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***“You are
the hope
of the world”***

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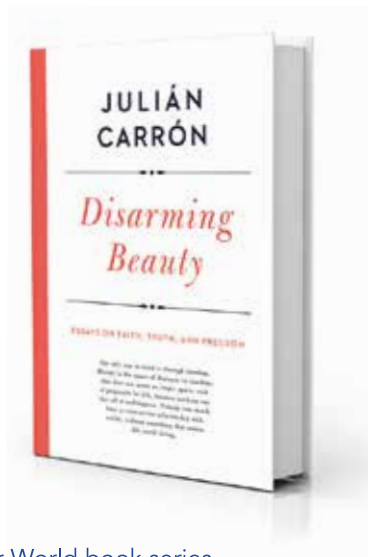
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JULIÁN CARRÓN

Disarming Beauty

ESSAYS ON FAITH, TRUTH, AND FREEDOM



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The impact of history

“**W**e want everything” was one of the slogans of the demonstrators in 1968 and became the title of one of the most visited exhibits during this year’s Rimini Meeting. These three words struck many during the week of the Meeting. It is also a cry that expresses the urgent need for fulfillment—for truth, justice, and happiness—that is present inside every person at all times, including today. That cry seems impossible in these times. We are so alone, feeble, and worried by what we see that a demand of that intensity seems out of place. We aspire to avoid trouble, seeking to find ways of protecting ourselves from the impact of history, creating environments that are as “safe” as possible, to use an expression that’s all too common in Anglo-Saxon societies, in which it has become normal to pile on rules and restrictions to make sure no one feels “attacked” in a work meeting or college lecture by a different opinion or “upset” by the violence of a chapter of history. Basically, we’re playing defense.

Yet that cry sounded once again this summer. You’ll find many examples in the following pages, in the letters and in the report from the Meeting, full of facts both great and small that, among other fruits, brought one guest speaker to say, “Let me stay with you, because for the first time God has become a possibility for me.” It can also be heard in the story of the young people called to Rome by the Pope for a pilgrimage in the middle of August, which became an opportunity to discover an unimaginable fullness, even amidst the brutal heat and chaos of the capital. Or in the way Pope Francis surprised everyone in Ireland during one of his most difficult trips by issuing a wake-up call for the entire Church. There were all the usual presuppositions that we’d return home disappointed, but something else happened. So then, *what was it* that happened? Who can reawaken the “I” like this? What makes the impossible *possible*, to the point that we see it happening and can *ask for* it?

We need to recognize the answer. What happened reveals to us, once again, the only thing we need in order to live: an event. A presence that is so exceptional that it reawakens our “I” to the point of reawakening that radical demand: “We want everything.” It’s the humanity we see surging up in us again that allows us to recognize the face of that presence, that allows us to say, “It’s You, Christ.”

And this is the face we can seek wherever we are, “with tenacity in following a path,” as Fr. Giussani himself said. “It’s very important that we close one phase and begin another: a definitive, mature one; one that can stand the test of time; in fact, the test of all of history because that announcement that began to impress [...] John and Andrew two thousand years ago, that announcement, that person is exactly the same phenomenon that attracted us to come here.” It’s the phenomenon that makes us ask for everything.

Viviana, Brother Paolino, Giuliana, Maria Cristina

edited by
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Three months abroad

I'm writing from England-Newcastle to be precise. It's 10:00 p.m. and there's still daylight—the sun doesn't seem to want to set. I mention this only because the fact that light and shadow are chasing each other reminds me of the experience I am living here. I left for three months during the summer to work with a family I did not know. I awaited my departure with a predictable and understandable anxiety and agitation. I left because I wanted to experience and discover what there is for me beyond the everyday humdrum, away from the things I love, to put my life to the test: can I be happy even far away from my refuge, from the company of GS? Can I find Him even among strangers? Once I got here, it was a disaster because the difficulties before me were too great. I spent the third day crying, the fourth day looking for another place to go, the fifth day calling home to announce that I'm giving up, I've failed. I wasn't as strong as I had always said I was. What caused me to wake up and unpack my suitcases was the realization that I could not draw or expect strength from myself alone. I am imperfect, incomplete: I need to ask and pray. And this is what made me stay. Instead of putting myself through hell and complaining about what I don't have, I have begun each morning by asking Him to show Himself during my day and I've ended my day each evening by thanking Him for what He has given me. It's been a liberation. This city, this family, this job are the circumstances that have been given to me for my fulfillment, and this understanding makes me live. In this way, I am able to examine and embrace real-

ity, aware that everything that is placed before me is a reflection of a Good that is greater.

