Fr. Giussani repeatedly said that he never intended to found a movement. He was always attentive to the per- ➤

**1975**

**1980**



*To you, young people of Communion and Liberation, who have come from all the regions of Italy at the cost of considerable sacrifice, today I desire to entrust to you a task and an assignment: now and forever, be bearers and transmitters of Christian joy! Bring Christian joy into the environment in which you normally live, that is, in your families, in your associations, but especially in the world of school!*

**John Paul II**

to 12,000 middle school students of CL in pilgrimage to the Pope, March 16, 1980

son, always alert to any possible reduction to a mere association, vigilant that the explosive power of the charism not become a dry framework or institution, allergic to settling for what is considered already acquired; he was an educator of the unfolding of freedom and co-responsibility and was opposed to crystallization, always open to beginning again.

In this sense, we remember him as the least “Movement-esque.” He wanted nothing more than to educate to a true Christian experience; but his reflection on his own experience, together with the reflections of Cardinal Ratzinger, helped many other movements and communities (as well as the ecclesiastical Magisterium) to understand the gift and meaning of these new generations of women and men who rediscover the gratitude, joy, truth and beauty of being Christians. Such encounters generate witnesses who communicate with conviction and persuasion the reasons of the gift received and offered to all.

**EVEN THE “FARTHEST AWAY.”** I am always struck by observing how the charism and thought of Fr. Giussani goes beyond the visible borders of Communion and Liberation, spreads along unexpected roads, illuminates the Christian life of many, and also evokes questions, reflections, and ex-



Rocca di Papa, in Rome, in 1987.

pectations in many people considered “far-off.” The publication of his writings in many languages has played an important role, but I continue to be surprised, especially in my Latin American sphere, at the many bishops, priests, religious communities, politicians, and academics, including groups of youth, who talk about Fr. Giussani with admiration and gratitude without having met him personally or having had contact with Communion and Liberation. Among many occasions, I remember a dinner with two Latin American Cardinals, whose words and faces I remember well, and who knew little about the experience of the “Movement.” One of them had endured great travail as a young bishop in the hot 1970s and suffered in seeing many militant com-

panions reduce their faith to angry, even violent moralism, and then lose it entirely. He told us how his pastoral and educational approach changed when he understood better, in reading the texts of Fr. Giussani, that Christianity was a “fact,” and not an ideology. The other Cardinal enthusiastically taught us about the importance of the “correspondence” between faith and the desires of the person.

**NOT AT ALL ANONYMOUS.** With regard to Fr. Giussani’s brilliant intuitions, even more people in the Church today behave like that “Monsieur Jourdan, who spoke in prose without realizing it.” Someone said that the best outcome for a thinker is when his approach and ideas become anonymous and spread everywhere. In this case, more than anonymous, they are a patrimony of the whole Church—for “the common good,” to use Saint Paul’s words. Ten years after his death, that which is in no way anonymous is his testimony of holiness that continues to accompany us today, and the faces of the many people who were attracted to Christ through those words, in a current of grace that continues to spread beyond the various geographic, cultural, and existential frontiers. **I**

*\*Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Latin America*

**1998**

**LOOKING AHEAD TO MARCH 7<sup>th</sup>**



*In our world, often dominated by a secularized culture (...) the faith of many is sorely tested, and is frequently stifled and dies. Thus we see an urgent need for powerful proclamation (...). And here are the movements and the new ecclesial communities: they are the response, given by the Holy Spirit, to this critical challenge at the end of the millennium.*

**John Paul II**

to the meeting with ecclesial movements and new communities, May 30, 1998

# We Millennials and that Strange Italian Priest

**The American selfie generation is dismissed by some as lazy, vain, and indecisive. In an exhibit, some of them tried to speak of their experience in the light of the encounter with Fr. Giussani.**

by Mattia Ferraresi

The Millennial generation reaches out its arm, offers the cell phone camera its best profile, and then admires the shot: “I’m exceptional,” says the face immortalized in the selfie, a photograph in which the subject and the object are one. Popular culture has tried to grasp the characteristics of these kids: lazy, creative, vain, indecisive, impervious to the old ideologies, obsessed with the sparkling of their own “I,” and at the same time fragile victims of the most varied anxieties. They are alternately described as either the lost generation or the one with the greatest potential; they are said to be composed of restless optimists who think their best days are yet to come, but are certain that salva-



tion will not come from institutions, the government, a career, or the other idols of their parents. From whence, then? The selfie is an initial clue. It may be narcissistic, but it is also a sign, an unrepeatable face that deserves to be captured and shared. The selfie, too, is a “crazed truth,” as Chesterton would say. “I am exceptional” is the title that a group of 75 young Americans chose for an exhibit that recounts the “Millennial experience”—which is, after all, the human experience, with its desire for fulfilment, filtered through the particular sensibility of a generation that everyone tries to archive under this label. Last summer, when José Medina, the responsible for CL in the United States, proposed >>

2007



*John Paul II was to entrust you with this mandate: “Go to all the world and bring the truth, the beauty and the peace, which is encountered in Christ the Redeemer.” Fr. Giussani made those words the program of the whole Movement (...). Today, I invite you to continue along this path, with a deep faith, personalized and solidly rooted in the living Body of Christ, the Church, which guarantees the contemporaneity of Jesus among us.*

**Benedict XVI**

at the audience for the 25 years of the Fraternity of CL, March 24, 2007

» that all of the Millennials of the CL communities across the country present an exhibit together at the New York Encounter, his idea was to read Fr. Giussani through the eyes of a generation that had not met him. Martina from Nebraska, one of the curators of the exhibit, explains, “Everything changed during one of the first encounters, when I had the perception that I was not interested in communicating to others a synthesis of the thought of Giussani: I wanted to do an exhibit on myself, on my human experience in the light of my encounter with Fr. Giussani.”

