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THE ROAD

Gestures. Words. Encounters. Simply by following in Christ's footsteps, the Pope has re-opened the road map toward peace in the Holy Land.

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Cover: the Pope embraces two friend of his: the rabbi Abraham Skorka and the muslim Omar Abboud.

NIGERIA WHO IS BOKO HARAM AFRAID OF?

The largest (and the wealthiest) country in Africa finds itself besieged by terrorists. Those most at risk are students and their families, because the real target is education.



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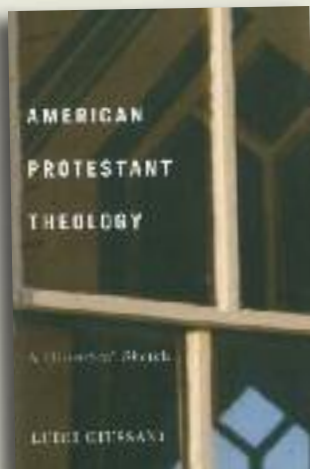
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LUIGI GIUSSANI

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

Giussani clarifies and assesses elements of Protestantism such as the democratic approach to Church-State relations, "The Great Awakening," Calvinism and Trinitarianism, and liberalism. His rich references and analytical descriptions reconstruct an overview of the development of a religion that has great importance in

the context of spiritual life and American culture. He also displays full respect for the religious depth from which Protestantism was born and where it can reach, and expresses great admiration for its most prominent thinkers and spiritual leaders, including Jonathan Edwards, Horace Bushnell, Walter Rauschenbusch, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich.

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

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LIKE ARTISANS

We were not expecting this. It was a pilgrimage, born for the most part as a way to mark the 50th anniversary of the historic meeting between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras and so therefore the theme would center on ecumenism and dialogue with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. That deeply meaningful re-embrace did take place, and we shall see its effects over time, but much more happened during those three days Pope Francis spent in the Holy Land at the end of May.

Words and gestures swept away all prognostications, displacing the criticisms of those who were waiting to measure every single adjective he used, those ready to criticize and exploit any possible sign that the Pope was favoring one side or the other. There was not a single complaint from the Israelis for that unplanned stop at the wall which separates Bethlehem from the world. There were no Palestinian protests for the prayer at the Wailing Wall or for the visit to the tomb of Theodor Herzl, father of Zionism.

It is surprise—continually manifested—in front of those reminders of what is essential. “Before the mystery of God we are all poor.” Or: “It is a bond whose origins are from on high, one which transcends our own plans and projects, and one which remains intact despite all the difficulties which, sadly, have marked our relationship in the past.” It is a surprise that has become wonder in front of an invitation: “Come to my house to pray for peace.”

Shimon Peres and Abu Mazen did go there on June, 8th. “It will be prayer only, nothing else,” Francis had indicated. In fact, there were no talks, no mediations—in short, no politics. But it is difficult to imagine that such a gesture would not create an opening. As it is, “it’s hard to argue that Pope Francis is not the world’s best politician,” wrote *Time* magazine.

Naturally, it’s the Pope. He is inevitably on the international stage. Whatever he says or does is observed and analyzed under a microscope. But the more we look at him, the more a question arises: what enables him to be so incisive? What moves him, what is his concern? And why is it that without “playing politics” he is giving history such a powerful jolt?

The answer is in his gestures and in his texts which must be read slowly, perhaps starting with the text that does not come from his pilgrimage to the Holy Land; it is a speech given to the Italian Bishops shortly before his trip. It is striking to see that he starts from a question that could easily be taken for granted among cardinals and prelates, and which instead should never be taken for granted—not even by the Pope: “Who is Jesus Christ for me? How has he marked the truth of my story? What does my life say of Him?”

Everything starts from here, from this awareness of Christ and of oneself, and from the witness that springs forth from it (“What does my history say of Him?”). Gazing at this man, observing him in front of the Wall or on the banks of the river Jordan, kneeling in front of the Holy Sepulcher or as he embraces his brothers and sisters of every faith—you can see it. Only this moves him, nothing else: Not strategies, nor schemes.

Looking at him, we can understand a little more of what awaits us, of our task, of the work to be done, “day by day, like artisans.” It seems insignificant compared to great and complex issues like Europe, the financial crisis, or war. It requires time and patience. That is why we often seek other routes: shortcuts to get quick results and crumbs of power that allow us to be “more concrete.” However, as the Pope reminded us at the Esplanade of the Mosques, there is only one road. It is a journey that is “docile to the call of God” and “open to the future that he wishes to create for us.” It is like “the pilgrimage of Abraham,” one who was not preoccupied with changing history, but did just that. T



THE ROAD TO THE EXERCISES

The invitation to participate in the Fraternity Exercises raised many questions in me, among them, “What else will I have to listen to that I haven’t already heard?” When I told my mother that I was setting out to go to the Exercises, she asked me, “Which road will you take?” I answered, “The one that passes through Wukari.” She was speechless: it is the same road where, just the previous week, unknown men had assassinated one of my relatives. However, listening to Fr. Carrón in those three days reawakened my heart and my mind, and made me return to the origin from which I had become detached, living each day in fear, thinking that nothing good could happen to me. The few days spent together with our friends from various parts of Nigeria reawakened all of my humanity, giving back to me the reasons for which I should remain attached to the essential. Only His gaze can illuminate. One of the things that I will never forget learning at these Exercises is that we all find ourselves living through difficulties that neither Jesus nor Fr. Giussani were spared. Hearing this was like a mother’s loving gaze. Lis-

tening again to the words of Fr. Carrón has pushed me to embrace the path of life. It has rekindled the desire to forge ahead because the journey is what makes us grow in experience. The companionship of Christ is promised to us from the beginning to the end and this diminishes my fears. When I complain or worry, it is because I have distanced myself from the essential.

Bitrus, Jalingo (Nigeria)

“MY SPECIAL FRIEND ESTEBAN”

Esteban is a very special friend and a faithful parishioner of our community. He could be found every day at Mass, or at Eucharistic Adoration, or kneeling in the last pew of the church, but he could also be found outside the church, waiting for donations from friends and the faithful who approached him with ever-increasing familiarity. He is what many of us would call a “beggar.” Years ago, we found ourselves seated in the same pew listening to a chorus sing the Creole Mass. At the part that said, “Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us,” I was deeply moved, by the intensity of the plea and by the beauty of the music. Beside me, Esteban was weeping, moved as I had been. I began to

look at him as a real friend, astonished by his “being,” by the infinite mystery of this person, so different from, and yet, so similar to mine. Every Sunday, my husband, Fernando, and I and, later, our children, would speak with Esteban, who eventually even learned all of our names and birthdays. Esteban lives in a small wooden cottage (in better shape now thanks to the work we have done with our friends) in an outlying neighborhood from which he walks 30 blocks to go to the parish every day. He does so with great physical difficulty due to a stroke suffered in the past. “Why do you make this sacrifice?” I asked him one day. He answered, “I come to tell Jesus, ‘You in me and I in You,’ and to my mother, Mary, ‘I am your son and you are my mother.’” This year, he came with us to the CL family vacation and at the end he was very grateful to us for having allowed him to “know heaven.” After a few days, his health deteriorated and he could no longer walk. My husband and two other friends of the CL community went to visit him; he was in terrible shape, depressed and almost wanting to allow himself to die. We went to visit him again with a retired nurse and a nun from the parish. I was concerned for his soul and so we also brought him to confession. From that point on, a tide of events took place. Perhaps the most meaningful one, because of the grace we received, was to host him in our home for three days (he did not want to stay longer because he was concerned about our family life). His human dignity was intact. We were witnesses to a performance of charity, attention, and unity among our friends while washing him and caring for him. In this charitable work that has been given to



A WORK MEETING

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL RESULTS ARE THOSE NOT PLANNED

While in France for a work-related conference, I ran out of breath talking to a German professor (we started from my research poster, but then we kept talking for another half hour). At one point, while he was talking about himself and his history, he told me that by now he has become good at what he does and things turn out well, but this is not the fascinating aspect of his work. He told me that the best results are the ones that he has achieved almost by playing around—without planning, just trying, without having the slightest idea of what he would find. “These results are the most beautiful,” he said, “because,



otherwise, you already have an idea of what you are looking for and, without realizing it, you may force the outcome. Instead, when you don't know which way to turn, you really want to understand and you have nothing; you are open to everything.” He described entire afternoons sitting at his desk surrounded by thousands of papers. I was struck to see, in a stranger, the passion for the Mystery, for the totally Other. Nothing corresponds more. Who are You who vibrates in the humanity of a stranger, in a place so apparently foreign, and who returns to surprise me again?
Benedetta, Perugia (Italy)

us, we learn Love, that fundamental and explicit lesson about the concept Jesus has of life.