Viviana, Newcastle (Great Britain)

Tracce on the island of Syros

Dearest Roberto and Tearoasa, I receive *Tracce* regularly and I always start by reading the witnesses, which are a great spiritual help to me. Here, with no possibility of having meaningful spiritual moments (due in part to my linguistic shortcomings in spoken Greek), it does me great good to be encouraged to always keep alive the memory of the event that is Jesus of Nazareth.... I imagine Him walking with me as He did with the two on the road to Emmaus! In particular, I have experienced how effective it is each morning when I get up to put myself at the service of the Holy Spirit in light of the "facts" that God the Father has set out for me. I am always on the island of Syros where, even though I don't have any great pastoral commitments, there are always daily surprises that must be lived with faith. After meeting you years ago in Corfu, I was provoked to delve deeper into Fr. Giussani's charism (reading in its entirety Savorana's biography of Fr. Giussani was a great spiritual help and I felt some nostalgia for so many ecclesial events that brought me back to specific moments of my youth). For this, I thank the Lord and you. I feel indebted because through you, I have rediscovered Fr. Giussani and his charism. His attention to daily reality, in which the Lord calls us to work, continues to help me here in Greece where every morning everything seems to start all over again with great precariousness, so that it is indispensable to reweave the communion between us and the Lord. I appreciated your gift of the text from Fr. Carron's Fraternity Exercises, which I will bring with me to the Spiritual Exercises in which we Capuchins in Greece will participate in Athens.

Brother Paolino, Syros (Greece)

What did they see in me?

This year, I was given a permanent teaching position. At the end of the probationary year there is an interview, during which one is supposed to present an activity that one has carried out. I sat down in front of the evaluation committee and I couldn't get a word in. They all started to tell me how well my work had been carried out, of the positive relationships I had established with the students (I teach adults, mostly immigrants), etc. I was embarrassed. I'm not that good. While they were telling me these things, what came to mind were my mistakes, my wasting of time, my struggles and my attempts to avoid them. What happened left me with a question, however; why, in spite of all of this, do they tell me I'm good? A few days later, I left for the community vacation. One of my immigrant Muslim students came with us. I invited him when I found out he had never seen mountains. My question made me see something there. I saw how we are with each other: the attention, the patience, the beauty of the relationships among us. My student was immediately drawn in by this beauty, so much so that he decided to participate in all the gestures. One could say that, over time, I've been formed by this friendship: a theoretically impossible friendship with people of very diverse ages, interests, and habits. I began to see the answer to my question: "It is the Lord." During the school year, my colleagues saw Him through me, in spite of my errors. Actually, *through* my errors and shortcomings. It is He who took my hesitant and fickle "yes" and transformed it. "By this you shall know that I am the Lord."

Giuliana, Parma (Italy)

