

EXERCISES of the FRATERNITY

OF COMMUNION AND LIBERATION



*Abraham:
the Birth of the "I"*

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Al Reverendo Monsignore

LUIGI GIUSSANI

Sono stato informato che numerosi membri della Fraternità di Comunione e Liberazione prendono parte all'annuale corso di Esercizi spirituali, e molto volentieri assicuro il mio orante ricordo, perché in questi giorni di preghiera e di meditazione essi possano approfondire la loro riflessione sulla vocazione di ogni cristiano alla luce della perenne fedeltà a Dio.

L'idea di vocazione si manifesta per la prima volta nella storia dell'umanità con la vocazione di Abramo. La persona, chiamata con il proprio nome, prende coscienza del suo rapporto con Dio, e può liberamente collaborare alla missione affidatale dal Creatore.

Attraverso le persone che Egli chiama, Dio vuole formare un popolo per sé, consapevole del proprio ruolo e del senso dell'umana esistenza. Dio è fedele e la vita del popolo che si è scelto, pur tra tante difficoltà, manifesta quanto sia irreversibile la scelta da Lui operata e irrevocabile la nostra vocazione.

Gesù, Signore della storia, dà forma definitiva al popolo dei credenti scaturito dalla fede di Abramo. Con la nuova Alleanza, vengono radunati in unità coloro che Cristo sceglie e che in Lui credono. Ha origine così la Chiesa, di cui Egli è il Signore. Anche ai membri di questo popolo, lungo i secoli, non è risparmiata la battaglia per la fedeltà e non è evitato il tradimento. La Chiesa rimane tuttavia lo strumento privilegiato con cui Dio chiama l'umanità alla comunione con Lui e la educa a camminare secondo i suoi eterni precetti.

La realizzazione di questo progetto salvifico è affidato alla disponibilità di ogni cristiano, perché si lasci penetrare e permeare dalle «vie di Dio» (cfr *Is* 55,8). Quanto più cresce la presenza divina nelle realtà umane, tanto più la religiosità svolge un ruolo significativo nella storia, rendendo l'uomo più uomo e facilitando il riconoscimento di Cristo che chiama tutti alla salvezza.

Auguro di cuore che gli Esercizi spirituali apportino i frutti di bene auspicati, e invoco il Signore perché sia a Lei di conforto e di sostegno fisico e spirituale. Con questi sentimenti, Le imparto con paterno affetto una speciale Benedizione, che estendo volentieri ai partecipanti agli Esercizi e a tutti i membri della Fraternità di Comunione e Liberazione.

Dal Vaticano, 25 Aprile 2001

Friday evening, May 18

• INTRODUCTION

During the entrance and exit:

Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony no. 7 in A major, opus Q2

H. von Karajan - Berliner Philharmoniker

"Spirto Gentil, " Deutsche Grammophon

Fr Pino (Stefano Alberto). As we listen to the heartrending strains of the second movement of this Seventh Symphony, one fact rises imposingly, the fact of our destiny, of the gaze on our life, and this gaze is trained on the infinite greatness of Mystery.

Well aware of the sacrifices we have made to come here, well aware that this is a new step forward, a new thing that is beginning, a new thing that is happening, and we are not capable of it, we wish first of all to ask for clarity and freedom, that this our gathering together, this our Fraternity may mark the beginning of a true and real change in our life.

I wish first of all - before each of you - to greet Fr Giussani who is with us, who will be with us, linked up with us, during these days, and then to greet in Fr Giussani's name the friends who are linked with us live, from Vienna, from Hessen, Germany, from London, from Dublin, from Swidnica, Poland, from Paris, from Cluj Napoca, Rumania, from Madrid, from Einsiedeln, and from Praia Grande, Portugal. A total of seventeen countries are linked with us directly by satellite, and another thirty-four will participate in the Exercises in the coming weeks.

I wish to remind you that this year too, Fr Giussani has chosen that the mode of this gesture, in which each one of us is called to participate responsibly, be a communional, choral one. The introduction by Fr Negri this evening will be followed by lectures given by me and by Julian Carron, and then the assembly will be led by Julian and Giancarlo Cesana. This is precisely to signify that the truth of the charism, which is an origin, which has an historic name, lives safeguarded by a friendship, a unity.

I ask you now to begin together by making the most realistic gesture that each of us can make before this infinite greatness of Mystery, which

is a benign presence in our life: to ask the Spirit, to ask with all the truth of our being, that something new may take place. It is a new thing - we have been reminded - and we are not capable of it. For this reason, consciousness of the event becomes one with entreaty, with prayer. We stand and sing "Come, Holy Spirit."

Come Holy Spirit

Luigi Negri. Three brief suggestions, first of all to make my intelligence more ready and my heart more eager to follow, thus as an aid to the awareness of each of us and the free response of each of us, echoing also, and in some way formulating some of the educative concerns which Fr Giussani has presented and communicated to us.

1. A first suggestion aims at answering this question: where do we live, how do we live? Where are we, in what world do we live? What form is taken by this culture of society, the world around us? (Or rather in us, because it is around us in so far as it first and more profoundly conditions us from within).

The ancient image of the people of Israel enslaved in Egypt comes back into our heart and our awareness as a definitive word: we are slaves of an evil world, we live in a dark age. The magisterium of Fr Giussani in recent years always, but especially since *Religious Awareness in Modern Man*, has, through a series of other precise discussions, enlightened us about this. I want to quote a passage from one of the most lucid pages that Fr Giussani has devoted to making us understand where we are and how we live, a phrase from the introduction to *In Search of the Human Face*, which is one of the clearest analyses of the condition of contemporary man. "One could say that we are living at a time when civilization seems to be ending: a civilization only evolves, in fact, to the degree that the value of every single T is helped to emerge and become clear."¹

We live in an age when this does not happen. Man does not know who he is, where he comes from, where he is going, he does not know the meaning of the things, great and small, that happen to him. Confusion and bewilderment prevail, a lack of clear points of reference, a lack of clear criteria by which to make operative decisions, to assume the responsibilities of life, it is a world in which the identity of the 'I' seems to be daily placed in crisis: an inconsistent "I", incapable of creation, incapable of responsibility.

Fr Giussani has also taught us in these years the historical and cultural reason for all this: it is the ultimate consequence of a secular attempt to conceive of man without God, therefore to think of him as against God, to think of the individual, the family, and society as without religious referents, without a quest for truth, without a religious sense, and thus without Christ, who is the accomplished and definitive answer to man's religious sense. We are paying the consequences. In the disintegration of our humanity and our society, we prove that this point of departure was unrealistic. A statement by Fr de Lubac in one of the first books Fr Giussani suggested to my high school generation, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, comes back to illuminate all these years, but especially the most recent ones. Fr de Lubac said: man can organize the world against God, to be sure, but when he has organized the world against God he realizes that he has organized it against man, because God is necessary to man, He is necessary for man to understand himself, He is necessary so that man may have clear criteria for judgment and behavior.

The stress on this first point is anything but catastrophic, it is a real observation of the condition in which we find ourselves: it is not only with regard to the great international events (although there we see all this tragically documented), but is an inconsistency and a confusion that begins in the relationship between man and woman, between parents and children, in the area of the elementary situations of shared life. We do not know who we are, we live in a society that has kept us from searching for God, that keeps man from searching for God and condemns him to become an object.

Beware, my friends, of thinking that these things apply only to others! Let's not underestimate the weight of this slavery, of this devastating presence in the consciousness and heart of each of us. Many times when we speak of faith we reduce it to a small, poor thing, one that does not take up the challenge of this situation, that does not overcome this situation.

This is a first observation: each of you will apply it to himself; for me, it is an exhaustive one. Like the ancient people of Israel, we are slaves to the power of this world, like the ancient people of Israel we risk losing sight of our identity, of our value; like the ancient people of Israel we can lose the sense of our human, even sooner than our Christian, dignity.

2. Then, the second point. I hope to be able to express it not as a matter of course, and I ask Christ that you may listen to it not as a matter of course: faith is another world, faith is the end of slavery, in Jesus Christ dead and risen there is a new being in the world, in whom slavery does

not take root, slavery remains powerless. There is a new man in the world, who knows where he comes from, he is the son of God, he knows where he is going, he knows the profound meaning of his existence, minute by minute, circumstance after circumstance: to give glory to God in the close and caring communion with his brothers, to the point of dying for them. Slavery has ended with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"The Redeemer of Man, Jesus Christ, is the center of the universe and of history."¹ When the Pope twenty years ago, in his first encyclical, reposed the Christian announcement in these absolutely radical and simple terms, just as Fr Giussani has said it so many times during these years, we were seized by an utterly irresistible emotion, because he was reproposing, in the very same words, the earliest things Fr Giussani told us, GS students of the first generation.

Christ the redeemer of man: God has saved His people and saves His people in the presence of a new man who lives in the world. There is a giant - the Psalm tells us - who treads the path of man, of the world, and of history.⁴ The Lord is a giant who treads the path of history. Faith makes us participants in this new thing, this ongoing liberation from slavery. It is the end of slavery to nothingness, the end of slavery to inconsistency and confusion, it is the end of slavery to violence, but not by a plan, not by an ideology, not by a doctrine. "Not a doctrine will save us, but the acknowledgement of the mystery of a Presence."⁵

We have received faith, we have encountered faith in our friendship so caring and concrete, so demanding as to make us undertake before the Church to choose this companionship as our road; we have inherited salvation, we take part in it here and now, we are part of this new man, of this new being. Not only is Christ the full man, the true man, but also all those who believe, those who participate in His life, all those who from generation to generation make their lives an offering to Him: the loving recognition of His presence and the offering of life to Him, as we hear in the School of Community." We are within the irresistible victory of God over evil, which is Jesus of Nazareth, dead and risen. Christ is characterized by an absolute awareness of this newness, and those who follow Him inherit this awareness, as St Paul says: "We are those who have the mind of Christ."⁷

We have the mind of Christ because - as Fr Giussani has shared with us in these days - Christianity is the way in which the God-made-man saw things. The most profound aspect of Christianity is that of being a mentality: it is an event, which generates a new mentality, a new way of being, of conceiving of life, a new way of using things, a new way of

dealing with reality; a *logos*, a mentality. The most acute and humanly persuasive aspect of faith is that it is a new way of living, a new awareness of reality. Unless we arrive at this, Christianity is weak and fragile. Paul VI said that faith must penetrate the deep layers of humanity, must reach down to where the criteria for the perception of things are formed.⁸ If it does not reach that far, faith is dead. John Paul II said something that Fr Giussani must have commented hundreds of times: "Unless faith becomes culture it has not been really welcomed, fully lived, humanly rethought."

Faith is the salvation that God gives us in Christ and that has - as an imposing and persuasive, mobilizing characteristic - the fact of being a new way of life: the culture of truth, of beauty, of justice and good, instead of the culture of nothingness. The great fight between Christ and the devil, which traverses all phases of history, is the fight between two cultures: the culture of slavery, nothingness, powerlessness, violence, and estrangement, and the culture of truth, good, beauty, and justice, which is made an experience of our humanity by our belonging to the mystery of Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Church.

But the fundamental characteristic of this event is that it has within itself the force of a new culture: it is a *mens*, as Fr Giussani has told us, it is a *logos*." Didn't we learn - some of us (like me) forty-five years ago - that the fundamental dimensions of the community are culture, charity and mission?" Culture, that is, a new conception of life, a new criterion for the relationship with reality (from school subjects to the great events of life and history); a new way of treating ourselves and others (charity); and an irresistible dynamism, i.e., reaching out in order to propose this experience, to the farthest ends of the earth (mission).

3. The third observation is a blow, a blow that we have to receive, one that Fr Giussani wishes us to receive in these exercises. Fr Giussani says: You are Christians, but you do not have the Christian mentality. Therefore you are not Christian, or you are not yet truly Christian. Let me read his own words: "We manage to be Christian without being Christian, that is, without being Christians in our mentality. Someone could have heard all our words, all our ideas and speeches, and yet not be a Christian, because this experience has not become a *mens*, this experience has not become a mentality."

These Exercises were conceived so that our intelligence might once again be converted. Christ proposed faith to the first ones certainly as a way to holiness, but first of all as a change of mentality. The first thing

Christ asked of His own, after announcing the advent of the Kingdom of God, that is, His presence, was just one thing: "Change your mentality."-'

We are here to help one another to change mentality. These days will help us progress in a change of mentality, so that faith may not be something formal, not a sentiment that gives shape to some areas of our lives (Sunday morning, or some moments when we perform canonical gestures), but then, where life decisions are to be made (in the relationship between man and woman, with the children, in the vicissitudes of society, in the face of this terrible expropriation of our culture on the part of the dominant mentality) where do we go to fish for our criteria? We stealthily go get them from the dominant mentality, we draw them from television, the movies, radio, the mass media.

The others are less culpable than we are - Fr Giussani seems to say — because they have not received what we have received. We have received Christianity as the form of life, as the unitary form of life; we have received Christianity as that fundamental unity of thought and of feeling that only the Lord makes possible in the life of those who believe.

Let us follow, during these days, asking that the change of mentality may come about, that our faith may achieve the dignity of culture, that it may become a *mens*, a mentality, a way of judging, a way of being in the world and therefore judging, because St Paul said: "The man who lives of the Spirit judges everything and is judged by nothing." ¹³ Asking that this new mentality be born, that it may place us in the world assured, certain, certain of our identity, certain of the new judgment that only believers can give because they participate in the *mens* of Christ, certain of our task which - whatever the circumstances of our life may be - is to proclaim Christ to all men, to make possible what the Pope once defined as the mission of the Church: this continual encounter between Christ and man's heart.¹⁴

May this new mentality affirm itself, may faith become the new mentality in us, or may it be renewed as mentality, may it become more profoundly our mentality!

There is a starting point, and it is the figure of Abraham. Because Abraham is the beginning of God's gesture towards man, he is the beginning of God's positive concern for man, therefore he is the road by which man may recognize himself, the beginning, because the accomplishment of this mysterious reality of Abraham is in the definitive truth of Christ and of the new people that is born of Him, a people that lives mysteriously in the world in the sign of the Church, where the way to participate in it and to live it is the charism of Fr Giussani.

This is the journey, and this is how we can participate in the perennial youth of Christ and of the Church. May what we have been given be really necessary, may it affect all our dimensions, may it become the criterion of judgment and of action, and in the measure of our fidelity, the grace that the Lord cannot fail to grant us, may it also become, in its own time, the fruit of holiness which has already been placed in our hearts," as the apostle James says. The fruit must ripen: if it does not become culture, if in the Christian man Christianity is not affirmed as a *mens*, then even holiness is less clear, is less evident, is less meaningful. Holiness is the witness of a new way of being and of thinking; thus, even holiness is animated by the awareness of the newness of a creature that is born of faith.

Christian holiness is certainly, above all, a great witness to newness of life and of consciousness: let us listen with this heart, let us follow the Exercises with this attitude so that God may renew in us the experience of a new judgment born of faith.