Carolina, Argentina

THE SILENCE OF THE PRISONERS

One year, with a small group of friends, we started the Cooperativa Sociale 153 Onlus, the purpose of which is to manage the farm business within the prisons in Perugia. It is a business that provides work opportunities to the inmates by producing vegetables in greenhouses and in open fields. Along with the fruit and olives, we also began raising free-range chickens and added a butchering facility. A month ago, we proposed a concert offered by the choir of the CL community to the prisoners. The purpose was to offer something beautiful to the more than 400 inmates, but also to tell them who we

are and where our experience comes from, since we have started a dialogue with some of them around readings from *Traces*. The day after the concert, I had some appointments at the prison. Upon entering, I was literally assaulted with comments about the concert by the educators, the guards, and even the administrative staff. They told me that the inmates had been incredibly enthusiastic about the concert. The staff member responsible for the treatment department told me that, in 40 years, it was the first time she



had become emotional during a concert in the jail. She also said she had never witnessed such silence among the incarcerated. They told me that the prisoners were thrilled especially during the Neapolitan songs (requesting an encore many times), and that they would like the choir to come back. This feedback tells me two things. The first is that things happen—meaning that an Event happens—where there is a wounded person. The wound is our strength; the desire that opens wide on our life is our best ally. The wounded person, aware of his mistakes, who is searching in his heart for the hope needed to start over, more easily recognizes the accent of Beauty. The second is that everyone desires to see Beauty and the Resurrection; therefore, we are called to proclaim it to the world.

Michelangelo, Italy

A CRACK IN THE WALL

The embrace of Jews and Muslims. The encounter with Orthodox Christians. The River Jordan, Bethlehem, and the Holy Sepulchre... And finally, that surprise invitation to the Israeli and Palestinian leaders: "I offer my house in the Vatican as a place for this encounter of prayer." The presence of Francis undermined every scheme, including politics. Thus, opening the path toward a peace that is "to be built day by day like an artisan."

BY ANDREA TORNIELLI

“We need to believe that, just as the stone before the tomb was cast aside, so too every obstacle to our full communion will also be removed. Every time we ask forgiveness of one another for our sins against other Christians and every time we find the courage to grant and receive such forgiveness, we experience the resurrection!” It’s the end of the day on Sunday, May 25th, and Pope Francis is tired. He speaks in a low voice, but one that is full of joy. He allows himself to be led by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, his brother, just like Peter might have done with Andrew from time to time, on

the shores of the Sea of Galilee where both, casting their nets, were “caught” by He who would make them “fishers of men.”

What happens beneath the ancient stones of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (*Anastasis*) in Jerusalem, where the empty tomb of Jesus of Nazareth is guarded, has no precedent: every Christian denomination in the Holy Land unites to pray in the place of the Resurrection, unfortunately also known as the place of division. Fifty years after the historic meeting between Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras their successors, in the same spirit of courage and humility, bear witness to the longing for unity of the followers of a God who became a child, who teaches his disciples to serve, who low-

ers himself unto death on a cross and who rises from the dead.

IN THREE STAGES. It is not easy to spend three days visiting the Holy Land, speaking to people of different faiths, entering directly into the heart of one of the most complicated political situations in the Middle East, and trying to do so without being exploited. More than by his words, Pope Francis succeeds—by his testimony and his gestures—in living a profoundly religious and spiritual pilgrimage. Indeed, in the very same way, he is also earth-shattering from a geopolitical point of view.

It is a three day journey in three stages—Amman, Bethlehem and Jerusalem—and among three religions, that the Pope, in accepting the invitation

Pope Francis praying in Bethlehem, at the wall that divides Israel and Palestine.



from his brother Bartholomew, decides to begin in Jordan, a country that is still a symbol of coexistence among different faiths. Here Francis was welcomed by King Abdallah II. The Pope recalls the war, the “civil strife” that has overwhelmed Syria for the past three years and the resulting humanitarian catastrophe. During an encounter with a group of refugees, at the site of the baptism of Jesus, abandoning his speech he says: “Who is selling arms to these people to make war? Behold the root of evil! Hatred and financial greed in the manufacturing and sale of arms.” I call on you to return to “negotiations,” asking God to change “the hearts of the violent... and those who seek war.” Just a bit earlier, during the mass celebrated at the Amman International

Stadium, he had recalled the role of Christians as minority that carries out a “significant and valued” role in the fields of education and health care, and emphasized the importance of religious freedom and “...the freedom to choose the religion which one judges to be true and to manifest one’s beliefs in public.” The Pope asked Jordanian Muslims and Christians to abandon their resentments and divisions. The path of peace, the Pope reiterated, is strengthened if “we are all of the same stock and members of the one human family; if we never forget that we have the same Father in heaven.”

“Every time we find the courage to grant and receive such forgiveness, we experience the resurrection!”

Sunday, May 25th is the day in Bethlehem and the embrace of the Christian communities of Palestine and Israel. Many were not able to come and meet the Pope due to the limited number of permits that were made available. Before arriving in Manger Square where the mass was to be held, Francis made his entourage stop the “pope mobile” beside the high cement dividing wall put up by the Israelis as a means of defense but which causes a lot of suffering and resentment for the Palestinian Christian and Arab population by cutting families and communities in half. The Pope says nothing about it at all. Instead, >>

CLOSE UP THE POPE IN THE HOLY LAND

he stops for a few minutes to pray in silence, first with his hand and then with his forehead resting against the wall. It was an unexpected and powerful gesture.

THERE IS NO ROAD MAP. The homily of the mass is dedicated to the God who became a little child, to the God who was born in a precarious situation, in need of everything, in need of being welcomed, in need of protection. It is an occasion for a moving meditation on children who are to be welcomed right from the moment they are in the womb of their mother; children who are dying of hunger, children who are enslaved and exploited, and those child refugees who drown in the “death boats” in the Mediterranean Sea.

At the end of the celebration, there is a surprise announcement: Francis invites the presidents of Palestine and Israel, Abu Mazen and Shimon Peres, to come to the Vatican to pray for peace. He is not acting as a political leader with a road map in mind to awaken a stagnant peace process. He genuinely believes in the power of prayer. He knows that peace is a gift to be implored and “crafted”, day by day, in the lives of each one of us. Bergoglio would have liked for that encounter to have taken place there, in the Holy Land but it was not possible. So he calls them to Rome. The purpose of the encounter is prayer, it is not a summit. It is an initiative more akin to the international day of fasting for Syria than any sort of peace conference.