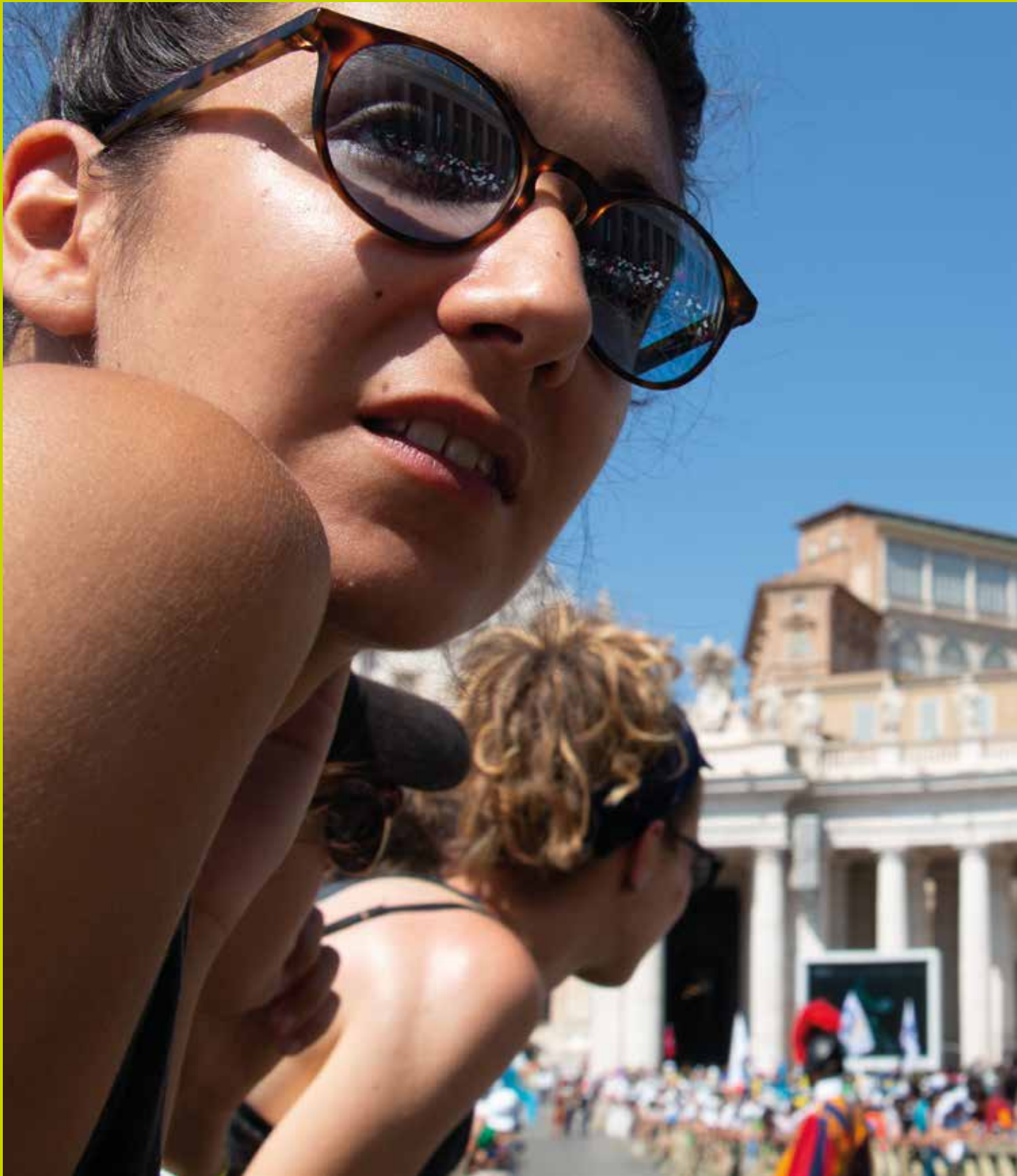
In the parking lots at the Meeting

When they told me that this year as a volunteer at the Meeting I would be working in the parking lots, I was happy because it seemed like a good challenge. Still, as the Meeting approached and we got our first instructions, my enthusiasm died. We were going to be at the east booth at the entrance reserved for the volunteers and for delivery vehicles. At the volunteer meeting, my university classmate Maria and I discovered that we were assigned to the "booth," one of the four corners of the Meeting fairgrounds, pressing a button to raise the bar to allow entry to the workers (who aren't even of the Movement). We looked at each other and laughed in disbelief. We said to each other, "It's going to be a difficult Meeting!" But that afternoon I went to talk with a friend who had been happy to do this job two

years ago. "The booth is a humble and hidden job; a great school for life. It's like the gargoyles of the Duomo of Milan: perfectly sculpted, but at eighty meters up, no one will ever see them. In life one would like to be in the spotlight instead of having to be where one is asked to be, where there is a need. The Meeting needed me to do that humble job and I did it the best possible way." This helped us improve our attitude: as it had been beautiful for her, there could also be something there for us. The first day we started to "serve" there, with great simplicity. We smiled, we stood up when someone was coming, we greeted people. Two policemen stopped to chat, a volunteer on a bike greeted us, and a food service worker asked our names.... On the second day, Loris, who was working at Radio Maria, got out of his car, offering us a bag of plums he had picked from his garden, and said, "I saw you yesterday. This is for you." That gratuitous gesture opened our hearts and generated a whole world. We ran to give some to the others working at parking cars and to those entering and leaving the fairgrounds. We saw on their faces the same amazement that had captured us. We also gave some to the Neapolitan guys from "Na Pizza," and they in turn gave us their sandwiches, which then we gave to Giovanni from the cleaning crew, who had been working in his pickup truck until 5:00 a.m. A surprising chain of gratuitousness sprang up: whatever we received, which was always more than we expected, we looked for chances to give it away. At the end of the shift that day, I was surprised that nothing was left—everything had been given away. And so it went the following days: people stopped to talk to us, they knew who we were, they sat down with us. Loris brought us fruit, the Neapolitans brought lasagna, the ladies from the cafeteria a tray of pastries... A moved and visible contentedness grew in us. Each day we approached the work as an adventure. Even the sacrifice of missing some of the meetings became light. At the meeting Vittadini held with the volunteers of the "services," a guy from the shift before ours said that the booth was a monotonous job. I jumped up on my chair. Just the day before, I had run into Fr. Ambrogio who, at my "How are you?" had answered, "Inexorably well because God is monotonous: He never tires of working miracles." There I understood that even the most monotonous thing like pressing a button (I don't believe life spares us from monotony, whether in our studies, work, or relationships), if it is done for Christ, that is, in a loving relationship that has taken us and takes us, makes us happy. This moves history, and in these days, it touched the people we met.

Maria Cristina, Turin (Italy)

Close-up






“Someone has called us together”

Close to 800 young people of CL participated in the week-long walking pilgrimage to Rome to prepare for the Synod on Young People. The Pope challenged the pilgrims “to bear in heart and in mind that Jesus, the Lord, loves me. Then, with this love, life becomes a good journey.” This challenge played out in the heat and chaos of Rome in August, just as it does in the reality of everyday life.



Paola Bergamini
photos by **Gaia Pomelli**

Friday, August 10th. The white marble of the basilica of Saint Sebastian was illuminated by the sunset. Outside the heat was still unbearable. Before entering the church, Max had dunked himself in a fountain to cool off. As one of those responsible for organizing the pilgrimage to Rome, he had been walking back and forth since dawn along the serpentine line of young people, both those graduating from university, like him, and those finishing high school. Now he was sitting in the church, soaking wet and very tired. With his head in his hands, he listened to Fr. Pigi Banna, the leader of the pilgrims, tell the story of the Roman martyr. “Saint Sebastian was not concerned about the future.