The Kingdom of God has come, it is here in our midst, it is Jesus Christ dead and risen. We need to be converted to Him, so that His presence may become in us the principle of a new mentality and judgment.

HOLY MASS

**HOMILY BY HIS EXCELLENCY MSGR GIANNI DANZI
SECRETARY OF THE GOVERNORATE OF VATICAN CITY**

The wish that becomes a prayer expressed by the Holy Father to Fr Giussani, and thus to me and to each of you, to each of us who takes part in these days in such a crucial moment for our personal lives and for the life of what is dearest to us, the Church, and that portion of the Church we have encountered thanks to Fr Giussani's charism, struck me to the core. The Holy Father said "that they may be able to reflect more deeply on the vocation of every Christian in the light of perennial faithfulness to God."¹⁶ But how can I, how can we reflect more deeply on this perennial faithfulness to God? Since we are so frail, so touched and marked by evil, how is this possible?

What the Church has told us, tonight too, with the words from the Gospel of St. John, is truly consoling, "You did not choose me, no, I chose you."¹⁷ Remaining in faithfulness to God is possible for each of us because the initiative was not and is not ours, but God's. "You did not choose me, no, I chose you."

Another thing struck me in what the Holy Father said: "God is faithful, and the life of the people that He has chosen, albeit amongst a great many difficulties, makes evident how irreversible is the choice made by Him and how irrevocable is our vocation." "God's choice of me, of you, of all of us is irreversible and irrevocable because He is the one who made it; not because we chose it, nor because we are suitable for this mission, but because He summoned us together to this new work in history.

I do not know how time will judge Fr Giussani's fatherhood in the Church. For me it is sure that he has been and is the father of my faith and of my faith in the Church. Perhaps this fatherhood applies to many of you too. As I listened to these words of the Pope, I said to myself: What if I had not had the luck, the good fortune to encounter a man like Fr Giussani, to whom the Spirit has given a particular charism for today's history? I would have been incapable of understanding these words; and if I were incapable of understanding them, we can guess how incapable I would be, we would be, of living them.

I believe - and I am saying this in full awareness of my responsibility as a Bishop, as being part of the Apostolic succession - that a great burden is on all of us: it is the burden of not mystifying the charism which the Lord gave us through the person, the work, and the words of Fr Giussani, for each of us, and of ensuring that through our life it may reach the ends of the earth. "You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last."

Fr Pino. Let me read the Holy Father's personal letter to Fr Giussani.
"Reverend Monsignor Luigi Giussani.

I have been informed that numerous members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation are taking part in the annual course of Spiritual Exercises, and I willingly assure you my prayerful remembrance, that in these days of prayer and meditation they may be able to reflect more deeply on the vocation of every Christian in the light of perennial faithfulness to God.

The idea of vocation manifests itself for the first time in the history of mankind with the calling of Abraham. The person, called by his own name, becomes aware of his relationship with God and can freely cooperate in the mission entrusted to him by the Creator.

Through the persons that He calls, God intends to form for Himself a people aware of its role and of the meaning of human existence. God is faithful, and the life of the people that He has chosen, albeit amongst a great many

difficulties, makes evident how irreversible is the choice made by Him and how irrevocable is our vocation. Jesus, the Lord of history, gives definitive form to the people of believers who welled forth from the faith of Abraham. The new Covenant brings together in unity those whom Christ chooses and who believe in Him. Thus the Church is born, whose Lord He is. Through the centuries, even the members of this people were not spared the battle to remain faithful, nor could they avoid betrayal. The Church remains, nonetheless, the privileged instrument by which God calls mankind to communion with Him and educates men to walk according to His eternal precepts.

The accomplishment of this salvific plan is entrusted to the readiness of every Christian to being penetrated and permeated by the "ways of God" (cf. Is 55:8). The more the divine presence increases in human realities, the more will religiosity play a significant role in history, making man more of a man and making it easier to recognize Christ who calls everyone to salvation.

It is my heartfelt wish that the Spiritual Exercises may bear the hoped-for fruits of good, and I entreat the Lord to be to you the source of comfort and support, both physical and spiritual. With these sentiments, I impart to you, in paternal affection, a special Blessing which I gladly extend to the participants in the Exercises and all the members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation.

From the Vatican, April 25, 2001, John Paul II"

And today Fr Giussani sent a telegram of thanks, also on the occasion of the Holy Father's birthday. Let me read it to you:

"Your Holiness, in unison with the entire Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, gathered together in Rimini for the annual Spiritual Exercises on the theme *Abraham: the Birth of the* " /", I give thanks to the Lord for your birthday by singing: "Sto lat, sto lat niech zyje, zyje nam!"

Our meeting opened with the surprise of a letter sent to us by Your Holiness, the most important text of these Exercises, one that illuminates our hearts with the greatest light, confirms our faith, and awakens in us that gratitude which comes only in front of something divine.

We wish to confide in Your Holiness that in the history of these years, we identify ever more with a sense of sonship towards Your Person, certain of our destiny as disciples of the successor of Christ, as like Abraham we are mysteriously chosen to be His people in history.

May Our Lady of Fatima, just as She miraculously saved Your life, obtain from Her risen Son the miracle of sanctity for us and for all our friends in the Fraternity throughout the world."

Saturday Morning, May 19

• FIRST MEDITATION

The event of a birth

During the entrance and exit:

*"Russian Folk Songs, " vol. 1, A. V. Svesnikov, Chorus of the State Academy
of Russian Songs, "Spirto Gentil, " Deutsche Grammophon*

Angelus

Lauds

Fr Pino. I shall read you three telegrams Fr Giussani has received on the occasion of these Exercises.

The first is from His Excellency Msgr Angelo Scola, Rector of the Pontificia Universita Lateranense.

"Dearest Fr Giussani,

In the contradictory folds of this our society, where can one find 'loci' to live according to St Paul's invitation 'As much as possible, to the utmost of your ability, be at peace with everyone'?¹⁰

There can be only one adequate answer: there where, by the gift of the new blood relationship with Christ, the genesis and destiny of the 'I' and of the people are made concrete. For in the Christian community as it is tangibly expressed, not even frailty and sin manage to snuff out the cry to the Father that He continually 'renew the face of the earth.'¹¹

Dearest Fr Gius, I pray that through these Holy Exercises the deep sweetness of the Catholic charism You were granted may go on generating in the world similar loci of hope. I ask of Our Lady that each of us may be a witness to this miracle.

Angelo Scola"

The second is from His Excellency Msgr Javier Martinez, Bishop of Cordoba.

"Dearest friends, I join you all who are gathered for the Exercises of the Fraternity, full of gratitude for the occasion we are given to experi-

ence the Grace of the charism to which God has called us, and which is renewed constantly under the guidance of Fr Gius' fatherhood.

May we, following and imitating his humanity, live reality in the awareness of the mysterious initiative of God and in the dedication, full of affection and responsibility, to the history that He is building.

I pray the Lord that this gesture may constitute for each of you a decisive moment, one of real newness, that will make us truer and more grateful witnesses to His presence in the world. With all my affection,

Javier Martinez, Bishop of Cordoba"

The third is from His Excellency Msgr Filippo Santoro, Auxiliary Bishop of Rio de Janeiro.

"Dear Fr Giussani,

Although it is impossible for me to participate in the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, I am close to all of you, grateful to belong to the same body and the same charism.

We have begun the new millennium strengthened by the testimony of the Holy Father, which urges us to new boldness in the journey to holiness and the mission '*due in altum*,' and by your call which leads us into the heart of our origin, into the Event of Jesus. I thank you, along with many friends both old and new, for this school that opens us up to the experience of Mystery in its unfathomable depth and in its human simplicity.

I pray to the Virgin Aparecida that she may sustain your health and lead us, in every corner of the earth, to be the beautiful sign of Christ's presence for the happiness of mankind.

Filippo Santoro, Auxiliary Bishop of Rio de Janeiro"

1. The antecedent. Where is the 'I'?

So that the work we do in these days may lead us to new awareness of the original factors of our experience, let's ask ourselves first of all (last night Fr Negri introduced it very effectively) what it means concretely, in terms of our existence, that the 'I' is not there.

Each of you could say to me: "What do you mean? We have been working on *The Religious Sense*,²¹ for more than two years we have been aware of the original factors of the 'I'— reason and freedom -: why sud-

denly, like a clap of thunder, like a stroke of lightning, does this cry that resounded at the beginning of the year come into our life: "Where is the T'?, We have to find the 'I'?"- Let's stick to our own life, let's take a look around. If we were asked... if we suddenly were to ask our fellow worker, on the subway, "What is your 'I'?" the first answer would be - as the editorial in the May issue of *Traces* says' - "I'm from Milan... I'm my mother's... my father's..."; but everything would be a bit embarrassing, a bit full of echoes of the confusion all around us. Ultimately, the answer to the question, "What is the 'I'?" tends to come today more out of a stammering of conventional phrases than of real awareness.

The problem is that an existential inquiry is not enough, an instinctive reaction is not enough, because all of this does not bring us out of the confusion which marks today's life, it does not really bring out a face, highlight a protagonist. This speck, this grain of dust which is the word 'I', this gasp can no longer manage to be the protagonist of a history, and, without a history, how can there be an 'I'?

Claudio Magris observed in an article: "In a world and a culture that are more and more virtual, the unity and continuity of the 'I' founded on conscience and on values appear not only to be at risk, but are almost forgotten in an indistinct pulverization in which everything is interchangeable with everything else, in a universal indifference which crumbles apart sentiments, visions of the world, the hierarchy of affections, the very meaning of experience. The individual 'I,' constantly dismantled and assembled like in a videogame, attempts to save itself by grabbing at things. It saves itself' - Magris remarks with some bitterness - "in the *inventory*,"^J by grabbing here and there at something, at whatever it manages to catch.

Hannah Arendt helps us further to grasp the question, the climate in which each of us finds himself living, even if he is in the Fraternity, even if he lives the Movement: "The reduction of man to a bunch of reactions," Arendt says, "separates him, with the same radicality as mental illness, from everything in him that is personality."²⁵

It is this confusion, this pulverization, this fragmentation that enters into each of us.

Franz Werfel offers a vivid picture of how the driving force of human beings becomes dispersed: "They have all thrown themselves after the petty and the insignificant.

This is so evident! It is a point of fact. It is not primarily a reproach we have to make to ourselves, but a coming to grips with a situation which - as Fr Giussani observes in a stunning passage of *L'autocoscienza del*

cosmo — is born precisely of our wounded condition: the original attraction decays immediately into estrangement, pride, the claim to measure things ourselves, but this leaves us alone and plunged in confusion.²⁷

If we reflect on what we are living, what it is our lot to live, it is not very different from the situation of the prehistory of mankind. Yesterday Fr Negri recalled the reality of slavery in Egypt. But the Bible narrative, right at the beginning, after man's first sin, shows us an emblem of this confusion, on one hand, and of man's loneliness on the other: the Tower of Babel:^{2*} confusion as a result of man's claim to be the one to plot the path, to be the one - remember Victor Hugo's poem "Le Pont"²⁰ - to get to heaven by his own strength. This confusion is made up of many idols, of an impelling need, of a desire to honor something greater, of which we as yet know nothing, and so we turn to the things that impress us most immediately: the great starry sky, the moon (Abraham's ancestors were moon worshippers), the sun, the fire, the rocks that were a point of stability in the desert; it is a heap of peoples, of tongues, of different customs. As a writer who has studied Abraham, Vogels, observes: "The prehistory of humanity ends up in a *cul-de-sac*. The story of the Tower of Babel describes how men do not understand one another any more, and end up in the maximum of confusion.... Suddenly, towards the end of this prehistory, there appears a notion that was never mentioned before, sterility: 'Sarah was barren, she did not have children.' Mankind had taken many initiatives to conquer the world that had been entrusted to it. ... Was there still hope for a humanity that experienced confusion, sterility and renunciation?"⁵"

It is not an exaggeration to say: the 'I' is not there. It is there, but it does not live as a protagonist, it does not make history, it does not generate; there is no clarity in it because there is no awareness of the goal of a journey.

2. From the 'non-I' to the 'I'

Second passage. "To this human existence, Mystery has given an answer. He has answered, as though in a dialogue, as though man's cry were cried out within God's heart, within God's house, which is the eternal, which is paradise; as though the cry were cried right in there."

a) *The event of the beginning*

"Yahweh said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your kindred and your father's house for a country which I shall show you; and I shall make you a great nation, I shall bless you and make your name famous; you are to

be a blessing! I shall bless those who bless you, and shall curse those who curse you, and all clans on earth will bless themselves by you."³

In these words from Genesis, the beginning of chapter 12, to be precise, we find the event of a beginning: "*Yahweh said to Abram...*" It is like the rising of a dawn, it is a new dawning, "An undefined light" - Fr Giussani observes - "...because it was like a great dawn that was breaking, in the history of mankind, within the soul, through the soul of Abraham, since this is the place where the meaning of all the history of the world, the meaning of every man's existence, is communicated. The event begins to communicate itself by which God becomes a factor within our lives, within the life of man, by which God becomes one of us, one of us, like us. Here there is still the shadow of prophecy, the first glimmering, the first hint; but the value of life and the individual, the value of history, lies in this event, this occurrence. The thing from which we can draw the reason for feeling secure, our way of acting, the motive for our acts, our own contentment, the certainty by which we walk, is an event: it is not so much a reflection on the world, an analysis of situations, the thing from which we take our directions, but it is the wonder of this event - that God came down and 'mixed in' with us - it is the marvel of this event, the contemplation of this event. The wonder of this event is the beginning of our rebirth, of our life."³

"God has 'mixed in' with us." Mixed in, this is what characterizes how the Lord, the Lord of everything, enters into a relationship with Abraham, using the right terms, terms he, a Bedouin, a nomad sheik, can understand; He speaks of the land, He speaks of children, of the stars, of wives, of cattle and goods; a Semitic language, concrete, made up of things, but at the same time all this concreteness, all these things are the point, the road through which awareness of Mystery springs up, awareness of an Otherness, awareness - here is the beginning - of a relationship unimaginable up to now, of a relationship, a Presence that embraces life, that embraces things, that embraces affections. They are everyday terms, and at the same time, through them it is like a dawning, like the beginning of a deeper perspective, of an infinite perspective, the deepening of Mystery, of Destiny as something other, other than self.⁴

Then, the first characteristic is the event of this beginning, the beginning of the discovery of a new thing, as the event that irrupts into Abram's life.

b) *Vocation.* "*You will no longer be called Abram... "*

There is a second passage. We have read it already in Genesis, chapter 12: "I shall make your name famous." In chapter 17, God changes

Abram's name, indicating a new reality, a new awareness, a new task: "And you are no longer to be called Abram [which means 'the father is exalted']; your name is to be Abraham, ['father of many nations']."-"

This insistence on the name, which can seem irrelevant to us, in reality for a Semite is everything. Think about the beginning of creation: to call things by name means to possess them. In this moment the very name "Abraham" comes from God; here his name indicates the synthesis of his personality, the new possession, and through this possession, this new generation, the new possession of all relationships, of all things. Saying 'I', discovering the self as birth of a new awareness begins from this hearing one's new name called. Here history begins as the gesture of a call that another makes to me, here begins life as relationship with God, because God calls Abraham by name and makes Himself known with a name: it is the beginning of a no longer confused attempt at establishing a relationship with Mystery through particulars, through idols, through the forces of nature. It is a You. He does not say His name immediately (He will reveal it to Moses: "I am He who is"), but here begins for the first time in the history of mankind after the fall, after man's first sin, here, like a new dawn, begins this opening of a relationship between Mystery and man.