**INFALLIBLE INSTRUMENT.** Slowly the emphasis shifted from the doctrine of life to the sociology of experience. It was not a matter of putting up panels about a theoretical itinerary, but of bumping up against the charisma, (re-) encountering it, and allowing oneself to be transformed. Six working groups were formed to confront the texts, first of all with an analytical approach. Some looked more deeply at the religious sense, others at the dynamic of the revelation of Christ, while still others at the hypothesis of a presence that remains, the Church, always with the eyes and heart striving to intercept the contemporaneity of those words. Thus began an adventure made up of readings and hours and



hours of driving across America, all to become increasingly familiar with one’s humanity. The second phase of work took a form more like School of Community, with constant comparison between the texts and experience. “We re-proposed the itinerary of Giussani, but through our life,” says Carolina Brito, a teacher in Boston, underlining perhaps the most original aspect of the exhibit: those who created it are not just the guides for the itinerary, but are part of the content of the exhibit. Every guided tour is implicitly a personal story. The panels have excerpts of dialogues on the Facebook notice board (where else?) between the kids and Giussani, Tarkovsky, and Alicia Keys. The ugly duckling—chosen as a metaphor for a generation—intersects with the editorials of young opinion makers. There are suggestions about the desire for fulfillment that hides in the “quarter-life crisis,” and the idea that the human person has an infallible instrument for judging, the heart.

One opens to the dizzying possibility that the response to the heart that reaches out has happened in the encounter with the human person, and has even become a companionship. There are John and Andrew, Mary Magdalene, a modern Simon (Peter, that is), his rough face of a minor with a cigarette hanging from his lips. Looking into the eyes of these kids, you sense that in these months of work something mysterious and irreducible has happened, the irruption of a presence that changes life.

Jonathan Ghalhy, from Colorado, talks about “how it was impossible to separate the content of the exhibit from their lives,” and Beth Nelson from Minnesota says that as she finished giving each exhibit tour she would burst into tears. “It may seem pathetic, but it indicated that I was in a ‘danger zone,’ that is, I was verifying. Explaining the exhibit is a verification of the exhibit itself.” An experience, as Fr. Giussani proposed. **I**

**2014****LOOKING AHEAD TO MARCH 7<sup>th</sup>**

*In order to attain ecclesial maturity, therefore, maintain—I say again—the freshness of your charisma, respect the freedom of each person, and always strive for communion. Do not forget, however, that to reach this goal, conversion must be missionary: the strength to overcome temptations and insufficiencies comes from the profound joy of proclaiming the Gospel, which is the foundation of your charisms.*

**Francis**

at the Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, November 22, 2014

## SOMETHING OF THE DIVINE

The Manhattan air had warmed slightly since the morning freeze. Outside of Marshall's department store on Sixth Avenue, people were lining up for the January sales. A bit further on, at the intersection on 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Professor Robert Pollack and his wife Amy got out of a taxi in front of the Metropolitan Pavilion, where the 2015 New York Encounter was in full swing: the 3:30 session on evolution was about to begin.

"Welcome, Dr. and Mrs. Pollack!" said Laura, as she greeted them at the entrance. "If you'd like to follow me, I've reserved two places for you in the front row." Professor Pollack hesitated. "Thank you, but we'd prefer to stay in the back. We're only staying for a half hour, to greet the organizers who invited us."

Robert Pollack, who teaches Biology at Columbia University, had lost count of how many conferences he had attended in his career. He had come to the Encounter to honor an old friend, Monsignor Lorenzo Albacete, who had died in November. In years past Albacete had told him about this event in the heart of the city, more than once adding, "You've got to come one day, Robert!"

**AS HE TOOK HIS SEAT AT THE FRONT OF THE ROOM,** the professor reflected on the strange series of meetings that had led a Puerto Rican priest to invite him, a Jew, to a Catholic conference. But it was just for a moment; some friends of Albacete's were there and wanted to meet him and Amy. As they looked at each other, shaking hands, there was nothing formal and it almost seemed as if they had been there waiting just for him and Amy. Every gesture, every word evoked "an unexpected familiarity." Angelo sat next to them, as Maria Teresa took the stage to moderate the session. The speakers were scientists of international renown, but Dr. Pollack was more intrigued by the dialogue, the way of conducting the conversation, the fact that what emerged was a true encounter of their points of view. After a while, he leaned over and whispered in Amy's ear, "Amy, I'd like to stay on till the end." She nodded in agreement.

When the session ended, Angelo and Maria Teresa invited them to go upstairs to see the exhibits. They also met the volunteers and saw the café and the restaurant. "Why don't you stay for dinner with us?" "Actually, we were planning to leave right away, but of course, we can come back tomorrow."

**THE DINNER HAPPENS THE DAY AFTER.** Amy and Robert spent some time signing copies of their book, which was sold-out. At table, they were both full of questions about everything, until suddenly Robert stopped and fell quiet. Then, looking around at the others at the table, he said, "Friends, today Amy and I feel at home. Each and every person we happened across today expressed a goodness and kindness to us for what they were doing, which I have rarely found in my life. We saw gestures that expressed incredible generosity. Without exaggerating, I can say that today we have seen *the greatest collection of happiness.*"

But this was not enough for Robert. "I have to give a name to all this. In the *Talmud* there is an expression that describes what we have seen: "*Gemilut chasadim*". It is an act of pure love and kindness that bears within it something of the divine. Rather, it is the essence of God." It is too beautiful to not come back.



# #AVSI4Iraq



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 **Caritas**  
Iraq



Courtesy Roberto Masi

## Refugee Emergency in Iraq

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