In the photos, some moments from the pilgrimage of Italian young people to Rome, which ended on August 12th.

He gave his life for Christ.” Then and there, in one of those moments that mark one’s life, Max raised his head and in his heart said, “I, too, am giving You everything, Christ, because only in this way am I truly happy.” The preceding wearisome days of heat and unexpected problems had made him understand. The words of Julián Carrón’s message to the pilgrimage participants became flesh as Max looked at Fr. Pigi and the other young people: “This is what you are friends for: to help each other respond to Jesus’s question personally, with simplicity. And there could be no greater gesture of friendship among you than following Him who carries you to your destiny.” For Max and the other young people of the Movement (760 of them), everything began with their “yes” to the Pope’s invitation to go to Rome for a gathering to pave the way for the October Synod on Young People. Carrón’s message also said, “Someone has called us together: the Pope. It’s not something we pulled out of our hat. Someone we trusted invited us.”

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Fr. Pigi read these words on the first day of the pilgrimage, Wednesday, in the sanctuary of the Queen of the Apostles. The message continued, asserting that “there is an alternative to the fear of the future and the cynicism with which everyone looks at work. It’s not mistaken to hope in something good and believe that my life is unique. Seeking happiness is not a mistake.” The alternative resides in the encounter that each participant had had with a gaze full of promise, of fulfillment. This is how it was for John and Andrew, the first disciples. This is the Church. Fr. Pigi related to the young people what Carrón had told him by phone the day before: “Thinking of you in Rome, from a certain point of view the fact of not being in Czestochowa [*the destina-*

tion of a similar CL pilgrimage every year, editor’s note] is an advantage. You will be in the midst of many discomforts, the heat, the chaos, trying to make present the memory of Christ. What could be more similar to what will happen to you every day starting in September at university or at work?”

On foot, they returned to the courtyard of the Saint Ann of Barolo Institute, where the pilgrims were staying. After dinner, some of them finished setting up their spots, inflating air mattresses and unrolling sleeping bags, even if “in this heat there’s no way I’m getting in that sleeping bag.” They slept under the stars with sleeping masks because the lights remained on so the security personnel could watch over them. The recitation of the *Memorare* closed the day, as they entrusted to Mary their hopes, fears, tiredness, everything.

Thursday at five in the morning

very loud music served as the wake-up call. Marco, in his last year in the history faculty, heard a young fellow ask his friend, “Did you bring your canteen full of water from home?” He made a mental note to use this in that evening’s skits.

After breakfast, they began their journey to the Seven Churches, following the ancient pilgrimage promoted by Saint Philip Neri. The first stop was Mass in Saint Peter’s Cathedral.

Divided into groups of 100, they

“Usually, I think that if the conditions I expect are not present, then nothing can happen. Instead...”



lined up to go through the metal detectors. Molly, in her last year of a degree program in humanities, directed the choir. None of the members had sung together before, and there had been no time for practice. “Usually, I think that if the conditions I expect are not present, then nothing can happen. Instead, at Saint Peter’s, repeating the same song for hours, waiting for everyone to enter, I found myself watching what was happening. It was Christ, taking initiative in my life, surprising me.” Outside, Marco and the other young people “entertained” those in line with mimed songs, readings from the booklet, and other songs, in series, until the last group finally entered, which at this point was at the Consecration. As they walked along Tiber River Avenue toward Saint Mary Major, Fr. Pigi asked the young people to pray the Rosary “to make present the memory of those who caused you to meet the Movement.” All around them was the chaos of the city, and on top of that, the amplification system was malfunctioning. Max was upset, but then he heard Fr. Pigi’s voice: “Don’t worry. Just pick up your prayer at the point where you left off. As soon as possible, let’s

move closer together so we can sing together. Before we reach the Imperial Forum, we’ll observe a few minutes of silence.” For Max, those words were freeing. “I had in front of me a man who was not worried about measuring things, not determined by the outcome. Free, striving to ‘mix it up’ with what was happening. Risking everything.” Alessandro, who had just graduated from high school, was from Rome, and knew well all the roads they were traveling. Every place had its own memories, like the spot where he broke up with his girlfriend and the pub where he drank beer with his friends. “For me to be here today, those beautiful and painful moments were necessary. Necessary to live this pilgrimage where everything seems to be prepared for me,” he thought in silence. After saying the “Prayer of Fr. Grandmaison” together (“preserve in me the heart of a child, pure and transparent as a spring”), Fr. Pigi suggested some reflections for the pilgrims so they would not miss what was happening. “Each of us has a gift. We are irreplaceable. Within the inevitable circumstances of life, vocation develops, and in this we are called to serve the Church, which first of all needs men and women who are happy. Not dull and stupid like Boetians, but *restless* and happy.”