"The Lord called Abram: 'You are no longer to be called Abram.'" It is from this moment, in this instant that a person saying 'I', thinking of himself, looking at his life, his existence, can begin to say "I am made by an Other, I am You who make me."

What event is this hearing oneself called by name? It is called *vocation*, precisely as the discovery of the creating gesture of God, the discovery of a seed of total positivity in my life: "God called *me* out of nothingness. Among billions of possible beings He chose and called *me*. My life is *constituted* by this call, my life goes on because He *continues* to call me, preventing me from falling back into the silence of nothingness from which I was drawn. My life is a Voice calling me, the powerful Voice of Him to whom everything is indebted for what it is."^w

c) *Vocation is for a task*

My life is vocation, and this vocation is a *task*, it coincides with a task. One becomes a protagonist because he is called by name, he receives a face, he receives a consciousness that unifies him with reality. You become the lord of reality, a protagonist, not because you possess reality, but because you discover it to be made by an Other, you discover it welling up from an Other, you receive it from an Other as the progressive

unfolding of a plan which is not your own, but which unfolds through you, through you is woven. The value of life, of work, of relationships, is an Other; the point where life is tensed is an Other. It is through this name by which you are called that you discover the You as everything within each thing. "God is all in all."⁴⁰

Abraham's story makes it "immediately evident here that the most realistic plan concerning his life is not his own, but an Other's. And this is something he [Abraham] verifies over time."⁴¹ There is a promise, and this extraordinary dialogue between man's desire, the desire of which man is made, the desire of man's heart and the greatness of the promise, (greater than man) in the course of time begins to be fulfilled. But not as man's strength, his consistency.

"The descendants I give you."⁴¹ I promised you a son. He is not the son of the slave-girl, he is not the son of Hagar - whom you chose because Sarah was barren. "Such a one will not be your heir; no, your heir will be the issue of your own body."⁴² And, even before, the promise of a new land. "Go out, I shall give you this country."⁴¹ No aspect of life is left out: each aspect is truly possessed, dramatically possessed in the consciousness that it is part of a plan, of a task. Here is the newness, the new content of consciousness. Circumstances remain - we shall soon see - dramatic, hard, complex, even ambiguous, but dominated by the evidence of the initiative of an Other who is their ultimate meaning: "It is I who will give you offspring, it is I who will give you a dwelling, it is I who will give you a land."

There is a final discovery. The task is not something added to existence: the fact that life is vocation, that life is a task, is the discovery of a fatherhood at work within the vicissitudes of my existence: "Do not be afraid! I am your shield and shall give you a very great reward."⁴⁴ This fatherhood: not because He has made us, called us: but because he constantly creates us, constantly calls us. "God has not *made* us. He *makes* us. Not only is He at the origin of our life, but He is the Principle of our being now, of our every action, even the merely human ones: without Him we would not be able to subsist [we can do nothing]. He continually creates and recreates us, giving us life moment by moment."⁴⁵

3. Life is founded on belonging

What does this evidence of being created, of being called, of being called for a task and generated, recreated in it, sustained instant by instant, give rise to in our lives? What is the content that marks our consciousness, the

throbbing of our soul, the moves made by our freedom? What is it called? *Consciousness of dependence, of belonging to Him*: it is the evidence that in life, in the course of existence, what conquers is His faithfulness, His fatherhood; that the victory is the course of this Covenant of the Lord with us, the Covenant made by God.

When Abraham asks Him about the promise ("What will You give me? I am going on my way childless, and the heir of my house is my slave, a servant of mine"),⁴⁶ God repeats His promise: "Look at the sky and count the stars if you can: ... just so will be your descendants. Abram put his faith in Yahweh and this was reckoned to him as uprightness."⁴⁷

He believed. This is why Abraham is father, the father of a multitude of peoples, father of us, father in faith. "A man who in the eyes, in the content of his thought, in his way of facing problems, hardships, aspirations and fears, had that Presence alive... In his relationship with it lay the substance of his life, and even its expressive face. So that, when as the supreme test of that relationship, of that road in which they had walked together, of that involvement of God in a familiarity with him, God asked him to offer his son,"⁴⁸ Isaac (which means "God's smile": to Sarah's skeptical laughter, God answered with His smile), Abraham adheres. And in our history these trials, these sacrifices are multiplied in a mysterious way, as an urge to put to the test the truth of our consciousness, our totality of surrender. "How much in keeping with his consciousness it must have been to adhere to what was demanded of him, because his consciousness was woven of that Presence: Abraham would not have been Abraham had he refused. This is why he became the prototype of all those [the Lord chooses, of all those] the Lord will choose."⁴⁹

It is with no little emotion that I read the conclusion of the lecture on Abraham given by Enzo in 1978, which Alberto published in *Traces*. "Man is put to the test when he has to offer to God the thing he holds most dear, the thing that for him is everything or almost everything. [God,] to be truly acknowledged as God, has to be preferred above everything else. This is the object of Abraham's obedience: total offering."¹¹ What God asked of Enzo, of Emilia, these mysterious sacrifices which are in our midst, which are for us - through the witness of our friends who live them with the greatness of someone who lets a father generate him - all this is an evident factor of greatness in our life, even though the Mystery remains a mystery. But it is so evident that it is for a greatness, for a new generation! And it is so evident that each one of us generates not according to what he wishes, loves, thinks, but according to the mysterious plan of One who is Father to us. And there is a father who

reminds us of this, and shows it to us. Thus we are brought into this dizzying radicality, so familiar and so mysterious. Alberto added as a comment to Enzo's text really one of Giussani's most beautiful sentences: "One cannot be a father, one who generates, if he does not have anyone as a father. Not: if 'he has not had,' but if 'he does not have' anyone as a father. If he does not have anyone as a father, this means that it is not an event, not an encounter, not an act of generation. Generation is a present act. The problem then is to follow. This is indicated better by the word 'sonship'. A son takes his stock from his father, he makes his father's stock his own; he is constituted of the stock of his father. This is why he is completely taken."¹

"Abram put his faith in Yahweh and this was reckoned to him as uprightness,"² and the Lord, right at the end of the episode with Isaac, says to Abraham: "All nations on earth will bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed my command."⁵

4. The birth of the people

How does this event, the event of a new generation, the event of a new birth, endure and become history? How is this event possible now? How does this discovery of a dependence and original belonging become history? How does this wonder of the Lord's Covenant endure?

a) *Vocation as the choice of a people*

This is where surprise enters at the way the Lord makes the 'I' fecund, makes the T a protagonist, makes the desire of the 'I', of this being drawn from nothingness, a factor of His promise, makes life the *locus* of the Covenant: vocation, the call, does not generate only an 'I', it generates a *people*. In the relationship with this reality which is generated from Abraham, with this reality more numerous than the stars, with this historical flow in which each of us finds himself to be a part now, the picture of my face becomes more precise, the sketch, the genesis, the features of my face become more precise, they are purified in this people. The consciousness of this dynamic can be summarized in the great prayer of Israel, "Hear, O Israel! Yahweh our God is the one, the only Yahweh. You must love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. Let the words I enjoin on you today stay in your heart. You shall tell them to your children, and keep on telling them, when you are sitting at home, when you are out and about, when you are lying down and when you are standing up."^M

This being generated in a people, this belonging to the Lord, is expressed as a possibility to generate history, to generate traces in the history of the world. But also this possibility of lasting in time and space is given to us on God's initiative, is given us by His choice. Every other solution, every other image, every other attempt man makes to endure, to generate, becomes abstraction, or lying pretension, and therefore violence.

Peguy grasps this extraordinary freedom of God's method in making the T last within the choice of a people. "History does not pass where we wish. History passes where it wishes. Men, peoples, *movements*, innumerable races would have made unheard-of sacrifices in order to be inscribed in the book of eternity in time. History always passes elsewhere. And to those who wanted nothing, it gives everything. It is always those who expect nothing, those who do not think about it, who do not know what it means to be touched, who are the ones who are touched, they are the ones to be cut down by the great wing."

This is the evidence that Isaiah calls to our attention: "And now, thus says Yahweh, he who created you, Jacob, who formed you, Israel: Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine.... For I am Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."⁵⁷

The point is this choice, the choice of the 'F, the choice of the people. "This concept of choice, of election, always implies a when and a where. Without a when and a where the choice is not a choice, the choice is not a history."⁵⁷ This is why the insistence on that people, on Israel, on Hebrew history, on this *pedagogy* of God, this introducing us, as a discovery, as a new consciousness, to the root of things - what Peguy calls the bottom: "We want to touch the bottom, the root, the real, and we have the impression of touching the bottom only when we touch the people. The rest is secondary... Only the people is deep history, only the people witnesses.

Why, then, this pedagogy of the Hebrew people? First of all because it leads us to understand this concept of choice, of vocation-choice, which is absolutely Hebrew, for no other people has it. There is no other people in the history of the world that draws its origin only from this, from this event.

Chosen. Why? This choice is forever, this choice is inexorably forever, it will never ever fail, even in the confusion, in the scuffle, in the fragmentation, in the arbitrariness that hits each one of us. How many times, even recently, have they tried, have they attempted to turn us into a party, to set us "against" something, to drag us out of the flow of history that is generated by the Lord. What is our strength? What is our certitude? The event of this choice, the event of the Covenant as inexorable definitiveness in our life.

Fr Giussani observes that "the entire history of the Hebrew people is the development of the awareness of this Covenant, it is all 'spun out' along the thread of this Covenant, and it carries within itself, constantly, their yielding to the temptation of uncertainty, to the temptation of letting go of their certainty, or better, of the criteria by which they judged their own measures. Sarah laughs 'Am I going to become a mother now that I am old? It is impossible, it is ridiculous.' Before God, who through the Covenant came to be among them, the people of Israel appear as though always divided, so to speak, between the figures of Abraham and Sarah, between the attentive, devoted, obedient wonder of Abraham and the laughter of Sarah, Sarah's incredulous laughter. But God is faithful."⁵

b) *"I am my people "*

What does this faithfulness of God make us discover? First of all that life is a plan, that life is a task. There is a plan in time. The endurance of this discovery is within the life of the people. This is why I begin to feel the people, I feel the people as my own dimension. "The answer to the question of the 'I' takes on the mysterious opening which is the relationship between 'I' and 'people': I am my people, out of me is born that for which and in which I have become able to collaborate with the Mystery which makes all things. Thus Mystery becomes action on the earth and on inc."¹

In the commentary to the *Benedictus*, in *Tutta la terra desidera il Tuo volto* ("All the Earth Desires Your Face"), there is precisely this reminder: only in the life of the people does the 'I' discover that it is part of a great plan. This is what gives reason to the infinite desire that I am, this is what makes life - within the toil, the contradictions, within the contradiction of sin and of death - the evidence of a positivity, of an indestructible positivity. "The fact that a man has been chosen along with his offspring, which multiplies to become a people, means that there is a plan in time. Of all the universe the Lord says 'I want the positive of everything' [we are not made for death, God did not want death, pain, God does not want the ruin of man, the ruin of the world]."¹ In order to make us understand this better, in order to make us realize this more concretely. He chooses a man from whom descendants are born that become a people... The individual man [the individual man, each one of us, one by one,] has value [has a face and a history] because he is destined to be within this plan and journey of a people, he belongs to this history and through him the others are called to belong to this history... The greatness of a man, the proportion of his stature, his strength, his openness, his richness, in other words the value of an individual, of me, of you, lies in belonging to the history that Destiny has launched into the

world. The value does not depend on the fact of doing this or that, or being or not being capable of building, of being lucky or unlucky, efficient or inefficient, of being healthy or not, of having or not what one wants. The value depends on belonging or not to this people, to this history. This belonging is the strength and miracle of the individual person in his journey in time, a journey that makes him pass among deserts and battles, aridity and temptations to doubt, struggles and trials."²

I was struck by hearing Cristina Rossi and Fr Giorgio tell about the last days of the life of Valentino, one of our GS friends who died at the age of 16 on April 25 after two years of illness. On the bedside table of his hospital room was the first volume of the history of the Movement, written by Fr Massimo Camisasca." Valentino (I was told, I did not know him) was someone who did not like speeches, quotations, sermons, they had no appeal for him. And yet, one day when he was suffering particularly badly, one of his visitors, not knowing what to do because his breathing was labored and he was suffering, began to read him the history, the origins, the beginning, the beginning of that plan which, through Fr Giussani, is woven into the substance of all our lives, the life of each one of us. And from that moment on, Valentino wanted only that book to be read to him, and he would ask his friends, his father, and his mother for it, he would ask his aunt, who is not even a Christian, and who, reading it, was stunned by this fact that she had never seen before in her life, the fact of a reality which, different from all the others, while becoming bigger and bigger and spreading out, still remains itself, in fact, deepens its awareness. Whenever he was conscious, the instant he felt a bit stronger, Valentino wanted to have this book read to him. His father had an intuition: that by now this history, the history of this beginning, the history of this people, coincided with Valentino's life: and he read one little page at a time, fearing that once he read the last word, Valentino would die. And, indeed, on April 25, Valentino died after the last page had been read to him during the night. The only thing he wanted to hear, the only thing of which he wanted to live, with which he wanted to prepare himself for the true life, was this history of things, of facts, of particulars within which Mystery unfolds, the mysterious and very sweet presence of the Lord."⁴

Jesu dulcis memorial This is our consciousness, this is our certitude, this is our entreaty. As the liturgy very wisely made us ask this morning at the end of Lauds: "O God, you unite into one will your faithful, grant to your people to love what you command and to desire what you promise so that among the varying vicissitudes of the world our hearts may be fixed where true joy is found.""

Saturday afternoon, May 19

• SECOND MEDITATION

The endurance of a newness in the history of the people

During the entrance and exit:

*Ludwig van Beethoven, "Concerto for violin and orchestra in D major, " opus 61
Cluytens - D. Oistrakh, Orchestre National de la Radiodiffusion i'ranqaise,
"Spirto (lentil, " EMI*

Julian Carrdn. "St Paul considers the history of the Hebrew people to be the great pedagogue, the great teacher that God has created, ... assisted, destined to prepare the whole of humanity for salvation." "This history is a preparation for this salvation, "the preparation which the Hebrew people is for the great event of His revelation to mankind; the pedagogy it represents is worth more for us, who come after them, than for the people of that time, who did not know and did not recognize the meaning of the Hebrew people. This people, throughout its history, was made by God as pedagogy, as an introduction illuminating the nature of His intervention in the world, in history.""⁸

God began this preparation by making a promise, it is the promise made to Abraham. With this promise God aroused the expectation of fulfillment. The whole history of the Hebrew people is traversed by this expectation, which each time is reawakened by a renewal of the promise. For this reason, the people prays like this: "Lord, let Your love come upon me, the saving help of Your promise!"