Before leaving the “State of Palestine”, Francis meets with the children from the refugee camp in Dheisheh. He listens as they speak to him about the “occupation”, wishing “to tell the world” about the sufferings of their people. He says to them: “Don’t ever allow the past to determine your lives.” And almost in a prayer, he adds: “But you must understand this: violence cannot be overcome by violence. Violence is overcome by peace!”



The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.

On Sunday afternoon Francis arrives in Israel, where he is welcomed by President Peres and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He reiterates the condemnation of anti-Semitism and intolerance, citing the six million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis and expressing his sympathy for the victims of the anti-Semitic attacks in Brussels.

“Never again!” The day comes to a close at the Holy Sepulchre, with a communal prayer among Christians, where the Pope repeats his willingness to find a form for exercising the Primacy of Peter as “a service of love and of communion acknowledged by all.”

Monday, May 26 is dedicated to Israel. After the encounter with the Gran Mufti at the Esplanade of the Mosques and a visit to the Wailing Wall, Francis makes another gesture that was not on the schedule. He prays silently in front of the memorial stone dedicated to the victims of terrorism. Another wall where he says: “Never again!”

The most moving moment of the day, however, is the visit to Yad Vashem, the memorial to the Shoah. “Who are you, o man? What have you become? Lord... Save us from this horror,” he affirms in a low voice in front of the perennial flame that commemorates the abyss of evil that was the Holocaust, showing “shame” for

man who has made himself a “god” and “sacrificed [your brothers and sisters] to yourself.” What is most striking, even more than his words, are his gestures. The Bishop of Rome, greeting some of the survivors presented to him, kissed each one’s hand. Once again, he shows himself to be a shepherd capable of bearing witness to the tenderness of a God who, out of love, gave himself up to death, showing his people the way of humility and service. Francis is a believer

The Pope knows that peace is a gift to be implored and “crafted”, day by day, in the lives of each one of us.

who trusts and who allows himself to be led and who is capable of sharing in the situations and sufferings of anyone. His gestures also made inroads in Israel. The successor of Peter came to the Holy Land only to bear witness to the Gospel. And his presence made an impact

on the reality of the region in a way that no political-diplomatic strategy could have had, so much so that Christopher J. Hale of *Time* magazine wrote: “It’s hard to argue that Pope Francis is not the world’s best politician after his trip this past weekend to the Holy Land.”

The final moment on his pilgrimage, before departing, is the mass in the Upper Room: “here the Church was born, and she was born to go forth. From here she set out, with the broken bread in her hands, the wounds of Christ before her eyes, and the Spirit of love in her heart.” **I**



Praying at the Holy Sepulchre with Bartholomew I.



Shimon Peres, Abu Mazen, Pope Francis, and Bartholomew I plant an olive tree in the Vatican Garden on June, 8th.

THE PRAYER AT THE VATICAN

Four Men who Have Obeyed Another

The meeting at the Saint Peter Gardens in Rome was not a diplomatic one, yet it has the strength of a radical gesture, in which are found the Pope's nature and our need.

BY ALESSANDRO BANFI

They represent the Israeli and Palestinian States, and the Roman and Eastern Churches. The ground for this encounter is a garden with St. Peter's Cupola in the background. The city is Rome. It is an early

summer evening, bathed in the light of sunset. The man in white, who invited them all to his home, was the first among the successors of Peter to take the name of Francis, the pauper from Assisi.

The encounter with Shimon Peres,

Abu Mazen and Bartholomew I, Patriarch of Constantinople, should have taken place during the Pope's visit to the Holy Land. That attempt failed because it was not possible to find a place for the meeting in the martyred and divided Middle East. So Pope Francis, as he recounts while on the return plane trip, proposed on the spur of the moment, to meet at his place, on the banks of the Tiber. Finally, the moment of the historic encounter has arrived.

The words of the Koran and the sweet, deep notes of the *klezmer* music, the Psalms and the Gospel resounded at the prayer meeting. It was a simple gathering where all of the illustrious participants traveled together in an ordinary van from Casa Santa Marta, the Pope's residence, through the Vatican City, to the gardens behind the imposing Saint Peter's Basilica, where the ceremony took place.

The encounter took place in three parts, followed by a conclusion. Prayers and music, then the official addresses. Pope Francis underscored that, "Peacemaking calls for courage, much more so than warfare. It calls for the courage to say yes to encounter and no to conflict: yes to dialogue and no to violence; yes to negotiations and no to hostilities; yes to respect for agreements and no to acts of provocation; yes to sincerity and no to duplicity. All of this takes courage; it takes strength and tenacity. History teaches that our own >>>

"Prayer Will be Useful. Only God Can Give Peace"

The Israelis

"He is a model of humility and holiness. An authentic religious leader." Ammon Ramon, an Israeli Jew and a researcher at the *Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies*, has studied at length the trips of the popes to the Holy Land and he has no doubt: "It was a success from all points of view."

Could anyone have imagined it?

Never, not at all. In the days running up to his trip, I had written about all of my perplexities surrounding his visit in the newspapers: the attacks on the price tag [the extremist Jews; NRP (National Religious Party)], discontent on the matter of the Upper Room. I was worried about all of the points that could have ruined the trip. Instead he surprised me. He surprised everyone.

In what way?

I say this as a practising Jew: the meeting with Bartholomew was fundamental. As an historian and academic of Christianity I repeat: the closeness between the two was something that was completely unforeseeable. It was anything but a political event. We are used to protocols and form. Instead we witnessed an encounter between two friends who were helping one another.



How did the Jewish community react?

The visit to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial, and to Monte Herzl were the two key points, at least in the eyes of the Israeli public. The tribute paid at the tomb of the father of Zionism redeems the encounter that he had with Pius X in Rome. When Herzl asked for the Pope's "blessing," 110 years ago, the refusal was clear: "The Jews have not recognized our Lord, therefore we cannot recognize the Jewish people." Today relations are decidedly changed. At the Holocaust Museum he did not go into the historic details and the position of the Catholic Church but he showed that he understood the universal message of the Shoah. He showed himself to be truly intelligent.

For years there have been discussions about whether or not to leave the management of the Upper Room to the Church. Is it a political or a religious question?

It is a very, very complicated issue. We are always in the Middle

East, politics and religion have always gone hand in hand. To divide them up is unthinkable. Underneath the Upper Room there is a place that some who are a part of Hebrew tradition identify as the tomb of David, and it would be unacceptable to allow the celebration of the Eucharist above a place of Jewish worship. We know that it is highly likely that King David is not buried there, but the government is often threatened by these small extremist groups. Above all when the issues in question do not touch upon national interests.

What is the main obstacle to peace today?

The two sides are not ready to make peace. It's simply because they do not trust one another. Allow me to go back five years, to Benedict XVI's pilgrimage. At the time there was a phrase that he said that has remained in my heart. He said that according to the Jewish language, the word "security" - *batah* - derives from the word "trust" and he was not only referring to the absence of a threat, but also to the feeling of calmness and confidence. The point today is exactly the same as it was then: mutual trust is absent. We have much to learn from the trust that Francis and Bartolomew displayed!

Francis invited Abu Mazen and Shimon Peres to the Vatican for a meeting to pray: do you think it was a prophetic gesture or a gamble?

On this point my answer will disappoint you, I was not convinced. He should have invited the prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has all of the power—if he wants—to put an end to the conflict. Peres in two weeks' time will no longer be president of the State of Israel, and I believe there is little hope, from a practical point of view, that this meeting can really have an impact.

Ramon stops, and thinks for a moment. Perhaps not even he is convinced by his answer. Then he continues: "But, in the end, who knows. Even praying for peace will be useful. Because only divine intervention could bring peace to this desperate land."