He asked, "When have you served and felt happy? If you think about this, you will understand why these days are important for you." After dinner, there was time and the desire for singing, dancing, and silly skits. To the tune of "Despacito," a song about their experience was created, with each verse covering an episode that had happened during the day. The Sisters of Saint Ann were present to listen to them, and in the end taught them a song of theirs in Spanish.

On Friday there was no break from the heat. In the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, they listened to Giacomo and Marta witness to their vocations. Giacomo talked about his experience with his wife of one year, Francesca. "Before we were married, I sensed that in our relationship there was a greater good, but no form seemed suitable to me. In the verification of my relationship with Christ, the bond between the two of us grew" to the point that they decided to get married. Asked how to understand whether someone is the right person, he said, "If the memory of her makes you lift your head."

Marta, a teacher and *Memor Domini*, spoke about her encounter with the Movement during high school, her moves to Germany and then

Belgium after getting her university degree, her deep friendship with a German teacher, and the thought that "living in love is beautiful. What would life be if you always lived in love with Jesus?" When the teacher confided that he wanted to give his life to Christ, her heart leapt and she wondered if this was for her, too. Thus began a struggle for Marta, as she came to understand that she just needed to leave space for Christ, then arrived at the point when "with the tiniest of voices, I said yes. I started the novitiate." There was an explosion of love. "I saw that the preference of Christ for my life was a hope for others, for my colleagues, for the uncontrollable kids I teach."

At lunch another Marta, a recent medical school graduate, sat down to eat with some young people she did not know, which was not like her, as she is a timid person by nature. "All the richness I saw in Fr. Pigi, Max, and the others filled me so much that I wanted in some way to empty myself, to meet new friends," she recounted. Before dinner, a group of young people sang traditional Alpine songs in the showers. In the evening, 70 young people sang them, and verses continued to be added to the "Despacito" song. Saturday was the big day of the

meeting with the Pope. They visited the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, then went to Capena Park in front of the Circus Maximus. Under the sun, they formed a human chain in a huge rectangle, unlinking hands to let friends in as they arrived from all over Italy. Every time someone entered there was applause to welcome them. They drew on their whole repertoire of songs, including the hymn of the pilgrimage. The young people on the team of stewards passed around water and Gatorade. After three hours, they received the announcement that they should head for the Circus Maximus, and formed a long serpentine line. Molly sang songs that everyone knew. At a certain point the geyser-sound handclaps made famous by the Iceland fans at the World Cup broke out. There was silence, then all 70,000 joined in.

At 6:30 p.m. the Pope arrived. As he answered questions from five young people, he invited them to have great dreams, saying that "to do this, an inexhaustible spring of hope is needed, an Infinite that expands. Big dreams need God in order not to become mirages." He talked about freedom and love. "It used to be said of early Christians: 'look at how they love each other.' Because people could see their witness. They knew how to listen, and

"Big dreams need God in order not to become mirages. With this love, life becomes a good journey, without worry."



furthermore, they lived according to the Gospel.” This is testimony. After an hour of meeting with the pilgrims, there was a reading from the Gospel of John about the morning of the Resurrection. The Pope talked about those moments that changed history. In closing, he said, “May each one of us, returning home, bear this in heart and in mind: Jesus, the Lord, loves me. [...] With this love, life becomes a good journey, without worry, without fear—that worry and fear that destroy us.”

Outside, Max gave the announcement: “Fifteen minutes for dinner.” Andrea, a member of the team of stewards, who was on his first pilgrimage, burst out: “That’s crazy!” When he reached his friends, all of whom were exhausted, one of them said, “Who can repeat for me what the Pope said about fear?” Another one said, “I missed the last sentence...”. Together they reconstructed the missing line. Stefano recounts, “In front of the Pope I felt at home, and despite my relationship with Christ, this is not something to be taken for granted. In my life, an experience of such deep truth in a relationship with someone has happened very few times, and it has been crucial.”

On Sunday at the *Angelus*, the Roman Tortoise formed up again. Before the Pope’s arrival the geyser sound started anew and everyone in the square joined in. “Life communicates itself,” Carrón had told Fr. Pigi on the phone. “In these last two days, the battle was between the idea I had in mind for following the Church, and instead, following what was happening,” he said. “But a sort of sensitivity emerged toward everyone, a sensitive attitude that reminds me of that ‘mixing it up with reality’ of which Fr. Giussani spoke in the famous letter to his friend Angelo Majo,” that “ineffable vibration” that made it worthwhile to go on pilgrimage. ■

“To teach us to live”

Two leaders of CL in Ireland tell us about the World Meeting of Families in Dublin, the preparatory congress, and the exhibit “The Love of My Heart” prepared by the CL community, as well as the Pope’s help in dealing with the great wound affecting the victims of abuse and pedophilia.