Why does Fr Giussani say that this is truer for us? Why this insistence on the Hebrew people? Because we sometimes think that we can skip this preparation, without traveling the path that arouses the expectation. By not walking this road, so many Christians say "Christ" without truly understanding anything, like a word thrown to the wind, because if there is no real expectation any answer will be fine, but when one is hungry, a piece of real bread is worth far more than a virtual steak. We have heard Fr Giussani quote so many times Niebuhr's statement: "Nothing is so meaningless as the answer to a question that is not asked."⁷ Anyone who has this expectation, this question, will have no use for a Christianity conceived of as spiritualism, as a certain kind of gnosticism conceives of it.

I. The offspring of Abraham is Christ

It is meaningful that the one who put the stress both on the newness of Christ and on the fact that the history begun with Abraham is fulfilled in Him is St Paul, who understood better than anyone else the newness of Christ, and who belonged deeply to the history of the Hebrew people, being stauncher in Judaism than the majority of his contemporaries, as he himself says,⁷¹ since he was zealous in sustaining the tradition of his fathers. For him, Christ is the fulfillment of the promise: Paul saw the promise made to Abraham fulfilled in Christ. So, *the offspring of Abraham is Christ*. "Now the promises were addressed to Abraham and to his progeny. The words were not *and to his progenies* in the plural, but in the singular; *and to your progeny*, which means Christ."⁷²

Why is Christ the promise made to Abraham, the progeny of Abraham? "What does this [Abraham's] story teach us?" Fr Giussani says. "That the 'I' is vocation, a choice as preference. So that, from the day of that call onwards, the 'I' is understood as an event within history. An event of dependence on God and of belonging to God."⁷³ So we can well understand why St Paul saw the fulfillment in Christ: for He is the 'I' who lived His human vicissitudes as belonging and as obedience to the Father. "God's great call, the great choice, the great election God wrought for His plan in the world is the calling of Christ, the Man who said: 'What I see my Father do, I do all the time.'... If an ordinary man, living in the time of Christ, were to have met Him and asked Him, 'Who are you? What is your name?' Jesus would have answered, 'I am the envoy of the Father'... 'Sent by Other': this expression implies mystery concerning its origin and its end, it implies the total mystery of His person."⁷⁴

Christ is the man who lives as someone belonging, with an attachment and an adherence to the Father that reaches the point of obeying Him till death: "Even to accepting death."⁷⁵ Christ lived His life according to the vocation which we saw beginning, like a dawn, in Abraham: life as relationship with the Mystery that makes Him. Thus Jesus appeared to the eyes of those who encountered Him as the accomplishment of what had begun in Abraham.

In the Gospel of St John, in His discussion with the Jews about Abraham,⁷⁶ Jesus says to them that they are not sons of Abraham, because they want to kill Him. Abraham would not have done so, but rather "Your father Abraham rejoiced to think that he would see my Day; he saw it and was glad."⁷⁷ Abraham, seeing the day of Christ, was glad. He rejoiced because he saw the fulfillment in Christ of what had begun in the call that

God had addressed to him. Jesus' T, that Man, was the accomplished image, the destiny of what had begun with Abraham, the fulfillment of the vocation that had begun in him.

When Mary reaches Elizabeth's house, already carrying Her Baby inside her. Elizabeth says to Her: "The child [John the Baptist] in my womb leapt for joy."⁷ That T which caused Abraham of old to rejoice, as He begins to make His way through history, starts by filling His fore-runner, John the Baptist, with joy.

So with Jesus, the fulfillment of Abraham's prophecy, God placed in the world that true pedagogue, that true T \ that great sacrament of His presence, which can truly arouse the T in man, can truly arouse expectation and fulfill it like no other.

This great pedagogue did not educate through speeches on religiosity, nor by giving advice; He was a Presence, a Presence that intrigued those who encountered Him: He was an T which made those who encountered Him become more T". Jesus used the sacramental method, by which God wanted to teach man what his T truly was, its fullness; it is a simple method, one by which one learns things simply (one learns how to love by falling in love and by following a beloved presence better than by following a course on the topic of love). God chose to teach man what he is by putting into the world a Presence that aroused adherence, a wonder all the way to adherence: one would begin to understand what his T' really was. Just like John and Andrew. We have heard it many times. From the first moment they saw Him they became His own. Jesus glued them to Him so strongly that the more they encountered Him "the more it was like adding coats of glue." Why? Because no one corresponded as much as that Man did. The Spanish poet. Antonio Machado says, "I stop to distinguish voices from echoes, and among the voices I hear only one":^{NI} only one, among many, corresponds uniquely to my T \

Those who encountered Him all belonged to that people, the Hebrew people. What did this T have, this person who magnetized them so strongly? What advance had God made that fascinated the life of those who met Him to the point that they became His own? "No one ever looked at me like this Man." It was that gaze, "a gaze which revealed man to himself and was impossible to evade." From a gaze like this, the T is born. We know that without this gaze we would not be able truly to say 'F. It is a preference, it was a preference, the preference of someone who looked at us like nobody else had. This is why we can understand what happened to John and Andrew. Because without an event that is present. we, like so many others, would read these passages thinking we

understood, but without understanding, because we cannot understand merely by reading: the beginning of knowledge is an event.

Those who belonged to that people, faced with that Man, when they had the simplicity of heart that is needed for adhering to the truth, could not resist becoming His own, belonging to Him. It was an attraction full of exceptionality that enabled them to become themselves. Thus, this is how we understand what Fr Giussani tells us in *Charism and History*: "The 'I' is understood as an event within history."² It is there, it is in that event that the constitutive factors of the 'I' come to the surface, that we know truly what the T is, to what our T is destined, that we begin to say 'I'. And from this an affection beyond compare is born, an attachment unthinkable before, to Him who makes us say T in a true way.

So the encounter and the shared life with that Man, with the "envoy," enabled an experience of life never had before. To the point that those who followed Him could not help saying, even when all the others walked away, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life,"³ and they followed Him, they became His own.

2. "If you are Christ's, then you are the progeny of Abraham"

"If you are Christ's, then you are the progeny of Abraham."⁴ If Christ is the progeny of Abraham, if Christ is the One who arouses an attraction because of His exceptionality, and those who follow Him begin to experience the fulfillment of their 'I', then we understand that when one becomes Christ's he is the true offspring of Abraham. St Paul says, "When faith comes, we are no longer under the dominion of the pedagogue. For all of you are sons of God in Christ Jesus, through faith. For all of you who were baptized in Christ have put on Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free man, man or woman. All of you are one in Christ Jesus. If then you are Christ's," St Paul concludes, "you are the progeny of Abraham, the heirs named in the promise."⁵

Christ continues in a communion which recognizes Him, an "earthly communion."⁶ The Pope, too, reminded us of this in his message: "Jesus, the Lord of history, gives a definitive form to the people of believers who welled forth from the faith of Abraham. The new Covenant brings together in unity those whom Christ chooses and who believe in Him. Thus the Church is born, whose Lord He is."⁷ From Christ, therefore, was born a people defined by faith in Him, by the acknowledgment of Him, by the recognition of Mystery present in Him. This is how we have become children of Abraham: "As Abraham put his faith in God and this was reck-

oned to him as uprightness, you may then be sure that people of faith are the children of Abraham.

We are the children of Abraham if we live this adherence to Him who is the fulfillment of Abraham's vocation, to Jesus ("If you are Christ's, you are the progeny of Abraham"), and when one believes in Christ, he becomes like Abraham: a blessing for everybody. It was said to Abraham: "All nations on earth will bless themselves by your descendants."^{1*} Thus those who live by faith, who acknowledge Christ, who belong to Christ "are blessed with Abraham the believer,"¹ they participate in this blessing, they are a blessing for everybody. For one who lives by faith is a good for all, is a blessing for all, to the point that it is this blessing, this living by faith, that generates a new relationship, "the relationship given by faith."⁰¹

We know well to what extent someone who lives like this is truly a blessing: we have encountered one. "For me the grace of Jesus," Fr Giussani said in Rome, "in so far as I have been able to adhere to the encounter with Him and communicate Him to the brothers in God's Church, has become the experience of a faith that in the Holy Church, that is to say the Christian People, revealed itself as a call and a desire to feed a new Israel of God: '*Populum Tuum vidi, cum ingenti gaudio, Tibi offerre donaria*' ('With great joy, I saw your People, acknowledging existence as an offering to You'). ... So it was that I saw a people forming, in the name of Christ. Everything in me became truly more religious, with my awareness striving to discover that God is all in all."²

This is the blessing of a man who belongs to Christ, who becomes the generator of a people, the nourisher of a new Israel of God. When we encountered him, we began to understand the meaning of Christ. It is in this historical belonging to the charism, it is in this wonder aroused by his presence that we have truly begun to understand what living, what saying T' is. What would our life be if we had not encountered him? What would we be without him? What would our mentality be like? We would think like everybody else, we would have everyone's mentality. It is only by letting ourselves be drawn by his attraction, that attraction present in him, that we have truly begun to live.

3. The characteristics of the offspring of Abraham

a) *Faith*

When one lives like this, when he encounters a man like this, when he participates in a people like this, a people defined by faith, everything, as

Fr Giussani says, becomes more religious: he begins to recognize God as all in all.¹ "The glory of Christ is the creation of a people, and by following this people each one achieves his happiness, which is Christ."² What we really need is One who will arouse in us that expectation of happiness of which we are made, who will take seriously our need for happiness and will stay by our side so that when we encounter it we may recognize it as the answer to our thirst.

The first characteristic of this offspring of Abraham is that he lives by faith, he recognizes God in everything. Think of us: without this encounter what would God mean, where would we recognize Him? "To be able to recognize Him, it is necessary... that He manifest himself through an exceptional presence."³ This is what we have encountered: an exceptional presence, belonging to which, historically, one can recognize, is educated to recognize the presence of Christ, of God in everything. The importance of this for life can be understood at once. "There is only one new thing in our life: one, not two: becoming aware of this presence."⁴

The thing we need most is that this recognition become more familiar. There is only one new thing: becoming aware of this Presence. "It is so much the only new thing that it makes everything new, even the instant, the banality of your place every day; rather, the supreme clue that Christ is God is precisely the fact that the human factor which is closest to nothingness, that is, one's daily routine, bit by bit is redeemed and all the breadth of man's personality is summed up and saved in the instant, in this instant, whatever he does."⁵ It is "because of that acknowledgment of a Presence which changes our perception of ourselves... [it] does not come about by an effort on your part, it is the consciousness of this Presence that finds in our unity [in our belonging to this people] the *locus* for calling us, persuading us, and educating us."⁶ It is reasonable to belong to this people. The true reason for belonging to this people is that it takes seriously our desire for happiness, and leads us to that newness which is becoming aware of the Presence in which happiness consists.

b) *Memory*

When one recognizes this Presence, this presence of the present Mystery, then he lives by memory. "The event is something that happens now," Fr Giussani said at a meeting of *Memores Domini*. "The event that happens now: then even in my darkest days, the ones most full of shadows, it is beautiful. [Who does not desire this for himself?] Memory is our organ, the spiritual organ which sees in things, which knows how to see in things their real nature. [It is a locus which educates us to see in

things their real nature]. Memory is an event that happens now. In whatever situation you are, memory is an event that takes place now, it is part of this event, it belongs to it. And in this belonging to that moment, what is affirmed and pertinent is the belonging to the mystery of God, which is the Lord Jesus. Belonging to Jesus, for Jesus is the man into whom God has conveyed the whole infinite strength of the mysterious sonship."

If the newness of our life depends on the consciousness of His presence, this awareness, then the aim of education is to make us familiar with the memory of Jesus, which is not a remembrance, but feeling the blow of His presence now.

To do this, to live by this memory, it is not necessary to be always aware of His presence; this is impossible. "It is impossible for you to think of Him in every action, and it is not even necessary... Memory does not mean that in every action you think of Him, and you do not even need to. What you do need is *to love* this." "It is a loving kindness that is expressed. Not hysteria, a love. All you have to do is want it. "All you have to do is long for my presence, the Lord would tell you, is desire to be aware of my presence. If you desire it, if you want it in pain and sorrow, ask me for it." "1"

But who desires it? Who wants it in pain and sorrow? The one who cries out. But who truly cries out? One who belongs. One who belongs to the people. The man who is faithful to the path, even if he is not faithful to the gestures but is faithful to the path, cries to God. If he belongs to the people, he cries to God; if he doesn't belong to the people, if he is in the people but does not belong to the people, that is, does not belong to God, it is a hopeless case. The people of Israel cried out because it believed in His promise. He who does not belong to the people has no hope; it is a hopeless case, a hopelessness which is somewhat tolerated as violence.

4. Marked

One who has encountered Jesus present here and now, a man who has had a true encounter is a marked man. Therefore his starting point, the point from which this 'I' that is born of an event always starts out, is a Presence; he will face everything with this Presence before his eyes. Like Abraham: he lived everything that happened afterwards without detaching himself, even for an instant, from that Presence, even when that Presence asked him for things which at first did not seem reasonable, like the sacrifice of his son.

We can look at everything, we can begin to look at everything, first of all at ourselves, in a different way, if we have this Presence before our

eyes. Think of Jesus' embrace of the Samaritan woman, how He embraced her needs, how He took her seriously, not violently; but for the first time that woman was able to look at her T, her need for happiness not as something to be ignored. When one looks at his heart with this Presence before his eyes, he begins to embrace it. The starting point is not an absence to be fulfilled, but a Presence that embraces all the needs for happiness we have, for "without the recognition of that Mystery present, night advances, confusion abounds and - with confusion, affecting your freedom - rebellion erupts, or disappointment fills you so full that there's no room for hope and none left for desire.""

Without that Presence, we end up desiring nothing. With this Presence before our eyes, even when trouble knocks on our door, it becomes an opportunity for a stronger bond with the Presence; the trouble given as punishment is the means God uses to reclaim, to save the faithfulness of our person. "Whenever He slaughtered them, they began to seek Him, they turned back and looked eagerly for Him, recalling that God was their rock, God the Most High, their redeemer."¹ⁿ² For nothing could break the Covenant God had made with His people. Thomas Mann says, "The will of man's heart is evil from his birth... but he who knows only this is foolish, and it would be better for him never to have been born. For he knows nothing of the inviolable pact between God and man, the pact that no one can break.""