Andrea Avveduto

» powers do not suffice. More than once we have been on the verge of peace, but the evil one, employing a variety of means, has succeeded in blocking it. That is why we are here, because we know and we believe that we need the help of God. We do not renounce our responsibilities, but we do call upon God in an act of supreme responsibility before our consciences and before our peoples. We have heard a summons, and we must respond. It is the summons to break the spiral of

hatred and violence, and to break it by one word alone: the word "brother". But to be able to utter this word we have to lift our eyes to heaven and acknowledge one another as children of one Father."

AN END TO THE CRIES. The Israeli President, Shimon Peres, said, among other things: "Two peoples—Israelis and Palestinians—still are aching for peace. The tears of mothers over their children are still etched in our hearts.

We must put an end to the cries, to the violence, to the conflict. We all need peace. Peace between equals. Your invitation to us to join you in this momentous ceremony to call for peace, here in the Vatican garden, in the presence of Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Druze leaders, graciously reflects your vision of the aspiration we all share: Peace. On this moving occasion, brimming with hope and full of faith, let us all raise with you, Your Holiness, a call for peace between religions, be-

“We Will Need Years to Understand that Hour” The Palestinians

“When I greeted him before he left, I did not ask him anything, because everything he had said during his visit he had said above all to me.” Monsignor William Shomali, Patriarchal Vicar for Jerusalem [second in authority for the Latin Church in the Holy Land] closely followed Francis’ pilgrimage. Struck “more by his gestures than by his words,” the Palestinian priest from Beit Jala, a small district north of Bethlehem, spoke about the pope’s “extraordinary” visit, destined to mark the history of the Mother Church in Jerusalem.

Excellency, what were the early reactions to the journey?

The Pope did more than was foreseen in the official schedule. He said more through his gestures than any number of speeches could have ever said, and without ever being criticized. If we think about the context in which we live, this is incredible. He inspired admiration in Christians and Jews, in the Palestinians and the Israelis. It is too early to make a full assessment right now, but without a doubt are dealing with a perfectly successful trip.

Among the “unscheduled events” there was a gesture that drew more attention than any other: the prayer in front of the dividing wall...

In passing, the Pope saw the symbol of evil, hatred and division, and he wanted to stop to exorcise these tensions that are generated every day. His gesture was not polemical; he was not hostile to the Israelis or partial to the Palestinians. Everyone can interpret it as they wish, but he wanted to pray for peace. He was unassailable. How can you attack or criticize he who prays for peace?

At the Holy Sepulchre we witnessed a momentous gesture. Are Catholics and Orthodox increasingly closer on the path toward unity?

The psychological wall of these years has finally fallen. It fell because two brothers, Peter and Andrew, were together again through their successors. They bore witness to extraordinary friendship and reciprocal esteem. This is why it was

moving. Bartholomew supported Francis as he descended the entrance steps. At the Sepulchre they entered together and together they prayed before the empty tomb of Christ. With great humility the Pope let the Patriarch enter first. It will take years to understand what took place in an hour.

What did they pray for in the shrine of the Resurrection?

They asked for forgiveness for the divisions and they prayed for the grace of unity. When the Pope kissed Bartholomew’s hand, once they were outside, we were moved. This gesture does not, as many wrote, call into question the primacy of the Petrine ministry. True leadership is not only authority, but, above all, service. Even Jesus washed the feet of the apostles, but he did not stop being Jesus. It is all part of a language that politicians do not know. It is a language of gestures, even spontaneous ones. Francis has “perfected” John Paul II’s style. In that moment, when he [Francis] bows and kisses the hands of the people, he is saying: “I bow before Christ, whom I see in you.”



Meeting with Palestinian leader Abu Mazen.

The Pope has continued to speak about peace. He is not the first and he won’t be the last. Why should the governments—deaf for all these years—

listen to the Bishop of Rome?

There is an element that we cannot fully understand. The Pope came here in the name of the Lord, as the vicar of Christ, to pray for peace. This is why “he spoke with authority,” as Christ did, and did not enter into the dynamics of the conflict but remained above them. It happened at a historic moment, when peace negotiations are at a standstill. He demonstrated a greatness that is entirely uncommon. But the answer to this prayer [for peace] can only come from above, when one least expects it, as it did for Abraham, who could not have children. Unexpectedly, when he had lost all hope, God gave him the gift of paternity through Isaac. Thus Francis, inviting Abu Mazen and Shimon Peres to the Vatican, told everyone: “Now that you have lost all hope, let us pray to the Lord. Only He can give you—and us—true peace.”

(A. A.)

tween nations, between communities, and between fellow men and women. Let true peace become our legacy soon and swiftly.”

And at the end, Abu Mazen said: “We ask You, O Lord, for peace in the Holy Land, Palestine, and Jerusalem together with its people. We call on you to make Palestine and Jerusalem in particular a secure land

“We do not renounce our responsibilities, but we do call upon God in an act of supreme responsibility.”

for all believers, and a place for prayer and worship for the followers of the three monotheistic religions Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and for all those wishing to visit it as it is stated in the Holy Quran. O Lord, You are the peace and peace emanates from You. O God of Glory and Majesty grant us security and safety, and alleviate the suffering of my peo-

ple in hometown and Diaspora.”

It was neither a political meeting, nor a diplomatic dialogue, yet what political and diplomatic consequences from a simple and radical gesture of prayer! All of the Pope’s nature can be found in the essentiality of his initiative. Their last act was the planting of an olive tree. The four men each took a shovel and worked the earth; with humility, obeying Another. The earth abounds in gratitude. **T**

CL LIFE
AT THE EDGES OF THE WORLD

IS THIS SPECTACLE

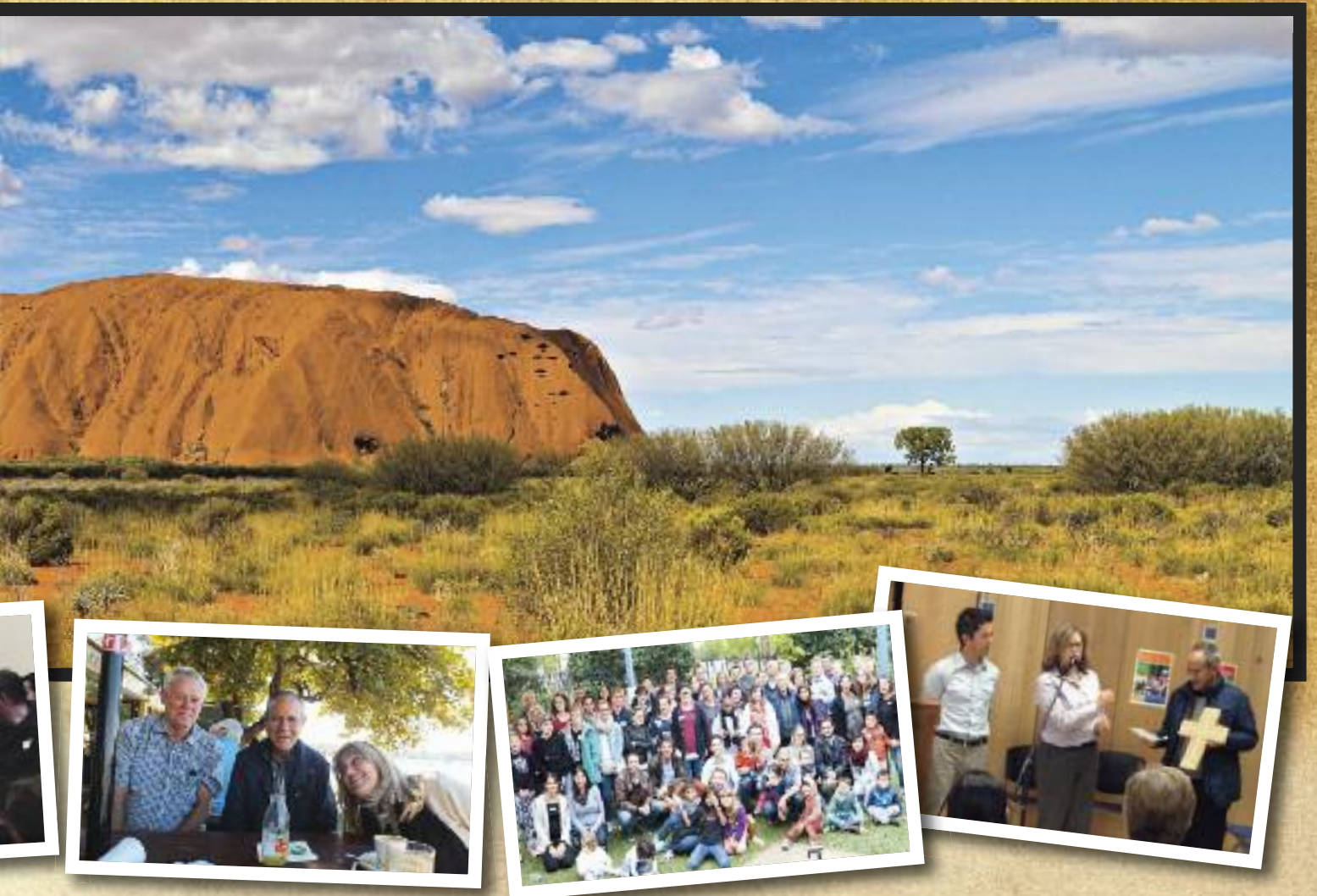
AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND



Small, often very young CL communities scattered around Australia and New Zealand—in Ashburton, Perth, Melbourne, and Sidney—tell us about their unexpected visit by Fr. Julián Carrón. A journey of pure friendship, with no official program, but following what was happening. His simplicity “has reawakened our thirst.”

BY PAOLA BERGAMINI

ENOUGH FOR YOU?



At the end of January, John Kinder and Fr. John O'Connor received this email: "Julián would like to come to Australia and New Zealand in April, for a week, for Easter, to see you. Is it okay with you? If so, please get in touch directly with him."
Fr. John from New Zealand replies immediately: "Wonderful news, Raffaella!" The news seems

almost like a miracle to him. There are so many important places with an impressive CL Movement presence.... yet that dear friend decided to travel to the other end of the world to visit them, a community made up of merely five people. Matthew and Lucia live with their three children in Ashburton, while several hundred miles away are Martin >>

» and Alison from Ireland, who have been here a year. And finally there is Fr. John, constantly travelling to the churches of the vast parish in North Canterbury that the bishop assigned to him.

Fr. John calls Matthew: “Fr. Carrón is coming to see us for three days. Maybe it would be worth organizing a public meeting to present the Movement. What do you think?” “We have never held one. There has never been the need for one. He is coming to live with us, to accompany us.” In Perth, Australia, Kinder and his friends start to plan the agenda for the journey.

Carrón can only stay for a few days. Which cities should he visit? Is this the best time? There are so many decisions to make. Nothing is taken for granted, nothing is formal. In the end, what prevails over everything is the desire to simply stay together, to show him that seed, which is still small but well established in the life of a few Australian cities: about 40 people in Perth, a small group in Melbourne, some friends in Newcastle, in Sydney.... Small communities, often very young, but within them is the only thing that makes life worth living: the encounter with Jesus.

Everybody awaits that friend, that companion, who is coming for just one reason, as Carrón said before leaving: “A friend feels the need to go and visit his friends, in order to share. Everything becomes more carnal.”

NEW ZEALAND

Tuesday, April 12th. Lucia is on her doorstep, looking at the sky: clouds are closing in; it is almost autumn. She has lived in Ashburton with her husband Matthew since 2009. This town of twenty thousand inhabitants is a necessary point of transit for those travelling to the south of the island. She is Italian, he is a New Zealander. They met in 2001 when Lucia accompanied her parents almost by chance on their trip to New Zealand.



Fr. Carrón and the New Zealand community.
Below, in Melbourne, Australia.



Through John Kinder, she got to know Matthew, who had very recently met the Movement. After that, it was a whirlwind of events: friendship turned into affection; Matthew’s decision to go to Dublin for work in order to be close to Lucia; the friendship with Margaret and Mauro Biondi and all the other friends of the Irish community; the wedding in 2003... and finally, the return to Ashburton.

For Lucia, who had always lived on the fringes of the Movement, this experience was now becoming ever more alive and was bouncing her from one side of the world to the other.

Her neighbor Fiona awoke her from her thoughts, asking, “Lucia, when are your friends coming?” A close friendship has developed with Fiona

in these years. Fiona is not Catholic, but it does not matter. “Soon, I think. Are you coming to meet them this evening?” “Certainly, after dinner. Here they are.” The car is carrying Fr. Carrón with Margaret, and Mauro, their friends from Dublin, who were in the

area for work and decided to accompany Carrón. A long embrace begins their visit. It starts to rain, and it will continue raining for the entire three days, upsetting all their plans. Joining the dinner with Fr. John are also Martin, Alison, Clara (from Italy but

recently moved to Christchurch for work), a young seminarian from Vietnam, and the parish priest. They talk about everything; they talk about their lives. Carrón listens and asks questions. Fr. John watches and only one thought crosses his mind: “This is friendship

Why organizing a CL public meeting? He is coming to live with us, to accompany us.

me yesterday? 'I came for you.' Period.'

MELBOURNE

Francesco with two Australian friends is waiting for them at the airport. Francesco is a mechanical engineer who came to Melbourne on a three-year research project. He met Margaret, got married, and never left. "I was happy in Italy. I just followed the signs that the Lord put in front of me: first a job and then a wife." These were signs like Carrón's unexpected—but desired—visit. When he heard the news from John Kinder, Francesco contacted friends in other cities. At first they were a bit worried: he's only coming for one day, what shall we do? They decided to meet all together, including their children, in Melbourne.

They get to Francesco's house by late evening in time for a coffee, a slice of cake, and a bit of chatting, for being together.

The following day, they have an appointment at the Seabrook Community Center with the friends of the CL communities from Melbourne, Newcastle, Adelaide, and Sydney. Some of these communities are made up of as few as two people, mostly young foreign couples, many of them in Australia just for a temporary work period.

Carrón talks to all those present in the big hall. He asks questions and jokes. At around 10:00 am, they say Morning Prayer, then the children go out to play. Fr. Julián tells them about himself, about the Beginning Day, about the Fraternity Exercises. After coffee break, it's time for witnesses and recounting of personal experiences. "Without the path of the personalization of faith that you are helping us to travel, I would not be able to live Christianity"—in Australia as in Italy, in a community of two people or a hundred. Carrón is moved by listening to the testimonies and by looking at each and every face. "The Movement generates people who >>>



Two moments with the Perth community.

in Christ—it encompasses everything."

Fiona arrives and tells her story to Mauro: fleeing from Zimbabwe 10 years earlier, the death of her husband, her four children to bring up... and the encounter with Lucia. The parish priest leaves and thanks Matthew for the evening with real gratitude. "And to think that he has always been quite skeptical about the Movement—he thought that our spirituality was a bit strange," says Lucia.

The following day entails a trip to where *The Lord of the Rings* was shot. These are beautiful places, if it wasn't for the incessant rain. Fog envelops the hills and an early retreat is necessary. Carrón follows them, chats, and looks, especially at the friendship between Martin, Matthew, and Fr. John. He says to them, "You have all that is necessary to live." While they are walking, Matthew tells him about his former employer: "Three years ago,

when I told him I was setting up my own business, I thought he would get upset, as he is quite irascible. Instead, he asked me if I could recommend some books on faith, 'because yours is clear to see.' And I had never spoken to him about the Movement."