Davide Perillo

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It was during the Penitential Act at the beginning of Mass in Phoenix Park on Sunday that Mauro Biondi, the leader of CL in Ireland, understood that something new was happening. “The Pope asked forgiveness for seven things. He did so in Spanish, while all the rest was in Italian, which is a sign that those lines emerged from within. He asked forgiveness from the heart, not only from the victims of abuse, but also from God, in the name of the Church. I said to myself, ‘He is proclaiming the announcement.’ In the midst of the drama, the wreckage, and at the lowest point, he indicated the road for starting over again for everyone. As he asked for forgiveness, he was announcing Christ.”

When Pope Francis arrived in Dublin on Saturday 25th to close the World Meeting of Families (held August 22nd–25th), he inevitably found waiting for him the drama to which Biondi was referring. This was one of the tensest moments of recent years in light of the American dossier accusing the Church once again of being complicit in sexual abuse and pedophilia. There was a bad feeling

in the air, a stormy mood, about an open wound that has been talked about here for over ten years, which has been intensified as other tragedies from the past have come to light, in places like orphanages and homes for unwed mothers, where the mothers were forced to give up their children. This open wound is still very painful.

“Among the moments of the congress preparing for the Pope’s visit, there was a gathering with the victims of those situations,” recounts Max Camusso, another leader of the CL community in Dublin. “It was clear that the content of this visit would be different. We thought that time had shown at least a way to reach forgiveness, but instead, judging by the tone of the gathering, we realized that in these ten years things have become even more intense. There was little openness to listening to each other. We said, ‘The only thing is for Francis to come and help us.’”

And Francis came, almost 40 years after Pope John Paul II’s historic visit. A large cross in Phoenix Park remains as a reminder of the visit in the place where Francis celebrated its final Mass. “Notwithstanding the hype of the previous weeks discouraging people from attending be-



cause of the problems with parking, how to get there, and traffic, the Mass was full of people,” Biondi says. “I was very struck to see families, the elderly, and people who had come from all over the country, the people of Ireland, not just the Dubliners. A people.”

The liturgy was the culmination of a series of memorable moments. The first was the Saturday meeting in Dublin Castle with the authorities of civil society and the diplomatic corps, something not to be taken for granted given the climate. “This dialogue should be taken up again, because there were some interesting points of openness,” observes

■
Pope Francis during the Mass in Phoenix Park, on August 26th.

Biondi. “The Taoiseach [the Irish Prime Minister and head of government] Leo Varadkar asked for more forceful initiatives against pedophilia, but for the first time in these years in which a frightful process of historical revisionism has been taking place, he also acknowledged that ‘it is not possible to think of Ireland without Christianity.’ He spoke about the suffering caused by abuses as ‘stains on our State, our society, and also the Catholic Church,’ thus broadening the issue and the parties responsible. It was an opportunity for the Church to say that we understand the difference between Christianity and Christendom.”

Saturday afternoon in Dublin the Pope visited the Capuchin Fathers’ day center for homeless families, and that evening he met with eight victims of abuse in the Vatican

Embassy. As we have seen, the Pope listened, asked questions, and sought to understand. He was struck and wounded to the point that in the penitential act at the Phoenix Park Mass on Sunday, he said, “In reflecting on what they told me, I wish to implore the Lord’s mercy for these crimes and to ask forgiveness for them.” Camusso says, “One of the victims said immediately afterward that ‘we have seen a Pope very engaged in understanding us, in listening to us. It wasn’t just a formality, something he *had to do*.’ For them, it was an encounter.”

Saturday evening Pope Francis took part in the festival of families in Croke Park Stadium, one of the biggest venues in Europe, with 84,000 seats. Biondi recounts, “It was a moment of celebration, song, and dance alternating with testimonies. There, too, the human newness made possible by Christianity shone through.”

This newness was also seen in the Exhibition Hall of the Royal Dublin Society Conference Centre, the facility that hosted the congress before the Pope’s visit. Biondi comments that the series of gatherings, testimonies, and lessons (the fulcrum was *Amoris Laetitia*) “was similar to the Meeting of Rimini.” One of the exhibits was “The Love of My Heart,” presented by the CL community of Dublin.

The genesis of the exhibit began quite some time ago, when someone in the community suggested a closer study of the pages of *Disarming Beauty* that talk about the family (but not only those pages). Meetings involving about 30 people raising ideas followed. The panels in the Exhibition Hall



The CL community in Phoenix Park.

The exhibit “The Love of My Heart” in the Exhibition Hall.



featured photos of daily life and reproductions of Van Gogh’s works, plus testimonies and salient passages about the epochal change we are facing, the rediscovery of the “I,” and the dynamic of the sign as discussed in Carrón’s book. “Just preparing it was a gift, because it reawakened our awareness,” says Biondi, “But what happened there in those days was even more of a gift.” The people visiting the exhibits—members of associations and parish groups—were in some way already accustomed to certain types of themes, but according to Biondi, “even so, many were moved.” One small group of priests stopped to photograph the panel on Mary Magdalene. Before beginning the itinerary, a woman said, “I’ve been married for a long time, and I know certain things about marriage,”

but after a few panels she broke into tears. “One guy kept entering and exiting,” recounts Camusso. “He started taking photographs. So I approached him, offering to explain the exhibit. ‘No, no, no,’ he said, ‘I already understand.’ ‘Great,’ I said, ‘but the beginning is at the other end.’ And so we went through it together.”