Jesus, the man Jesus, is the victor over cruelty, barbarity, and violence. Belonging to this people, one participates in the victory of Christ over barbarity. And the first contribution that we make to the men of our time, is precisely this: often, even those who follow the Church, even when they follow her, do not realize her contribution to the world, to the history of the world. We, by saying yes to Christ, by participating in His victory, make our contribution to the world, and no other contribution can be greater than this.

5. Mercy

But we well know how far our weakness can reach. Fr Giussani said in Rome, "Infidelity always arises."¹⁴ But God never stops. "God is not stopped by your evil, by your sin; He would not stop were He not to find an awareness of grace received. The Church, the Body of Jesus Christ, goes forward, she opens herself a path in the middle of the storm, of all storms, in the midst of the confusion and disarray that occur in this earthly life: right on this level a wellspring is created that is not in man ... a

wellspring that is a force, the force of a love mysteriously, inexplicably capable of forgiving evil: mercy."¹⁵ He never stops. Without a gaze full of tenderness and of mercy trained on us, it would not be possible to build anything, not even ourselves. Without a gaze full of tenderness we would have already been destroyed. It is He, His gaze full of mercy which puts us back together each time, and, having been reconstructed, we can continue on our journey full of hope, because without this mercy there is no journey.¹⁶ Just as a child without the mercy of his mother stops, is blocked, so even we, without this gaze full of mercy, are not there, something blocks us and we are no longer there.

For this reason, let's live the entreaty for this mercy, "Christ who begs for man's heart, and man's heart that begs for Christ."¹⁷ It is this mercy that we need to beg for continually.

HOLY MASS

HOMILY BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL JAMES FRANCIS STAFFORD PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY

The first reading, taken from the *Acts of the Apostles*, describes the beginning of St Paul's second missionary journey, which took place in A.D. 49. He was accompanied by Silas, later joined by Timothy, because Paul had separated from Barnabas, who had been his companion on his first missionary journey. They had divided in disagreement over the question whether John Mark should go with them or not.

The vision of a Macedonian had revealed to Paul that he should leave Asia and set sail for Greece. They sailed from the port of Troas, near the ancient city of Troy immortalized in Homer's *Iliad*, and went to Macedonia.

Paul's missionary activity at Philippi, in Macedonia, is not the first experience of Christianity on the European continent, as some maintain. The Gospel was introduced by Paul into Greece a few years after unknown missionaries from Jerusalem had already brought it to Rome. The Christians in the Eternal City date back to the early 40s, since St Paul found lodging in Corinth in 49 with Aquila and Priscilla, a Jewish couple, who "had recently left Italy because an edict of Claudius (the *princeps*) had expelled all the Jews from Rome" (Acts 18:2). According to the Roman historian Suetonius, in A.D. 49 Claudius "expelled the Jews from Rome because of the unrest they constantly caused at the instigation of

Chrestos." In all probability, Claudius expelled the Jews who were disputing about the identity and Messianic mission of Jesus of Nazareth. The Christian faith arrived in Europe from Asia, and this is a meaningful fact. Because the provocative question, "What does it mean to be Christian?" was being put to Paul now not only in a Semitic environment, but in the context of the refined pagan culture of ancient Greece and on a different continent.

"Quid sit christianum esse" — what does it mean to be Christian? This question was asked by an unknown Christian at the beginning of the fifth century. It was a moment of crisis, the time of Ambrose and Augustine, Jerome and Chrysostom, when the Roman empire was rapidly becoming Christian. It is the same question that led to the answer of the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem in A.D. 48, the answer that Paul, in our second reading today, transmitted to the cities of Asia Minor and their inhabitants during his second missionary journey. Paul had already raised the question of the Christian identity of the uncircumcised at Antioch. His great letter to the Church of Rome on justification, faith, grace, and human freedom is one of the definitive answers to the question of Christian identity.

In times of crisis, that question is constantly present. Among the great sources of anguish of our time, the question "What does it mean to be Christian?" is central and fundamental. A *crescendo* of voices has been raised, first from the ruins of the cities of Europe as a result of two world wars, then from the dust of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the concentration camps, and most recently, from the test tubes used for human cloning, voices that insistently ask *"quid sit christianum esse."*

What does it mean to be Christian today? Having crossed the threshold of the new millennium, you too, you here in Rimini ask the same question. The affirmation which inspires the Exercises of your Fraternity, "Abraham, the birth of the T," is clearly connected with this search.

It is Baptism which gives the Christian his identity. In Baptism, all sins are forgiven, all the faithful emerge from the water of regeneration without spot or wrinkle (as we read in the great Baptistery of San Giovanni in Laterano in Rome). But these realities do not exhaust the mystery of the baptized, who all still live in that meantime before the final coming of Christ, the intermediate period between the remission of sins, which occurs at the moment of Baptism, and the state of absolute perfection, reached once and for all in the Kingdom to come. Being baptized means that we live in this intermediate period of prayer, in which every day we plead: "Forgive us our trespasses."

Yes, the identity of the Christian is founded in Baptism. And yet, through this Sacrament, the baptized have been started on a process of convalescence which lasts their whole lives. For Christians remain profoundly contaminated by the effects of sin and must observe Paul's prohibition to pronounce any judgment before the due time, "until the Lord comes; He will bring to light everything that is hidden in darkness and reveal the designs of all hearts" (1 Cor 4:5).

The baptized come to accept themselves as powerless beings who stand at the foot of the Cross of Christ with nothing. Together with St Augustine, they learn to come to terms with their dark sides and to accept themselves as essentially problematic beings: "See how I stand! Weep with me, and weep for me, you who in this matter bring about within yourselves some good from which like deeds issue... But do you, O Lord my God, graciously hear me, and turn your gaze upon me, and see me, and have mercy on me, and heal me. For in your sight I have become a riddle to myself" (*ConfX*, 33, 50).

Abraham's identity is not only a personal identity but embraces also a social identity. The letter to the Hebrews states, in fact: "Because of this, there came from one man [Abraham], and one who already had the mark of death on him, descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore which cannot be counted" (11:12). The spiritual descendants of Abraham turn their back on "privacy" and "turning in on oneself" as the most insidious form of pride, the root of all sins. Being turned in on oneself, isolated, is not part of the Christian identity. For Christians gather together in communities and together search for wisdom, a gift of the Holy Spirit, placing the emphasis on charity in the sphere of the community, whether this is the family or a larger community like Communion and Liberation. The Christian identity is closely tied to living in the ambit of a community in harmony and unity of intent.

The world of which Jesus speaks in today's Gospel is quite distant from a similar vision of community. This is why the world hates Jesus and his disciples. It is very difficult to place the common good before one's own interests, but a subtle pride like this undermines the community. It is very important to note that, from the time of the Fathers of the Church, the Christian community has been defined as the *res publico* of God, the City of God. St Paul affirms the foundation of Christian identity by including its life in the sphere of the community: "What have you got that was not given to you?" (1 Cor 4:7). ("What have you got that was not given to you?": even power is a gift, even the power of a mother and father is a gift from God). Here is the definitive answer to the question: "*Quid sit*

christianum esse," what does it mean to be Christian? St Ignatius of Loyola defines the Christian identity in an unforgettable prayer: "Take, Lord, and accept all my freedom, my memory, my intelligence, all my will, everything that I have and possess. You gave it to me, to You, Lord, I give it back. Everything is Yours, use it according to Your holy will. Give me Your love and Your grace; this is enough for me."

BEFORE THE FINAL BENEDICTION

Thank you. I have been asked to say a few words in English for those who understand English and I do that with great enthusiasm. I am going to ask you to pray for the Holy Father and for the Cardinals who will be gathering in Rome on Monday at the invitation of the Holy Father, and we will be in Rome for four days reflecting upon his letter *Novo millennio ineunte*; may I ask your prayers for the Holy Father and for the Cardinals. I indicated earlier in my homily that Christian identity is essentially social. Yes, we must find our identity in Baptism. I indicated also that our life after Baptism is nothing but a process of convalescence, that is that we stand each day with the *Our Father*, with the central prayer and petition of the *Our Father*-. "Forgive us our trespasses." We say that each day. that, to me, is the essence of the identity of the Christian who is always in the process of convalescence after his Baptism. I also indicated that we do this as a group, as a community of people. It is significant that in the reading today for the first time the author, Luke, in the *Acts of the Apostles* speaks of the first person plural "we," not "they," but "we"! For the first time he says that, indicating that Paul, Silas, Timothy, and he himself (Luke) are one in their missionary journey together with the whole Church: "we!" We are the sign of the communal essence of the Church. So, brothers and sisters, may I ask you to keep in your prayers all of the men and women who are present here in Rimini, that they may grow in deeper understanding of their convalescence here in this pilgrimage upon earth, and that they may do it together!

Sunday morning, May 20

• ASSEMBLY

During the entrance and exit:

Sergej Rachmaninov, "Vespers, " opus 37

*A. V. Svesnikov, Chorus of the State Academy of the U.S.S.K.
"Spirto (lentil, " Ricordi*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, "Coronation Mass, " K 317

*H. von Karajan - Battle, Schmidt, Winbergli, Furlanetto,
Wiener Philharmoniker, "Spirto (lentil", Deutsche Grammophon*

Angelus

Lauds

Giancarlo Cesana. The theme of these Exercises began to emerge and become precise some time ago, and when Fr Giussani outlined it more precisely, by giving it the title ("Abraham: the birth of the T"), he said: "This is a new content, a new step forward." We must keep clearly in mind that it is a new step; so we must not hurry, nor try to rush things in an attempt at abstract comprehension, but really try to immerse ourselves in it, and this we do by starting with the questions that have been asked.

The first one has been expressed in various ways, and it concerns the central question of yesterday's two lessons, that is, the relationship between T' and people. One way it has been formulated is: Why is the consciousness of the people necessary to the consciousness of the 'I'? What does it mean to say that the people is the locus for living the event, if God's call was to me? What does it mean that the T coincides with the people?

Another way of putting it comes from Central Europe, especially from the countries where totalitarianism effectively dominated: How is the value of the 'F' affirmed in belonging to a people and not crushed by it?

Or another: Why is there no cry without the people, why is there no expectation without the pedagogy of Israel? Isn't my heart enough?

Carron. To my mind, our difficulty in understanding the 'I'-people relationship derives from the fact that we do not have a *sense of history*.

To be sure, the ontology of the T is what we have studied in *The Religious Sense* (the T' with its structural disproportion, its needs, etc.) and we think that, since this is how man is, everybody will be aware of the T as it is described there. But let us think of the experience we have had, of our difficulty in absorbing what we have learned with *The Religious Sense*. Think of what remains in our heads when we say T! And this is not evident primarily when one asks the question, but when he speaks of the 'I'. Many times one shows - in the way he relates to reality - that he does not have in mind even for an instant the slightest awareness of his disproportion, of that structural disproportion of which the T is made; and this is the source of all the complications in our life, for we think we can manage, doing this and doing that to respond to this disproportion, and when things do not work out we get angry. Why do we get angry? The drop does not get angry at the glass because it doesn't fill it up; if one is aware of what the drop is, he realizes that the drop does not fill the glass; if there is that much disproportion, no drop will fill it.

This means that, historically speaking, man does not live with this awareness of his T, and we must help each other to understand why. If this is how we are made, if our disproportion is structural, why don't we have this awareness, why don't we live this way, why don't we conceive of ourselves like this?

This is where the question of *history* comes in: man is born within a people, within a tradition, we have learned to see reality (to put it simply) through the eyes of our mother, that is to say, the eyes of the tradition of the people into which we were born. For instance, if a child is born in an Arab country, when he looks at his mother he sees the same thing as a child born in the West, in the Christian civilization. All of them see the same thing: a woman. But one, seeing that this woman, for instance, does not sit at the table when his father has guests, but stays back in the kitchen, will begin to look at things differently from a child born in the West. All of them see the same reality (a woman), but the way one is introduced to reality is different in every tradition. We can offer many similar examples.

This is what happens to man. De Lubac, in his book *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, entitled an entire chapter, "The Paradox Unknown to the Gentiles": this paradox is the structural disproportion of which man is made. Before Christ, the Greeks and many other peoples had some idea of this disproportion, but were afraid of it, so afraid that they said it was dangerous to have thoughts beyond one's possibilities: one must resign himself to cultivating his garden. But when Christian civilization falters,

we find the same ideas, for instance, in Ingmar Bergmann's film *Fanny and Alexander*: let's resign ourselves to cultivating the garden.

When one understands that, as a consequence of history, that is, of original sin, we do not still have the awareness we had at the beginning, he understands very well that without Revelation, without God's intervention in the people, the truth is attained "only by a very few, and this only after much time and not without the inclusion of error.""¹

So then, if we understand this, we realize that without a people, without the encounter we have had, we would not be able to say 'I' as we say it now. When you say T now, or I say 'I' now, our way of saying T has a whole history behind it, all of our belonging; there is in us a conception of the 'I' that, even if you do not realize it, was entirely favored and educated through the people (so much so that *The Religious Sense* was written by Fr Giussani, not by others, not by Protestants, for example).

Thus belonging is not a "decoration" on the T, but is crucial for the 'I'. It is this preference, a gaze of true preference on us which has aroused us and has made us aware of our T. For we have been looked at in such a disturbing way that it has made us aware of what original sin and the dominant culture attempt to flatten out. And when the 'I' is awakened within a people, then it cries out, even the cry is awakened, the cry of man's heart.

Therefore, without an historical belonging that is lived, historically, daily, within a people, the 'I' is crushed. It is enough to look at your colleagues: they live like us in our same culture, but what is their conception of their 'I', what do they think of themselves? Why are we different? Why do we have a different way of looking at ourselves? Only because we, by grace, belong to that people in which one can truly say 'I'.

Cesana. The second question was one of the most frequently asked. We have chosen the simplest formulation, the quickest one: Why does Fr Giussani insist on Abraham? Wasn't it enough to speak to us about Jesus?

Carron. We don't speak of Abraham in order to abolish Jesus, but to understand Jesus. We can start, as a help, from an elementary experience we have all had. Before our encounter, we thought we understood Christianity. Some of us knew it so well, they thought, that they had even decided to abandon it; others, like me, thought they knew it and stayed inside the Church. But what happened to all of us when we had the encounter that has led us here? We understood that we had not comprehended anything about Christianity, so much so that both we and the others had to change our path, because we had encountered something which

aroused the interest that has bound us, really bound us. What happened? That we have encountered Christianity as an event of a people, inside which we were able to have the experience of what Christianity means: we have experienced a carnal, historical, concrete fact, one that swept away all our previous images. And this (Fr Giussani insists) is decisive today, because so much of Christianity is reduced - as we all know well - to values, it has nothing to do with belonging. For the culture we are in now is characterized by a rupture, by an attempt to uncouple Christianity from history. Everybody wants the Christian values, but nobody wants to belong. They say, "It is enough to be consistent with values. It does not matter whether one belongs to the people or not." This influences us too. But we have seen to what extent belonging to the people is crucial for the T!