They meet everybody: the last day they attend the Mass of the Lord's Supper together. Then they take a coffee at the pub where Matthew and Fr. John meet for School of Community, a place half way along the road between their two homes. "With Martin, instead, we do a three-way Skype connection!" Carrón laughs. Finally, before flying to Australia, they journey to Christchurch to meet the bishop. "It was a one-hour trip in silence. This is possible only among friends, when there is something greater among them," relates Fr. John. Watching the car drive away, Lucia says to Matthew, "Do you know what Carrón said to



» know how to stand on their own two feet. There is a seed here, young and sometimes temporary, and the fruit will be seen.”

They have lunch all together, young and old. Fr. Julián, with his fork in hand, stops and asks everyone, “So, what do you do?” He never tires. A friend is always eager to know everything. And then comes the surprise: a man enters the hall with his “portable” zoo. Out come an opossum, an iguana, an owl, and even a koala. The children cheer, and everybody poses for pictures, including Carrón. There is time for a short assembly and then, at dusk, while a small group accompanies Julián on a walk along the river, the others set up a potluck dinner before Mass. Everybody has brought something, and it’s a feast. At the end, a gift is presented: a crucifix with aboriginal paintings. After dinner, there are songs, but Carrón retires to bed. Among friends one can have the freedom and humility to say: “I’m sorry; I can’t do it—I’m too jet-lagged.”

PERTH

Easter Sunday. On the way home, John asks Carrón if he is happy with the plan for those three days. He sees him smile. “Is there something wrong?” John asks. “I’m here for you all; I trust you. John, follow what is here.” It is a liberation, because all you have to do is... That day they have Mass with the friends of the community and then an Australian

Easter dinner: lamb with mint sauce.

Monday 7:30 am. Morning Prayer at King’s Park, watching the newly risen sun. This is a great spectacle. Everybody is there—families and young people, mainly students whom John meets in the university where he teaches. “They are here for that hunger for meaning that they feel,” he says. They enjoy breakfast in the open air. Anna approaches Carrón. “Hello, are you the one from the video?” Julián laughs and they start to talk. All possible formality dissolves.

The breakfast is followed by an assembly in the parish hall of St. Thomas the Apostle, Claremont. Two hours of non-stop questions. “How can we not stop at simply the human friendship?” Carrón answers, “It’s like with the beauty that surrounds you, like the sun from this morning. Is it enough? If it doesn’t recall you to something else, to the love of Jesus, you feel empty inside. Of course, in such ‘perfect’ conditions as these, you don’t miss anything, but your desire can get misty. What is it worth living for?” Steve thinks, “He has come to reawaken our thirst, not to quench it.”

Lunch is in the same room and then all go to look for kangaroos. At 6:00 pm, a walk on the beach, fish and chips for dinner, and then to Trish’s house to sing Australian

and CL Movement songs. Ash looks at his friends and at this new friend: “Here is our heart.”

At the assembly, the day after, a seemingly provocative question is asked: “Why do we always read the same texts? Wouldn’t it be better to open our horizons?” A murmuring could be heard in the room.

Carrón thanks his interlocutor: “This is a fundamental point. I can only start from my experience. I understood the value of my studies when I met Fr. Giussani. This implies a total openness. There is a starting point. We are on the same road.”

While they drink coffee on the riverside, John approaches Carrón: “We have booked a Vietnamese restaurant. We need to leave shortly.” Julián looks around: “This place is so beautiful. Why don’t we stay here to eat? If it’s possible.” And he carries on talking to some students. You follow what happens.... Lunch is ready soon after, then a final visit to the cathedral before departure. John talks about these days to his wife Silvia, at home: “These were days absolutely normal. We expected this or that, and instead we encountered a friend. And that’s what Mauro and Margaret were, too: discreet friends. A pure friendship, full of the presence of Christ.”

“It’s like the sun from this morning. If it doesn’t recall you to Jesus, you feel empty inside.”





The mothers of the female students who were kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorists in Chibok, Nigeria, on April 14th.

WHO IS BOKO HARAM AFRAID OF?

Three hundred girls were kidnapped and forced to convert to Islam. The largest (and the wealthiest) country in Africa finds itself besieged by terrorists. Those most at risk are students and their families, who dare to send them to school, because the real target is education.

BY MICHELE FARINA

Rabia Mura is 16 years old. The Boko Haram terrorists, who kidnapped the female students and slaughtered the male students, have not made her change her mind: “One day I will be a doctor in a hospital; this country needs us if it

wants to develop and heal.” Rabia studies at the Maitama Sule secondary school in Kano, the largest city in northern Nigeria (with 2.5 million inhabitants), the second largest city in the country after the immense Lagos, with 11 million inhabitants. Four hundred girls and forty boys, Mus-

lims and Christians, study side by side, one desk next to the other, challenging Boko Haram and its prohibition on going to school.

This is not to be taken so readily for granted after the incident when more than 300 girls from Chibok, between the ages of 16 and 18, were seized >>

in mid-April, the night before their exams. Since then, security measures have been increased in many schools across the country. But this does not make any less heroic the intentions of students such as Rabia and the families who, despite everything, continue to send their children to school every morning wherever they can.

It has been about a year now since the establishment of a state of emergency in the northeast of Nigeria—the cities in those areas have been militarized. Yet not one of them can consider itself safe. Even the large centers like Kano continue to deal with fear: one Sunday in mid-May, a kamikaze detonated a car packed with explosives in the Christian district of Sabon Gari, amidst restaurants and bars on Gold Coast Street.

SCARS. Restaurants, schools, places of worship: everywhere, one can see the scars left by the group of Muslim extremists who advocated the creation of an Islamic state regulated by a rigid interpretation of Sharia law (which is already the principal law in 12 states in the north). “Female children have to marry at 12, not go to school,” ruled Abubakar Shekau, the leader of the group, thereby justifying the mass kidnapping in Chibok. Even the parents and teachers of Rabia and her classmates experienced a pang in their hearts, like millions of people in the whole world who joined the “Bring Back Our Girls” campaign. Even Rabia knows terror. In just one day in Kano, in 2012, the “Nigerian Taliban” killed 185 people. An unforgettable tragedy. The headmaster of Maitama Sule Academy, Martin Felix, 46, speaks about his daughter who is seven years old: “Even today when she hears a loud noise she calls out to me in terror: ‘Papa, the bombs.’”

“Not a night passed without someone throwing the head of a dead animal over the wall: ‘Infidel, leave!’”



Here, an image from the video showing the girls who were kidnapped and forced to convert to Islam; right, students from a school in Abuja ask for their release^b.

The cathedral to Our Lady of Fatima in Kano is surrounded by barbed wire; the faithful must pass through a metal detector to enter. Churches besieged; churches that flourish: the Catholics in Africa have grown by 21% between 2005 and 2010. The ordinations of priests have increased by 16%. Nigeria, Ghana, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have the highest number of faithful. In Nigeria, the most inhabited country on the continent, Christians number more than 70 million, about half of the population. The majority live in the south: in the Catholic church of Christ the King in Lagos, Mass is celebrated every Sunday for a total of 10 million people, and on Saturday there are baptisms of 100 children at a time.

Churches that flourish; churches that burn. According to the data from the Nigerian Episcopal Conference, at least 700 churches were attacked in 2007. In the village of Wada Chakawa, in the state of Adamawa, following yet another raid in January, a survivor told journalists: “They slaughtered my brother as they would a goat. They burned all of our houses. We have no choice but to leave the village.” Beside that desperate man, there was a woman who had been rendered

speechless. Together with her loss of speech, she had lost almost everything in the massacre at the church: her husband and son. She was left with a promise of life in her womb, a child to be brought up—but where?