A colleague of Camusso’s had objected that the exhibit should also have addressed other forms of family, but in the end, he couldn’t hold back his gratitude: “He understood that the subject is what supports the family, not the form.” This was a new thing for many people. The exhibit included an evening of singing in the midst of the panels, and the music and beauty attracted scores of people.

The content of the exhibit was a provocation as well: since when has it been possible to discuss the issues of virginity and marriage together? How can the experience of the cloister be a support for marriage? “Also provocative was the last panel on Mary Magdalene, a figure expressing all the affective power of Christianity,” Biondi explains. So in the end, this is the people with whom the Pope “entered into dialogue,” says Camusso. “He saw and listened. He asked himself questions. He understood that we were blocked and he brought his contribution, establishing a different point of reference.” Biondi adds, “You can stop at the limitations, at the error. But these are excuses. He didn’t come to propose an ideal world without evil, but to show what makes it possible to live.” ■

“Into the depths of who we truly are”

Here we publish a letter from one of the guides at the exhibition “The Love of My Heart”

I look at the work done to prepare for the Pope’s visit reading *Amoris Laetitia*, *Disarming Beauty* by Julián Carrón, and assembling the exhibition as a great gift. When we had the panels physically mounted at the congress, I remember asking whether or not people would actually come and if something new could come out of it.

Then the time of my first guided tour came. I was with two ladies—one I knew (she is the mother of one of my daughter’s schoolmates) and one I didn’t from Carlow. I walked with them through the panels, through the journey that we ourselves tried to make, through the points of chapter 13 of *Disarming Beauty*, and I slowly saw the face of the lady I didn’t know becoming more and more fixed on me, her eyes locked with mine often in what might have been mutual understanding.

I briefly recalled the five points of the exhibition, consisting mostly of how I saw them through my own personal journey and the anthropological crisis we are knee-deep in, the crisis of our relationship with reality when it is reduced to appearances. I was focused on the possibility that our heart is the key to overcoming the crisis, the possibility for each of us to rediscover what holds true, first and foremost by going into the depths of who we truly are. But it was only in front of the panel in which we see the picture of the woman at the well with Jesus that something sparkled... she had five men and none of them understood the thirst that constituted her... only that Man could claim to be the answer for that thirst for fullness of life. And the question arose from the woman I didn’t know: “Is it possible for a couple to live this even if it’s only one of the two that sees it?”

I told her, “maybe,” and I added that “my life is so much more beautiful when my husband lives his own relationship with God in his own life; then his gaze on me is so different that I can’t help desiring to see it every day.” She thanked me and said, “I came here with a real question for myself and my marriage and even if what I met at the World Meeting of Families was only this it would be enough.” She asked me, “Is there any information I can have about this, where I can read more about it?” I gave her the booklet of the exhibition.

She walked away with the booklet. She came back several hours later, after I had already left, with the booklet in her hand, and told Rita who was still there at the stand: “I read it all and I saw the personal testimonies at the end. I read the one by Chiara... she says that what helped her and her husband through a period of crisis was not a session with a couples counselor but the Spiritual Exercises. What are those Spiritual Exercises? Where are they and when do you do them? Can I come?”

The fact that someone noticed and was interested enough to follow through was sufficient proof for me that we really don’t fully know what we carry, not only for people outside the Christian community, but even among us.

I also gave a tour of the exhibition for a couple and a priest from Sri Lanka in the same group as my mother-in-law. At the end of the exhibition the priest asked several times who Julián Carrón was, what is the title of the book where the things we had on the panels had come from, and how we came across it. The couple and the priest were particularly moved by the last section of the exhibit in which we say that the church is important for the family because it is the place where people can exist in the ambit of a greater love and meet the experience of the fullness of faith...When the tour was over they thanked me “for being for us the witness one of the panels speaks about,” and added, “even your mother-in-law is pleased with you; for us in Sri Lanka this is a difficult and important relationship.” The priest and the couple returned the next day, and the priest asked me if he could get the book the exhibition is based on. He said he wanted to read it and maybe present it in Sri Lanka. He also left his contact details.

This opportunity ultimately gave me another way to verify what Carrón said to me many years back: “You are here begging for the crumbs that fall from the table even though you are invited to the banquet, but to understand this you need to work.” My own family is a place where He is a presence in my life, so much so that this presence can become meaningful even for others. I hope to live my work and everything else with the same awareness of the relationship with the Mystery I experienced working on the exhibition.

Chiara Leva, Dublin

“The vocation to love and to holiness is not something reserved for a privileged few. No. Even now, if we have eyes to see, we can see it being lived out all around us. It is silently present in the heart of all those families that offer love and forgiveness when they see the need, and do so quietly, without great fanfare. The Gospel of the family is truly joy for the world, since there, in our families, Jesus can always be found, dwelling in simplicity and poverty as he did in the home of the Holy Family of Nazareth.”