Then, in a situation like this, Fr Giussani's insistence is truly decisive for us: if one does not have the experience of Christianity as belonging to a people, sooner or later he will stop caring about Christianity. We can follow any road we like, but sooner or later, unless the 'I' is awakened every time by belonging to a people, thus unless the belonging to a people arouses affection for Christ, your life interest moves to something else. Just like in the relationship with a woman: one can stay married, but from a certain point on, it may happen that the interest of his life is no longer the same you that charmed him in the beginning. One may not reach the point of divorce, but the interest of his life no longer coincides with that you. I may remain a priest to the end, but the question for me is how Christ remains interesting for my life as nothing else is, and the farther along I go, the more He interests me. Without this, without the verification of this every day, without seeing this preference, this attraction taking place, what is Christianity? Rules to be kept, values to be respected.

This is why I said that when one begins to have the experience of Christianity as belonging to a people, his 'I' is awakened, and this is why the path of Israel is so important, because one can travel it even within the encounter he has had, indeed, it is the only way today: it is not out of historicism that we have to go back to Abraham, but we need to have the experience the Hebrew people lived within Christianity, because otherwise we do not understand Christ.

Let me tell my experience, very simply. I felt an affection for Christ from the beginning of my life, by grace, but it was only when I encountered the Movement and it awakened my 'I', that I began to come to grips with reality, because the relationship with Christ I had before was rather spiritualistic, and this does not hold when you are faced with life. When I encountered the Movement the first surprise was that I threw myself into

reality, especially in my teaching: I began to say things I had never said before. A desire was awakened in me that I saw being fulfilled, that found an answer in Christ. Then an affection for Christ was sparked off that I had not had before, I assure you.

I would not be saying these things before all of you if they weren't true, and this is why I feel an enormous affection for the historic person who made me have this experience, Fr Giussani, for if it weren't for him I would not have had this experience of Christ, whom I thought I knew already.

When someone's heart is awakened this way, he can see that he cannot be content with just any conception of Christianity. It won't do: the ethical reduction, the sentimental reduction, the reduction to ideology of Christianity are useless to the heart, to a heart whose needs have been aroused. In that case only the encounter with a real presence (real!) can fill the heart with joy: "My heart and my soul ring out their joy to God, the living God."¹

Cesana. In connection with this question on the importance of Abraham, last night I received the suggestion that I should repeat what was published in *Traces*² concerning a recent experience of mine, which is the experience in which this proposal emerged; and I am happy to do so, because I think that repeating things that are true is helpful both to the one repeating them and to those listening.

We were with Fr Giussani, discussing things. Fr Giussani kept insisting on a word he has used a lot recently, the word "mystery". "Life is mystery." Then he muttered to himself, "It is a big mess," and meanwhile he kept talking about this calling of Abraham. As I was listening, I said somewhat provocatively, "But if life is mystery, if life is a big mess (it is for everyone, the good and the wicked, there is no difference, so that we are tempted to ask: 'Why does life go well for those who are bad, and not for me, when I am good, I am a Christian, I have hope, I go to Mass?' Or to put it more simply, 'What is the meaning of what is happening to me?'). If life is this great mystery, both for those who have no vocation, that is, who have not been touched by God, and for those who have been touched (since even those who have been touched by God sometimes find themselves out of sync with life: the *Hail Holy Queen* calls life 'this valley of tears'); *what is the difference* between having been touched and not having been touched?"¹ Because having been touched is not like an election promise (you will see, if you side with me...), it cannot be this.

And Fr Giussani gave me one of those answers that show you the genius, the strength, and everything else he has inside him. What differ-

ence is there between Abraham and the others, and the great confusion of the others, of the peoples that surrounded him, besieged by idols, by their gods and their own thoughts? Fr Giussani gave me this answer that was like a bolt of lightning: "It is the same difference as between the T and the 'non-I'." In other words, for Abraham, having been touched meant beginning to be able to say 'I'.

Because the man who seeks God without having been touched by God does not distinguish himself from the earth, from the sand; that is to say, he feels, he would like to be different, but he does not manage to; he does not distinguish himself from biology, from death, from tribulation. Whereas the man who was touched says 'I'; an awareness springs up in him, a consciousness of things, a consciousness of meaning, consciousness of a task. This does not mean that then everything will fall into place, because if we read the Bible, the story of Abraham and then of all the patriarchs (Isaac, Jacob, Joseph) and all the biblical history up to the Gospels, up to the Apostles, and the history of the Church all the way to us, tribulation is not taken away, the torments and contradictions are still there, but the thread of life is not lost, life can be lived: it can be lived not merely in view of the hereafter, beyond what I see and hear, but it can be lived now: life does not frighten me now, reality does not frighten me now. It can be possessed: to be sure, through a possession that is not to my measure (it is possession by Him who is its Master); yet it can be possessed, it can be lived, that is, I can say 'I', I have a name.

You well understand that, from this point of view, Abraham is each one of us. What happened to Abraham as consciousness of himself and that he later handed down to his children, his servants and maidservants - one time we were eating together with Giorgio, and Giussani said that Abraham's maidservants, while they made bread, while they waited on the table, were aware of the purpose for which they did it; they were aware of this thread which had entered their lives - is what happened to each of us. The Mystery wormed its way into our lives, we were preferred by Destiny, we were wanted, and this is what will keep us from ever being lost.

Question: What does it mean that the aim of education is to make the memory of Christ become familiar, not as a remembrance, but as the rebound of His presence now?

Carron. After what we have heard, this is easy to answer. Because when what Giancarlo was just talking about happened... what happened? The encounter with an historical presence: it was not a remembrance, it was

feeling the rebound of His presence. We know it was He, because that preference, that correspondence bore His mark, the mark of truth, the mark of Him. Then, this is an experience we cannot censure; we can go away, we can do what we like, we can go to the Bahamas or anywhere else, but - and this is true for Abraham or any of us - we carry this with us.

Now, this presence we have encountered, is it there or not? We cannot doubt even for one instant that it is there, because we have had the encounter, and we have felt this preference in our own flesh, we carry it before our eyes. *It is there*; and if it is there, we do not have to remember it, we do not have to create it with our imagination: if it is there, all we have to do is *acknowledge* it, in any situation whatever, at any time. But then, where does that question come from? From the fact that we use reason like everybody else: where reason can reach as the measure of reality, we reach; but what is not measurable we confine to remembrance, to fantasy. But - Fr Giussani says - when we look at reality, we can even make a list up to the 99th factor and not say that last factor of reality, which is His presence."² But unless we go that far, unless we reach the point of acknowledging "His sweet presence," we look at reality like everybody else, that is reductively.

Now, if I think of myself, the most evident thing is that I do not make myself, that I cannot say T without this Presence. Then it is not a remembrance, for man does not live by remembrance; when the needs of someone's heart have been aroused, remembrance is not enough for him (like when he is hungry): the only thing that corresponds to the heart is His presence, welcoming and recognizing His presence. That this may become familiar "is the new thing in life, for there is only one new thing, not two: becoming aware of His presence."[•] Not changing the circumstances, not that what I desire happens, not what I imagine! There is only one new thing: to become aware of His presence.

What does it mean to become aware of His presence (not "remember" His presence, but "become aware of" His presence)? Becoming aware of this Presence changes everything, in the very instant in which I acknowledge it. This is why it is the new thing: it doesn't matter what we do, it is all the same: "Everything is little compared to the capacity of the soul."⁴

If this Presence is not there, why get up in the morning? How do we emerge from the formality with which we do things? "So as not to fall into formalism, it is necessary for God to have become man, to have died and risen."[•] In order to have a reason for getting up in the morning, not to fall into the formalism of "another gray day", we need His presence, we need to acknowledge His presence: this is the only new thing.

This is why Fr Giussani insists every time that for us memory is not remembrance, but is the acknowledgment of His present Presence.

Cesana. The fourth question. "One who belongs to the people, even without following its gestures, cries out to God": this statement has thrown us off. What does it mean from an existential point of view? Many have asked this question in a different way: "Why don't we need to follow the gestures to cry out to God?" That is, they got things backwards.

Carrdn. I did not mean to say that gestures are not important, on the contrary, but that it is not our lack of consistency that keeps us from crying out. It is not that I may not participate in something one time, or not say Lauds one morning, or I may get angry because I am frail... This is not the problem. What stops us many times is scandal at our lack of consistency, our evil. This is not important; what concerns us, what is important for us, what Fr Giussani is interested in, is something else. The true question is not this. The true question is belonging. What really prevents us from crying out is not-belonging to a people. If we stay within the people, even with all our stupidity — which will cause us pain and sorrow - our cry rings out, time after time.

Cesana This question refers to Fr Negri's introduction, and it represents many of us: What does it mean existentially that we are Christian without being Christian?

According to me, keeping in mind also what Carron has been saying, we are Christian without being it when we think that Christianity is a matter of values or a matter of ideas, rather than an experience of belonging (hence the relevance of the stress on the figure of Abraham). When we say "experience of belonging" we say two things which are existentially relevant.

The first is, we have been preferred, because to belong means to have been preferred, that is, someone has wanted you: we have been blessed, blessed by God, we have been preferred, we have been wanted, we have been picked out.

The second is, we ourselves have been encouraged to prefer. For, if God has wanted us, he has wanted us with our character, our temperament, our life history, with our physiognomy: if He has wanted us as we are, what we are, our preference cannot help being expressed, rather, all of life is the risk of this preference, all of life is made up of things we desire and things we do not desire, of moments towards which we lean and moments we would like to avoid.

But what does it mean to be Christian, to exercise this preference? In *L'autocoscienza del cosmo*,¹ Fr Giussani says that judgment is made up of intelligence and affection, that is, judgment is not only a cerebral circuit that is set into motion, but is also the expression of an attachment to reality. Preference is a more concrete and stronger way than judgment, and it is what you feel, you perceive when you encounter a person. Yet preference, if it is not judged, if it is not itself placed in common, if it is not lived in common, if it is privatized, if it is hidden, if it is not in function of the aim, if it is not offered as a function of the aim, if it is not put into play, if it is not discussed, if it is not subjected to comparison, if it is not lived communally, if it is not lived for you, if it is not lived as a true act of love; if preference is not all of this, it becomes an idol, and then we are Christians but our heart is attached to idols: we are not Christian; formally we are Christians, but we are not Christian, for it is the heart that has been taken away.

Question. The vocation is an Other who intervenes in your life giving you a task: why does day-to-day life seem to limit this possibility, rather than being the locus where it happens?

Because we understand nothing about vocation. What does it mean, vocation, what does this intervention of God in history mean except the fact that your daily life which you felt to be banal, arid, stifling at times, begins to acquire a meaning, and you begin to perceive it as an opportunity rather than an obstacle, that is, you begin to perceive it, as Fr Giussani beautifully observed to a gathering of *Memores Domini*, as the step on which perfection is built? Circumstance, day-to-day banality, day-to-day difficulty, every day, every Monday, tomorrow: day-to-day banality, day-to-day circumstance is the channel through which this sense that has become attached to you, that has become stuck onto you, this sense, not only about yourself, but about all of history, of mankind, of everything, this sense that has penetrated you, begins to spread and to swell, so that you no longer hate what you are living. Vocation is this: you no longer hate what you are living, but you thank God that He gave it to you, or you are no longer indifferent to what you are living, you do not need to dream in order to live, you are no longer alone.

Day-to-day life. To recognize the meaning of things means realizing that what makes up your whole day and could be taken for granted, could be lived absent-mindedly, is on the contrary full of reminders. Because - as Carron was saying before - meaning has entered our life and we feel its rebound now, in the face of what we are living now: the reality we are living now makes more sense. The call is this.

Thus we understand also the last question. Normally it happens that we do not take our expectation seriously and we do not trust the companionship completely, so much so that our life's task falls into a constant reacting to circumstances. The Fraternity of CL, and more precisely the *locus* of our Fraternity, what is their purpose in defining our personal vocation?

The purpose is education: the unending work of life, as Fr Giussani called it. The unending work of life is our education. Always taken up again, for ours is a companionship guided towards destiny, not a casual companionship ("riding away on casual pillions," to use Eliot's words⁷): we are a companionship guided towards destiny, a mutual reminder to each other through our witness.

I recall once Fr Giussani said: "To do the Fraternity it is enough to have supper together every now and then." Why have supper together? Because we are happy to be together. And why are we happy to be together? I am happy to be together because you remind me of the destiny for which I live, you witness to me about why I am in the world. Without this, how can one go on?

CLOSING ADDRESS BY FR GIUSSANI

I was able to follow your progress in the manner the Lord has permitted me, more limited and laborious than before. But everything is a progress of God in our life. In any case, this is the only formula for making our heart morally, also morally ready and ever able to suffer, for the way God made us - because God created us.

But, so as not to keep you there too long, I say today that there is only one thing that we cannot miss - let's not drop it as a possibility — we must pray in the literal sense of the term, in other words, we must beseech Him to Whom we belong, that He may not have called us in vain.

Every day we are called, every hour we are called, every minute, every instant we are called. For what qualifies the 'I', what defines the 'I' in the face of all the other human attitudes, what qualifies the 'I' is precisely the consciousness that it is relationship with the Infinite: a woman is sewing, she is sewing or cooking in the kitchen, and she is relationship with the Infinite. What characterizes man is this paradoxical dimension between the little that he is, the very little that he is, the "fuse" that he is, between a littleness that he is and the constitutive relationship, a constitutive relationship which is the relationship with God.

But now I do not want to take up again things that we have already taken up together. I want simply to say: let us pray, let us pray, because this is something we can do even while we are doing any other task. It is an intention, it opens us to an intention, just as on a rainy day the sun breaks through the clouds, pierces the clouds and throws light, it makes us throw light on everything we are and do.

I have applied in recent times, I have discovered in recent times, with all my heart, deeply moved, the "jaculatory" formula, so to speak, the most complete formula that can be conceived from the Christian point of view: "Come, Holy Spirit. Come through Our Lady." *Veni Sancte Spiritus. Veni per Mariam*. Repeat this formula every day, at all hours, when the Lord chooses you to make Himself heard: it is a moment in which everything is reconnected and reconquered, everything is made one thing.

Veni Sancte Spiritus, because *Spiritus est Dominus, Spiritus est Deus* (God is Spirit, the Spirit is God). The Spirit is God, to Whom we belong. Because the Spirit is consciousness of self; and if this is applied properly in us it makes us understand: man understands that he belongs, that he is belonging to an Other. It is belonging to a Presence, to a Presence, here too, that is mysterious (mysterious because it is not ours, this Presence, in

a certain sense it is not; because if it comes from another source, it is not from our source).

"Come, Holy Spirit" into my every action, "Come, Holy Spirit" into my every moment. *Veni per Mariam*, and this is precisely... Our Lady is precisely the most powerfully human and persuasive touch that God has made towards His acting on man.