Of the more than 4,000 Boko Haram victims from 2009 to the present, about a quarter are Christian. This is a particularly high percentage, bearing in mind that in the north the Muslims are in the majority. In the three states most affected—Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa—the Muslims make up more than 80% of the population. However, there are entire villages that are predominantly Christian and there are many other that are “mixed” (or they were, before they were knocked to the ground by terrorists). The majority of the female students kidnapped in Chibok, Borno, were born in Christian families. In a video, Shekau said scornfully, “Given that you care so much about their freedom, we thought we would free them for you. How? By converting them to Islam.”

The exodus of Christians from the hell of Boko Haram does not attract many followers on Twitter. If Chibok has, sadly, become famous in the world, very few have ever heard mention of the small town of Gashua on the border between Nigeria and Niger. There are only a few letters difference in the names, but an abyss of difference

the incident in Chibok, the headmistress of the Government Girls College, Hauwa Musa Gwoma, gathered together the more than 2,000 students to explain that the security measures had been increased. Zainab Abdu-jiibr, 18, told Christina Lamb of the *Sunday Times*: “I want to be a surgeon. We are afraid, but we are determined. We know that to educate a man means to educate a person; to educate a woman means to educate a nation.”

SAFE PLACE. Sometimes the secret lies in such cliché phrases. Thus, the bishop Charles Hammawa, speaking on the telephone from Jalingo, explains in a calm voice that “the Christians of Nigeria will not abandon the path of hope.” He adds, “We must do everything we can to ensure that the boys and girls continue to attend school. Collaboration between Christians and Muslims on this point is crucial. The incident of the female students in Chibok risks putting a stop

to this but the government must reassure the families that the schools are a safe place.”

The problem is not just Boko Haram. As the female poet and teacher Lola Shoneyin tells us, there are states, such as Zamfara, where only

5% of girls between ages 5 and 16 know how to read and write. Zamfara was the first of the northern states to reintroduce Sharia law. For eight years, it was led by governor Ahmed Yerima who, once he became a senator, replaced his fourth wife (herself a teenager) with a 13-year-old Egyptian. The ceremony took place at the central mosque in Abuja. There were many senators among those invited and there was no international protest. Bring back that girl...

“Here to educate a man means to educate a person; to educate a woman means to educate a nation.”

of the most corrupt countries in the world. The regions in the north do not enjoy the fruits of the oil boom in which the south is awash. The primary economy on the continent produces less electricity than the uninhabited North Dakota or, to compare it to a country with the same population, Bangladesh (which is increasingly more Muslim but, oddly enough, has emphasized female education more than the devastated Pakistan from which it separated more than 50 years ago).

Concerning the topic of school: education is certainly not one of the priorities of the government of president Goodluck Jonathan. There are about 4.5 million female school-age children who do not receive a proper education. Boko Haram is not the main responsible for this, even if it does everything to be blamed. Maiduguri, the capital of Borno, is home to the Future Prowess Islamic Foundation movement, born in 2002, which offers education and free breakfast to 110 orphans who have lost one or both of their parents at the hands of the extremists. Among these are the children of Habiba, 26, and Abdullahi, a mechanic. Or those of Aisha and Mohammed, who was a policeman. Also in Maiduguri, after

in reality. In the past three years, the Catholic minority has almost entirely disappeared—either by being killed or fleeing. Of the 3,000 souls, less than 200 have remained. Father John Bakeni, 38, told the British daily newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph*, his difficult experience in the parish of Saint Joseph: “Not a night passed without someone throwing the head of a dead animal over the wall as a warning sign. Often they came and knocked: ‘Infidel, leave or we will kill you.’”

It might seem like a little thing compared to the atrocities committed by Boko Haram, but the story of Fr. Bakeni provides a picture of a very difficult situation which is a breeding ground for violence. The authors of those warnings are young boys from the *al-majiri*, the local *madrassa* (Koranic schools), forced to beg on the streets for two years. The reason for this forced vagrancy is to fortify their souls and make the little ones learn what it is like to be poor. A futile test in a land where 80% of the people live on less than one dollar a day and which results in turning these baby beggars into easy prey for Boko Haram recruiters. Nevertheless, Fr. Bakeni is very careful not to point the finger at Islam: “It is true, Christians are being targeted. But the Muslims are also victims of extremism.”

But it is not just that. Nigeria is one

T



INTERVIEW

THE TRUE BATTLEFIELD



He is one of the greatest jurists in the world, and among those who know Europe best. We asked him to compare himself with the interpretation of modernity as presented by Fr. Julián Carrón in the previous issue's "Page One" section of *Traces*. Here are his answers.

BY LUCA FIORE

In 2010, he defended Italy before the European Court of Human Rights against those who were asking for the removal of crucifixes from schools. He did so wearing the kippah. He is Joseph H. H. Weiler: a New Yorker, born in South Africa in 1951, the major American expert in European Law, the President of the European University Institute in Florence, and university professor and Director of The Straus Institute for the Advanced Study of Law & Justice and The Jean Monnet Center for International and Regional Economic Law & Justice at NYU School of Law. His knowledge of European treaties is equal to his knowledge of the Torah, and this says it all. Mr. Weiler read Fr. Julián Carrón's presentation of the CL document issued in light of the European elections. Furthermore, he participated on a panel discussion, on May 15th, at the Cultural Center in Milan. The priest from Spain and >>

JOSEPH H.H. WEILER,
63 years old, Jewish,
President of the European
University Institute in Florence,
Professor at NYU School of Law

the Jew from New York are separated by more than a geographical ocean, and yet the consonance of their thought runs deep and beyond all expectations.

Person, work, progress, freedom: these are all words that are continually losing their original meaning. Why is that?

It is a difficult question, because sometimes the “original meaning” is unclear and in some cases it has a tremendous meaning. Think about the concept of “person” that did not include slaves. Even in the Bible, women were not considered as subjects in the Sinai revelation. Believers don’t have to base the value of their *Weltanschauung* [worldview] on the “original meaning,” but on a concept of the world in which the person is humble and understands the limits of the human condition—a theocentric, not an anthropocentric, conception. It is in this sense that the concepts of person, work, and freedom become different.

Joseph Ratzinger said that the illuminist attempt to mold society by separating it from the idea of God has failed. Do you agree?

Pope Ratzinger’s thought is much more refined. In any case, the failure is the result of incorrect, at times even suppositional interpretations of Illuminism.

We do not need to be equally suppositional. We do not have a monopoly on the idea of good society. We have a different concept of holiness, one that values laborious research, almost always imperfect and destined to fail. Let us always remember the words of the prophet Micah: “You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

Fr. Carrón affirms that the road to regain the foundations of Christian society is neither through a confessional state nor through a Europe based on Christian laws but through witnessing to the suitability of a Christian life. What do you think?

These are lapidary words, a fundamental teaching; God

smiled with satisfaction while listening to them.

In the face of the debate about the “new rights,” we are witnessing a strange mix of fascination and aversion. Why is this? What is at the source of these new petitions?

The problem does not lie with the request for new rights, some good and others questionable, but with a culture in which the belief in duty and personal responsibility has been lost. I’m referring to the culture of virtue shared by Aristotle, Thomas of Aquinas, and Maimonides. However, if you allow me, it seems to me that this question is tied to a way of thinking that is unable to free itself from the dictatorship of politics. Surely politics are very important and should not be neglected, but let us not allow them to colonize our soul.