Veni per Mariam. Think of the evolution of this woman and Her way of lasting even in history! But obviously the foundation of Her belonging is from God, is in God. Yet, on the other hand, Mary is the totality of man, the totality of man who is exalted to the point of making Her become, of rendering Her the necessary instrument for relationship with God (necessary, not in the immediate sense of the term, but in the ultimate sense of the term). *Per Mariam*, because She did not make a single mistake, God did not allow Her to be the object of attack by the demon opposed to the truth. Virgin pure and beautiful: beauty is the sign, and She is as it were a sacramental sign of the beauty of which God made the world.

So then, happy to have left you a reminder of this jaculatory, this insurgent, always insurgent glory of our Christian life, may the *Veni Sanete Spiritus*. *Veni per Mariam* be a support, may it reveal itself to be a psychologically clear support, because profoundly permeated with origin, with roots.

My wish for you is that this jaculatory, that this surge of sincerity and simplicity, may daily find in your hearts space to be recalled and human reality to be changed in accordance with that ultimate order for which we were made. And destiny is this, and this is what we are missing so many times, but that never ceases for an instant: God cannot cease for even an instant being the wellspring of our happiness, of our fruitfulness.

HOLY MASS

HOMILY BY MONSIGNOR FRANCESCO VENTORINO

What have we watched, in what have we taken part during these days? The passion of a man, Fr Giussani, the passion that this man has for each of us, an intelligent passion, with which he looks at us in the profundity of our 'I' and sees there our election by God, which is the beginning of its greatness, this election which constitutes our very being, constitutes us in our being part of that people to which God has tied His glory in the world: the figure of Abraham is the beginning of all this.

Our greatness lies in this choice, in this belonging, and in this belonging lies the foundation of a positivity which nothing can take away from us because it does not come from us, but comes from the name by which God calls us. Blessed by God.

Now, when we feel ourselves to be traversed by this passionate and intelligent gaze, when we feel ourselves looked at this way, we feel within ourselves a resistance, and this resistance is generated by our usual way of looking at ourselves and evaluating ourselves, which has as its criteria those ethical and social goals which the world that pervades us suggests to us. As we come face to face with the precariousness of our existence, we attempt to save ourselves by grabbing onto something, but all this does not dispel our fear.

We must recognize, however, as has happened in these days, that the gaze this man trains on us, within the Church, within the Movement, has a more persuasive force, it is more powerful, it is truer than the gaze with which we are used to looking at ourselves. So we understand that the entire question of our life lies in the obedience, in the sequela to a man, to a human *locus*, who looks at us like this, in accordance with the truth of ourselves, a gaze that we can never stop learning.

It is simple, it is simple, it is enough... just think, it is enough to maintain the heart we have had here in these days, the heart with which we came; it is enough to maintain this heart that takes in this gaze, that lets this gaze light up the concreteness of things, of affections, of everyday life. To learn from this gaze our true greatness: our Fraternity is given us for this.

It is true, there is a condition: the cross. We must give up our plan, the plan we have about our own human salvation and even the plan that takes shape in us about God's salvation in history, because this is accomplished by a force, according to times and ways (how many testimonies have we given each other in these days too), this is accomplished according to times and ways that are not ours and that often seem to contradict the promise. And yet the newness of God is not first, God's newness is at the end of this contradiction.

Let's think of Jesus' death: the real newness is not in the prolongation of His life; the real newness for Him and for the world lies in the Resurrection, but resurrection comes after death. The Easter we celebrate today, which constitutes the promise of our life, is born of this resurrection; this mystery is accomplished in us every day.

May the Spirit whom Fr Giussani has implored, and urged us to implore, make us comprehend all this more and more every day.

TELEGRAMS

His Holiness

John Paul II

Your Holiness, in unison with the entire Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, gathered together in Rimini for the annual Spiritual Exercises on the theme "Abraham: the Birth of the 'I'", I give thanks to the Lord for your birthday by singing: "Sto lat, sto lat niech zyje, zyje nam!"

Our meeting opened with the surprise of a letter sent to us by Your Holiness, the most important text of these Exercises, one that illuminates our hearts with the greatest light, confirms our faith, and awakens in us that gratitude which comes only in front of something divine.

We wish to confide in Your Holiness that in the history of these years, we identify ever more with a sense of sonship towards Your Person, certain of our destiny as disciples of the successor of Christ, as like Abraham we are mysteriously chosen to be His people in history.

May Our Lady of Fatima, just as She miraculously saved Your life, obtain from Her risen Son the miracle of sanctity for us and for all our friends in the Fraternity throughout the world.

Fr Luigi Giussani, Prof. Giorgio Feliciani

His Eminence Cardinal James Francis Stafford

President, Pontifical Council for the Laity

26,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation gathered in Rimini and others linked from 50 countries in the world for the annual Spiritual Exercises, meditating on "Abraham: the Birth of the T", ever grateful for your friendly presence at the Eucharistic celebration, a sign of the unity of our Movement with Peter. We confirm the service of mission of the Church through the witness of the baptized laity, who find in the Pontifical Council for the Laity a place of real welcome and communion.

Fr Luigi Giussani, Prof. Giorgio Feliciani

His Excellency Monsignor Stanislaw Rylko

Secretary, Pontifical Council for the Laity

26,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation gathered in Rimini and others linked from 50 countries in the world for the annual Spiritual Exercises, meditating on "Abraham: the Birth of the T", meditating on the moving letter sent by the Holy Father, express to Your Excellency their esteem and gratitude for the continual signs of fatherhood and faithful friendship.

May you perceive us as completely available to the needs of the Church in the world, to the glory of the risen Jesus, whom we serve by following the immense humanity of this Pope. May Our Lady watch over his days as well as over our attempt.

Fr Luigi Giussani, Prof. Giorgio Feliciani

*His Eminence Cardinal Camilla Riini
President of the Italian Episcopal Conference*

26.000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation gathered in Rimini and others linked from 50 countries in the world for the annual Spiritual Exercises, meditating on "Abraham: the Birth of the 'I'", grateful for the guidance Your Eminence gives by following the concerns expressed by the Holy Father in these days, place in Your Eminence's hands their will to continue to serve the Church in Italy, for a clearer witness in society, aware that "we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which He gives us."

May Our Lady of the Holy Rosary be your comfort in the responsibility of the mandate you have received.

Fr Luigi Giussani. Prof. Giorgio Feliciani

*His Excellency Mmsignor Giuseppe Betori
General Secretary of the Italian Episcopal Conjerence*

26,000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation gathered in Rimini and others linked from 50 countries in the world for the annual Spiritual Exercises, meditating on "Abraham: the Birth of the T". sending their best wishes for success in your new responsibility, confirm their commitment to working together tor the mission of the Church in Italy through the education of youth and adults for a Christian witness in our country, in the deepening of the charism received, and in fidelity to the Pope, the successor of Christ. May the Mother of the risen Jesus sustain you in the labors demanded by the task entrusted to you.

Fr Luigi Giussani. Prof. Giorgio Feliciani

*His Excellency Monsignor Mariano De Nicolò
Bishop of Rimini*

Together with 26.000 members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation gathered in your diocese and others linked from 50 countries in the world for the annual Spiritual Exercises, meditating on ""Abraham: the Birth of the T". we thank you for the hospitality which every year makes us feel at home. Knowing that you are away from Rimini, we remember you in our prayer

to Our Lady of the Rosary that She may ensure to you the comfort of the sweet presence of the risen Lord in the mandate to continue the uninterrupted flow of the apostolic succession, through which Jesus has reached and conquered us, so as to cause the Fraternity to flourish in our lives, which you personally accompanied with a father's loving concern toward recognition by the Church.

Fr Luigi Giussani. Prof. Giorgio Feliciani

*His Excellency Monsignor Angelo Scola
Rector, Pontificia Universita Lateranense*

Dearest Angelo, in your message you express the wish that the charism of the Movement "may go on generating in the world similar *loci* of hope." In all these years, and especially the most recent ones, we perceive your person as a great protagonist of this generation, of which we are the wondering witnesses. By this, faithfulness to the living tradition matures in that new *mens* of which St Paul speaks. So, ask Our Lady on behalf of all of us that we may become more and more assimilated to the mind of Christ, in order to be active collaborators of the will of the Father who is in heaven, to the benefit of our fellow man on the edge of that human desert which is today's world.

Fr Luigi Giussani, Prof. Giorgio Feliciani

*His Excellency Monsignor Javier Martinez
Bishop of Cordoba*

Dearest Javier, we thank you for the bright testimony of unity which you gave us with your message. Through the charism granted to the Movement, we discover every day of our lives that we are fathers to each other, in accordance with the mystery of Grace that makes us move confidently forward through trials and sacrifices. For this reason, we ask Our Lady to protect your person, the vanguard of the people that we are, in the immense responsibility for which you have been chosen in the land of Spain.

Fr Luigi Giussani, Prof. Giorgio Feliciani

*His Excellency Monsignor Filippo Santoro
Auxiliary Bishop of Rio de Janeiro*

Dearest Filippo, thank you for your words which remind us of the purpose for which we were chosen: to be the beautiful sign of Christ's presence, for the good of all those we meet. Your prayer to Our Lady is reciprocated with the plea that your person may go even more deeply into our common belonging so as to be for your people a father and friend in the journey to holiness that has been undertaken.

Fr Luigi Giussani, Prof. Giorgio Feliciani

ART IN OUR COMPANY

Prepared by Sandro Chierici

(Guide to reading the images from the history of art accompanying the classical music during the entrances and exits)

Our course this year has the theme of vocation, through the figures of the prophets, the Blessed Virgin, the apostles, saints, Christians.

Vocation as a response to a You who calls us by name, who for the prophets is the God who reveals Himself mysteriously, in Our Lady and the apostles becomes direct relationship with Christ, a welcome presence and a companionship that can be experienced, and in the saints becomes memory lived to the point of martyrdom. In man, it is witness in daily life (work, study, charity).

The call of the Eternal

1. Marc Chagall, *Abraham and the Three Angels*, Nice, Musee Message Biblique
2. Marc Chagall, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, Nice, Musee Message Biblique
3. Caravaggio, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*. Florence, Uffizi
4. Andrea del Sarto, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, Dresden, Gemaldegalerie
5. Giovanni Antonio Bazzi. called Sodoma. *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, Pisa Cathedral
6. Marc Chagall, *Jacob's Dream*, Nice. Musee Message Biblique
7. Marc Chagall, *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*. Nice, Musee Message Biblique
8. Marc Chagall, *Moses and the Burning Bush*, Nice, Musee Message Biblique
9. Marc Chagall. *Crossing the Red Sea*, Nice, Musee Message Biblique
10. Marc Chagall, *Moses Striking the Rock of Horeb*, Nice, Musee Message Biblique
1. Marc Chagall, *Moses Receiving the Tablets of the Law*, Nice, Musee Message Biblique

The Word was Made Flesh

12. Duccio, *Annunciation*, Siena, Museo dell'Opera
13. Duccio, *Annunciation*. London, National Gallery
14. *Annunciation*, Apocalypse, Ms 68.174, fol. lv. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art

15. Giotto, *Nativity*, Padua. Arena Chapel
16. Giotto, *The Adoration of the Magi*, Padua, Arena Chapel
17. Giotto. *The Presentation in the Temple*, Padua. Arena Chapel
18. Thierry Bouts, *The Virgin Embracing the Child*, New York. Metropolitan Museum of Art
19. Gerard David, *The Virgin and Child with a Soup Bowl*, Genoa, Palazzo Bianco
20. Rogier van der Weyden, *The Duran Madonna*, Madrid, Prado

A Presence in the Day-to-Day

21. Masolino. *St John Baptizing the People*. Castiglione Olona, Baptistry
22. Giotto, *The Baptism of Christ*, Padua, Arena Chapel
23. Piero della Francesca. *The Baptism of Christ*. London. National Gallery
24. Duccio, *The Calling of Peter and Andrew*, Washington, National Gallery of Art
25. Domenico Ghirlandaio. *The Calling of Peter and Paul*, Vatican, Sistine Chapel
26. Giotto. *The Wedding Feast at Cana*. Padua, Arena Chapel
27. *The Miracle at Cana*, Zillis (Switzerland), ceiling of the church of St Martin
28. *Jesus Freeing a Woman Possessed by the Devil*. Zillis (Switzerland), ceiling of the church of St Martin
29. *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well*, Zillis (Switzerland), ceiling of the church of St Martin
30. Duccio, *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well*, Madrid, Thyssen Collection
31. *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well*, mosaic, Venice, San Marco
32. *Jesus and Zacchaeus*, mosaic. Venice, San Marco
33. *The Healing of the Blind Man*, mosaic, Venice. San Marco
34. Duccio. *Jesus Opens the Eyes of a Man Born Blind*. London, National Gallery
35. *Jesus Calming the Storm*, mosaic, Venice. San Marco
36. Duccio. *The Miraculous Catch of Fish*, Siena. Museo dell'Opera
37. Luis Borrassa, *St Peter Walking on the Water*. Tarrasa (Barcelona). Santa Maria
38. Giotto, *Jesus Driving the Merchants from the Temple*, Padua. Arena Chapel
39. Giotto, *The Last Supper*, detail, Padua, Arena Chapel
40. *The Last Supper*, Zillis (Switzerland), ceiling of the church of St Martin
41. *Jesus Washing the Apostles' Feet*, Zillis (Switzerland), ceiling of the church of St Martin

42. Giotto, *Jesus Washing the Apostles' Feet*, Padua, Arena Chapel
43. Giotto, *The Kiss of Judas*, Padua, Arena Chapel
44. *The Christ of Sutri*, Sutri Cathedral
45. Ferrer Bassa, *The Maries at the Tomb*, Monastery of Pedralbes (Spain)
46. Giotto, *Noli me tangere*, Padua, Arena Chapel
47. Luca Signorelli, *The Incredulity of St Thomas*, Loreto, Sanctuary, Sacrestia di San Giovanni

In the Name of an Other

48. Masaccio, *The Raising of Theophilus' Son*, Florence, Brancacci Chapel
49. Masaccio, *The Preaching of St Peter*, Florence, Brancacci Chapel
50. Masaccio. *The Baptism of the Neophytes*, Florence, Brancacci Chapel
51. Masaccio, *St Peter Healing by his Shadow*, Florence, Brancacci Chapel
52. Masaccio, *The Apostles Giving Alms*, Florence, Brancacci Chapel
53. Masaccio, *The Healing of the Cripple and the Raising of Tabitha*, Florence, Brancacci Chapel
54. School of Agnolo Gaddi, *The Alms of St Anthony*, Florence, Santa Croce
55. Fra Angelico, *St Stephen Preaching to the People and the Doctors of the Church*, Vatican Palaces, Chapel of Nicholas V
56. Fra Angelico, *The Consecration of St Stephen as Dean and the Distribution of Alms to the Poor*, Vatican Palaces, Chapel of Nicholas V
57. Filippo Lippi, *St Stephen Disputing with the Pharisees*, Prato, Santo Stefano, Choir chapel
58. Bernardo Daddi, *The Martyrdom of St Stephen*, Florence, Santa Croce

The Quotidian Transfigured

59. Agnolo Gaddi, *The Finding of the True Cross*, detail. *Monk drawing water, Monk fishing*, Florence, Santa Croce
60. Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, called Sodoma, *Monks at Work Building the Convent*, Monte Oliveto Maggiore, cloister
61. Domenico di Bartolo, *Enlarging the Hospital*, Siena, Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, Pellegrinaio
62. Unknown artist of the 14^h-15^h century, *The Month of April*, Trent, Castello del Buon Consiglio, Torre dell'Aquila
63. Unknown artist of the 14th-15th century, *The Month of July-August*, Trent, Castello del Buon Consiglio, Torre dell'Aquila
64. Unknown artist of the late 15th century, *Tailor's Workshop and Fabrics Shop*, Issogne, Challant castle
65. Unknown artist of the late 15th century. *Pharmacist's Shop*, Issogne, Challant castle

66. Unknown artist of the late 15th century, *Fruit and Vegetable Vendor*, Issogne, Challant castle
67. Domenico di Bartolo, *Assistance to Pilgrims*, Siena, Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, Pellegrinaio
68. Domenico di Bartolo, *Distributing Food to the Poor*, Siena, Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, Pellegrinaio
69. *Clothe the Naked*, Pistoia, Ospedale del Ceppo, Della Robbia frieze
70. *Visit the Sick*, Pistoia, Ospedale del Ceppo, Della Robbia frieze
71. *Feed the Hungry*, Pistoia, Ospedale del Ceppo, Della Robbia frieze
72. *Washing the Feet of Christ the Pilgrim*, Pistoia, Ospedale del Ceppo, Della Robbia frieze

DIRECTORY FOR FRATERNITY GROUPS

The following indications, which have emerged from the last twelve years' experience, aim to reply to Fraternity groups who have expressed the desire for a greater seriousness in the way they lead their lives, both personal and in communion.

1. Obedience to the indications given by the person guiding the whole Fraternity

Those who participate in the life of the Fraternity are invited to obey the indications given by the person guiding the whole Fraternity, in a responsible immanency in the life of the Movement that goes as far as one's affectivity.

2. Nature and consistency of the group

A group is made up of adults who freely choose it or constitute it. The idea guiding the Fraternity is the discovery that an adult is just as responsible for his work and family as he is for his sanctity, for his life as a path to sanctity, that is to say, for his life as vocation.

The adult, in so far as he is responsible, joins up with others who recognize the same responsibility before life as vocation.

According to the method the Movement teaches, everyone should desire a Fraternity group, even though adherence to it is personal.

3. Guidance: each group must be guided

Each group must be guided. The person guiding the group is not necessarily the prior, but must be someone authoritative, in the evangelical sense of the term: someone who has faith, who can even be from outside the group. The person guiding must communicate a method of life: he must teach how to bring everything back to one fundamental idea, and by meditating upon it, watching it, loving it, "all the rest" may spring forth. This is the origin of our method: Christian life springs from the encounter with a presence, and by following this presence one is changed. It is precisely in this change of self that the idea of a rule slowly matures.

The person guiding must encourage an authentic seriousness in the faith. He should be one who gives the group a direction, comforts it, and helps it to correct the inevitable tendency toward artificiality and moralism.

A stable relationship with someone "external" to the group (a priest, a responsible of the Movement, a member of *Memores Domini*) is a way to avoid emphasizing one's own group to the detriment of the unity of the entire Fraternity, which is not a federation of autonomous entities.

Exercises of the Fraternity

Each group must have a prior, who performs a secretarial function (notices, document distribution, etc.) and maintains order. The prior follows the directives received from the Center through the diocesan and regional responsables as well as the member of the executive committee in charge of the region.

4. The rule

In the life of the group, the rule is in function of an increase of the relationship between the person and Christ, and thus as a consequence, of an increase of the Movement in service to the Church.

a) *Prayer*

Each group must give itself a rule of prayer: it may be reciting a Hail Mary in the evening or going to daily Mass. Whether one chooses the minimum or maximum hypothesis is not important. What is important is the gesture of prayer, and the faithfulness to it.

b) *Poverty*

Monthly support of the common fund of the entire Fraternity, which implies sacrifice, is in function of an increase in the consciousness of poverty as an evangelical virtue. As St Paul says: "We have nothing yet we possess everything." The true way to possess everything is to be detached from everything. One can pledge even a few coins, but to pay them with faithfulness has a fundamental value as a reminder, because it is both a concrete and unitary gesture. Whoever does not commit himself to this directive may not be considered part of the Fraternity.

c) *Development of the knowledge of Church doctrine*

The Movement's catechetical study is the School of Community: this illuminates our formation, which is our whole life's task. It should be carried out while taking into account the Exercises and the latest documents of the Movement which clarify the context in which the "course" set by the School of Community is placed.

In cases where the School of Community is done elsewhere (as the result of a missionary presence of adults in their environment), the Fraternity group should meditate on the spiritual Exercises or documents indicated by the Movement, without failing nevertheless to refer back to the School of Community.

5. Work

The work of the Fraternity is the increase of the Movement in service to the Church. Taking on specific commitments is therefore in function of this (see the letter to new enrollees to the Fraternity).

Notes

- ¹ L. Giussani, *In Scorch of the Human Face*, unpublished translation. Kampala. 1993.
- ² Cf. H. de Luhac. *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1998.
- ³ John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, Encyclical letter, March 4, 1979, no. 1.
- < Cf Psalm 19 (18):6.
- ⁴ Cf. "No. we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which He gives us" (John Paul II, *Novo millennio inexcussum*. Apostolic Letter, January 6. 2001, no. 29)
- * Cf. L. Giussani, S. Alberto, J. Prades, *Generare tracce nella storia del mondo*, Milan, Rizzoli, 1998, pp. 28-36.
- " 1 Cor 2:16.
- * Cf. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic exhortation to the evangelization of the contemporary world, December 8, 1975, nos. 19, 21.
- " Cf. John Paul II, "Al Congresso del Movimento ecclesiale di impegno culturale," January 16, 1982, in *La traccia* (1982), fasc. I, p. 55.
- " Cf. L. Giussani, S. Alberto, J. Prades, *Generare tracce nella storia del mondo*, p. 74ff.
- ¹¹ Cf. L. Giussani. *Il cammino al vero e un'esperienza*, Turin, SEI, 1995, especially pp. 13-17, 36-41.
- ¹² Cf Mk 1:15.
- ¹⁵ Cf. 1 Cor 2:15.
- ¹⁴ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, nos. 10 and 13.
Cf. Jm 3:18.
John Paul II, personal letter to Msgr Giussani, see the complete text on page 3.
- " Jn 15:16.
John Paul II, personal letter to Msgr Giussani. p. 3.
Rm 12:18.
Psalm 104 (103): 30.
- ¹⁶ L. Giussani. *The Religious Sense*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997.
- ¹⁷ L. Giussani, "Charism and History." *Traces*. Feb. 2001, p. IV.
Cf. the Editorial, "I am an Infinite Cry" in *Traces*, May 2001, p. 1.
C. Magris, "Novecento. Lo scrittore nel videogame." ["The 20th Century. The Writer in a Videogame"]. *Corriere della Sera*, January 12, 1998, quoted in M. Borghesi, "Crisi del soggetto ed educazione oggi." [The Crisis of the Subject and Education Today] in *Il Nuovo Areopago*, no. 4, Winter 2000, p. 68.
- " H. Arendt, *Le origini del totalitarismo* ("The Origins of Totalitarianism"), Milan, Edizioni di Comunità, 1996, p. 604 [the quotation is translated from the Italian edition].
F. Werfel, *Bernadette*. Milan, Mondadori, 1963, p. 480.
- " Cf. L. Giussani, *L'autocoscienza del cosmo* ["The Self-awareness of the Cosmos"], Milan, BUR, 2000. p. 58.
Cf. Gen 11:1-9.
V. Hugo, "Le Pont," in *Les contemplations*, Paris, Michel Levy Freres-Hetzl-Pagnerre, 1857, p. 127.
- " W. Vogels, *Abraham, l'inizio della fede* ["The Beginning of Faith"], Cinisello Balsamo (Milan), San Paolo, 1999, pp. 100-101.
- ¹⁸ L. Giussani, "A Mystery of Election," in *Tracce*, March 2001, p. VII.
Gen 12:1-3.
- " L. Giussani, "Life: God has 'Mixed in' with Us," *Traces*, November 1999. pp. 11-111.

- ^u Cf. L. Giussani, *Il senso di Dio e l'uomo moderno* ["The Sense of God and Modern Man"], Milan, BUR, 1994, pp. 45-46.
- ¹¹ Gen 12:2.
- ¹² Gen 17:5.
- ¹³ Ex 3:14.
- L. Giussani, *Porta la speranza. Primi scritti*, Genoa, Marietti, 1997, p. 164.
- ¹⁴ Cf. 1 Cor 15:28.
- ¹⁵ L. Giussani, *In Search of the Human Face*.
- " Cf. Gen 15:5.
- Gen 15:4.
- ¹⁶ Cf. Gen 15:7.
- ¹⁷ Cf. Gen 15:1.
- " L. Giussani, *Porta la speranza. Primi scritti*, p. 169.
- Cf. Gen 15:2.
- ¹⁸ Gen 15:5-6.
- " L. Giussani, *In Search of the Human Face*.
- Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ E. Piccinini, "The History of a Preference," *Tracce*, May 2001, p. 19.
- " L. Giussani, quoted in E. Piccinini, "The History of a Preference," *Tracce*, May 2001, p. 19.
- " Gen 15:6.
- ²⁰ Gen 22:18.
- ²¹ Dt 6:4-7.
- " C. Peguy, "Il popolo e la terra profonda," ["The People is the Deep Earth"] from *Un nuovo teologo, Fernand Laudet*, in *Lui e qui. Pagine scelte*, Milan, BUR, 1997, p. 274.
- Is 43:1,3.
- " Cf. L. Giussani, "A Mystery of Choice," in *Tracce*, March 2001, p. X.
- C. Peguy, "Il popolo e la terra profonda," pp. 272-273.
- ²² L. Giussani, "Life: God has 'Mixed in' with Us," pp. III-IV.
- ²³ L. Giussani, "I am My People," in *Tracce*, May 2001, p. 7.
- ²⁴ Cf. Wis 1:13.
- L. Giussani, *Tutta la terra desidera il Tuo volto*, Cinisello Balsamo (Milan), San Paolo, 2000, pp. 172-173.
- M. Camisasca, *Comunion e Liberazione. Le origini (1954-1968)*, Cinisello Balsamo (Milan), San Paolo, 2001.
- ²⁵ Cf. C. Rossi, "Dolce e grande Valentino," in *Tracce*, June 2001, pp. 24ff.
- Jesu, dulcis memoria*, Gregorian hymn. Cf. text and comment in L. Giussani, *Tutta la terra desidera il Tuo volto*, pp. 28 ff.
- " Prayer at the beginning of the Liturgical Assembly, IVth Sunday of Easter, in *Messale ambrosiano festivo*, Turin-Milan, Marietti-Jaca Book, 1976, p. 402.
- L. Giussani, S. Alberto, J. Prades, *Generare Tracce nella storia del mondo*, p. 53.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ Psalm 119 (118): 41.
- R. Niebuhr, "Human Destiny," in *The Nature and Destiny of Man: a Christian Interpretation*, vol. II, London, 1943, p. 6.
- " Cf. Phil 3:3-6; 2 Cor U:22ff.
- ²⁸ Gal 3:16.
- ²⁹ L. Giussani, "Charism and History," in *Tracce*, February 2001, p. VI.
- " L. Giussani, S. Alberto, J. Prades, *Generare tracce nella storia del mondo*, pp. 53, 54.
- " Phil 2:8.
- Ct'Jn 8:31-59.
- " Jn 8:56.

- Cf. Lk 1:44.
- Cf. L. Giussani, *L'attrattiva Gesù*, p. IX; L. Giussani, S. Alberto, J. Prades, *Generare tracce nella storia del mondo*, p. 95.
- A. Machado, "Retrato," in *Campos de Costilla*, Ed. Catedra, p. 41.
- L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Church*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998, p. 53.
- L. Giussani, "Charism and History," p. VI.
- Jn 6:68.
- Cf Gal 3:29.
- Cf. Gal 3:25-29.
- L. Giussani, "A Mystery of Election," p. XV.
- John Paul II. personal letter to Luigi Giussani. See the complete text on p. 3.
- Cf. Gal 3:6-7.
- Gen 22:18.
- Cf. "Those who live by faith will receive the blessing together with the believer Abraham" (H. Schlier, *La Carta a los Gdlatas*, Salamanca, 1975, p. 153).
- Ibid.*
- Testimony by Luigi Giussani during the meeting with John Paul II of the ecclesial movements and the new communities, Rome, May 30, 1998. Published in *Communion and Liberation. A Movement in the Church*, edited by Davide Rondoni, trans. by Patrick Stevenson and Susan Scott, published for Cooperative Editoriale Nuovo Mondo by McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston, 2000, pp. 171-175.
- Cf. *Ibid.*
- L. Giussani, *L'attrattiva Gesù*, p. 41.
- L. Giussani, S. Alberto, J. Prades, *Generare tracce nella storia del mondo*, p. 33.
- L. Giussani, "Faith is Acknowledging a Presence," in *Traces*, December 2000, p. III.
- Ibid.*, pp. III-IV.
- Ibid.*, p. VI.
- L. Giussani, *Si pud (veramente?) vivere così?*, Milan, BUR, 1996, pp. 429-430.
- ¹ *Ibid.*, p. 432.
- L. Giussani, text of the Communion and Liberation Easter 2001 poster.
- Psalms 78 (77):34-35.
- Thomas Mann, *La legge*, Milan, Baldini & Castoldi, 1997, p. 129. [The quotation is translated from the Italian edition].
- Testimony by Luigi Giussani cited above.
- L. Giussani, "Charism and History," p. II.
- Cf. L. Giussani, S. Alberto, J. Prades, *Generare tracce nella storia del mondo*, p. 181.
- Testimony by Luigi Giussani cited above.
- Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I. q. 1. art. 1., quoted in L. Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, p. 140.
- Cf. Psalms 84 (83):2.
- G. Cesana, "Enchained Evil," in *Traces*, April 2001, pp. 191T.
- Ibid.*
- Cf. L. Giussani, *Si pud (veramente?) vivere così?*, Milan, BUR, 1996, pp. 84-85.
- L. Giussani, "Faith is Acknowledging a Presence," p. III.
- "Everything is little and small for the capacity of one's heart" (G. Leopardi, "Pensieri," LXVIIII. in *Poesie e prose*, Milan, Mondadori, 1980, vol. 2, p. 321).
- Cf. L. Giussani, *L'autocoscienza del cosmo*, pp. 22-23; 28-29.
- Cf. *Ibid.*, especially pp. 179IT.
- Cf. T.S. Eliot, *Choruses from "The Rock"*, San Diego-New York-London, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988, p. 154.

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