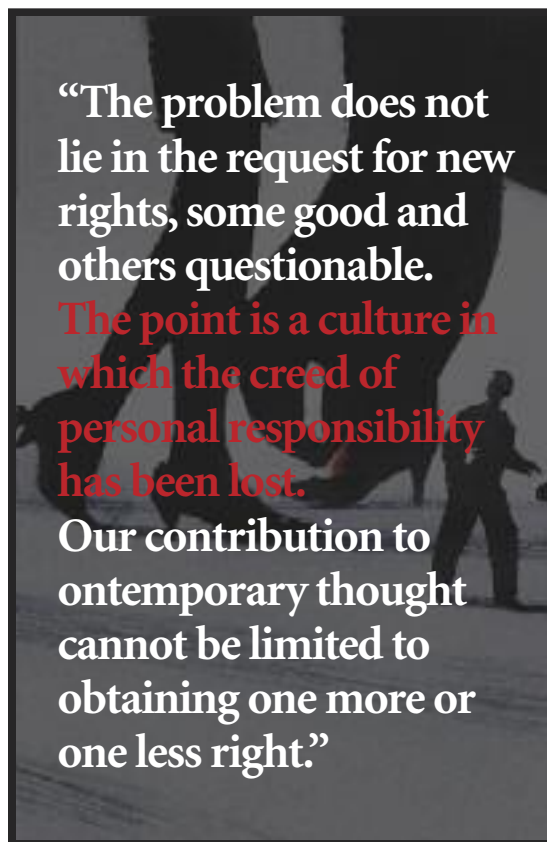
In what sense?

To give in to the logic that sees the rights as the battleground and gaining one more right is the war to be fought. Instead, the real battleground is the human and personal responsibility toward the other person; to give and not to have. Read Chapter 18 of Leviticus: forget about ritual aspects; concentrate on moral normativity. You will see a society founded on justice, solidarity, and social conscience.

You will notice something interesting: they are all contemporary values, but they are based on responsibility and duty and not on rights. Does it make us think? Our contribution to contemporary thought cannot be limited to obtaining one more or one less right.

Fr. Carrón says that we cannot be misled to believe that the desire to succeed, at the root of those in favor or against the “new rights,” can be satisfied at the legislative level. It is necessary, he says, citing Msgr. Giussani, to deepen the nature of the subject. What does this mean for you?

That we would be truly poor if we thought that every normativity of values had to be ruled by law. We would be really foolish. **»»**





» Is there a need to go deeper into the nature of the subject?

I'm modest; it is enough for me that we become adults.

What do you mean?

That, although they are important, human law, the right and the rights, must again become a modest part of the human condition and of the relationship among people.

Cesare Pavese said, "What man seeks in pleasures is an infinite, and nobody would ever give up on the hope to attain this infinity." Yet experience tells us that desire dozes off. What reawakens in you the desire for this infinite?

Surely it depends on the type of desire. I would suggest that you go and read again the book of Psalms and also the beautiful book, *Poesia dell'uomo e di Dio (Poetry of Men and of God)*, the poetic version of the Psalms by Davide Rondoni, and you will understand why the question you asked is poorly posed. Personally, I do not search for the infinite: daily life is a sufficient challenge. To spend a day without a lie, without any embarrassment in front of God, is more important to me than all the imaginable infinities. Sadly, I have had very few days like this. What is my desire? Let us make an exchange: you give me 20 days of my life without embarrassment in front of God and I let you have the infinite. For me, it would be a good deal....

Even your desire to please God is incomplete, infinite. Am I wrong? Perhaps we are saying something not

so different. What helps you to retain the desire to avoid embarrassment in front of God?

Oh, well, you have understood everything. Yet even the way things are done is important. I like Saul's road a lot: he went to look for donkeys, and without wanting to, he found the Kingdom... But notice: what he was looking for were donkeys!

"Daily life is a sufficient challenge. To spend a day without a lie, without any embarrassment in front of God, is more important to me than all the imaginable infinities."

Can politics alone defend religious liberty?

As far as the exterior elements are concerned, which are very important, yes. The internal element, however, depends on the human conscience, especially the interiorization of the sovereign possibility to say no to God. Only this interiorization guarantees a true yes. A child doesn't know that he can say yes or no to his parents. The parents await the moment in which their children rebel against them because, after that moment, when they will adhere to what the parents have told them, they will do it in a truly free way.

How can Europe become a free meeting space for those searching for truth?

Europe already offers this possibility. That encounter will take place when the believers stop being embarrassed by their creed and when more people stop deluding themselves, as Fr Carrón suggests, that the way would be to return to a confessional state or to a Europe based on Christian laws. The problem with European believers is that they are not yet used to being a minority and to having to defend their creed daily. **T**



THE STORY

“AREN’T YOU EVER AFRAID?”

Monica watches as numbers slowly scroll on the screen in the reception area of the doctor’s office. When her number appears, she approaches the desk and the nurse asks her; “Is this visit for you? Good, fill out this form.” Monica starts writing, but after a few moments, she stops and asks; “Excuse me, on the form there are only two spaces to list children; I have five. Where should I list all of them?” The nurse looks at the forms; “It’s rare to find families that are so large. There is some space on the side where you can write them in. I see that your two older children are the same age as mine. Is your oldest working or still in school?”

“He is studying at the University.”

“Then he likes to study? That’s wonderful. My son struggled a lot in school.”

“How so?”

“He is dyslexic. There have been many difficulties, many struggles. I have always tried in any way possible to help him to grow. He is a strong man now, determined, but I am always afraid.”

“I don’t understand... why?”

“Because he is not perfect; his difficulties remain. I’m of the notion that an individual person does not count in this society: one needs to surrender to this fact. When I look at him, I’m afraid that sooner or later, something will crush him.”

MONICA RECALLS THAT CHAPTER IN ONE OF FR. GIUSSANI’S BOOKS: Jesus’ gaze, was filled with tenderness toward every man that He encountered. It was that same gaze that “seized” her so many years ago. In a matter of seconds, the images of encounters and events that transformed that gaze into flesh run through her mind. “Ma’am,” she tells the nurse, “you must keep fighting. We love our children precisely because they are unique, with all of their difficulties, and all of their mistakes. This is the only certainty we can convey to them. Even though the common mentality, as you said, would claim the contrary. I’m certain...”

The nurse interrupts her; “Aren’t you afraid? You seems so sure...” The nurse pauses, and then suddenly; “Perhaps I understand: you are a follower of Pope Francis. He is the only one these days who is so certain and fearless.”

Monica smiles. “You are right, I am certain because I have found people like Pope Francis. They show me that living, fighting, and dying are worthwhile because each one of us has an immense value; we are loved for who we are.”

Behind her, someone huffs and whispers; “How much longer?!” The nurse does not seem to notice. She says: “All right. Tell me then, if at the end of the visit, the doctor were to tell you that you have a tumor, wouldn’t you be afraid? Wouldn’t your certainty crumble?”

Monica thinks about her sick friends, about their faces. She responds, “I would be crazy with fear. Even then however, my certainty would remain, because I have seen that even with a tumor, one can feel loved and certain of a good that is greater than pain and fear.”

The nurse’s eyes are moist. She reaches out and firmly grasps Monica’s hand: “Having met you is the best thing that could have happened to me today.” Monica replies: “I feel the same way. Thank you so much!” The nurse comes around the desk and they hug. “You need to go now, it’s your turn. Second floor, examination room number 50.”

ONCE THE EXAM IS OVER, as Monica is heading for the exit, she hears someone calling to her. “Ma’am, wait a moment.” She turns to see the nurse on duty. “Did I forget something?” “No, no, do not worry. I just need to give you this” as the nurse hands her a note. Monica opens it while in the elevator; “I am the nurse who spoke with you today. I’m a non-believer, but I will pray to God for you, that the results of the tests are negative. The world needs people like you. Thank you. Come back and visit.” Monica will return.