Pope Francis

“A newness among us”

The guests, the exhibitions, the meetings... A great wealth of witnesses from a week that spoke of happiness and change to an anguished world. Only “a reawakened humanity can turn the wheels of history.” This is how the revolution of the heart, as described by Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Christophe Pierre, transforms into concrete facts and faces.

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Alessandra Stoppa

The bridge in Genoa that collapsed five days before; the pressure of migrants along the southern coast of Italy hinting at thousands of others elsewhere; the wounds created by pedophilia in the Church; international conflicts and the suffering of the sick and homebound; the misery of poverty and the dissatisfaction of the well off; and varying degrees of resentment—all revealing a general fear of life and feeling of powerlessness, both personal and collective. The world was groaning under these burdens as the Meeting began, speaking of happiness and change: “The forces that move history are the same that make man happy.” We can ask ourselves if this message is just “an oasis” for the weak of heart, or if it offers a real possibility in the face of the “the force of external events” identified by Dario Di Vico in *Corriere della Sera* as the gathering began.

To understand all that happened at Rimini, you need to take a look at the pictures and the videos from the more than two hundred talks and the interviews with the volunteers and the curators of the 16 exhibitions and the many guests. They’re a treasure trove of human witnesses, both past and present. Their main characteristic in common is that they depict people who never take their eyes off reality as a whole just as it is, no matter how complex or difficult, but instead face it and live immersed in it. The force of newness they exhibit makes you think. Cardinal Angelo Scola, one of the 528 guest speakers, said he went away from his half day at the Rimini Fiera changed because he had seen a fact capable of awakening a newness: “A newness in me, in you, between us! It’s as if all that God has given me in life, including



the great responsibilities, were all as naught compared to the newness that is generated.”

What kind of newness is this? It consists, for example, in facing head-on one of the most ancient questions, the question raised by Job: “Why do we suffer?” If he was one of the protagonists of the Meeting, it’s because we are all Job. His question about meaning looms over almost all else; however, actually facing it, or even leaving it open, isn’t simple. The 42 chapters of this bottomlessly profound text were brought to life again in an exhibit that moved thousands of visitors, making them stop to think, touching and changing hearts, offering answers, and opening new questions; the same was true of the related dialogue moderated by Monica Maggioni

between Fr. Julián Carrón, secular philosopher Salvatore Natoli, and medical doctor Mario Melazzini. There is nothing abstract about reviewing man’s history in dealing with evil and our wounded reason that breaks off our relationship with God and can no longer see the ultimate goodness in life. “Job, however, doesn’t blaspheme because without the God who saves, he would’ve lost himself,” Natoli said. Lifting our heads along with Job, asking life to answer for itself, carries us to the threshold of the questions God asks: “Who are you?” “Where were you when I founded the earth?” The creation He unfolded is like the response of a mother who patiently teaches her child according to the formula “What do you say?” “Thank you” in response to the fact that the world exists.

The exhibition “Job and the enigma of suffering.”

The General Secretary of the Muslim World League, Muhammad Bin Abdul Karim Al Issa, at the Meeting for the first time.

We are helped by the wonder awakened by the exhibit on “Exoplanets,” which discussed the secrets of the universe and the possibility of life in unexplored places. You could see a witness of the sweetness of waiting for answers in leading astrophysicists and theologians. Alongside the big names of their fields were two young researchers who spoke of their passion as a journey and described their greatest discovery: “Regaining that original wonder at oneself, one’s own nature and ‘I,’ the wonder at a speck who yet has infinite and irreducible value, through considering the beauty of outer space.

This is another contribution the Meeting offered: placing the depth and totality of reality before our eyes through the experience of those already looking; for example, in the story of Jorge Mario Bergoglio’s life that helped us come to know the humanity, faith, and breadth of thought and the pastoral work of a Pontiff who is often misunderstood, or in becoming familiar with the extraordinary humanity of Romano Guardini or the charity with which Giancarlo Rastelli dedicated himself to his patients, changing the history of heart surgery and enchanting the Meeting with the beauty of his soul and the intelligence of his pure faith. The Meeting showed us the mercy exhibited by Iraqi Christians returning to destroyed homes to rebuild their people in helping those who chased them out. What was presented makes one say, “I want everything,” along with the students who worked on the exhibit about the upheavals in 1968: that cry for authenticity is theirs, it’s present; it creates an openness and commitment to enter into another’s experience, to let oneself be struck by those who, like former Red Brigade member Franco Bonisoli, faithfully and with sadness, shared their human drama and let themselves be deeply struck by the youth.

“When is it that we marvel at reality?” Pilar Vigil challenged those seated in the exhibition halls. The Chilean doctor and member of the Pontifical Academy for Life answered, “When we are conscious of the fact that its existence is not automatic.” His wonder in speaking about the mystery of the beginning of human life, which still leaves him speechless in front of his microscope after 40 years of study, is the same wonder we see when he talks about the Meeting. He had come for the first time. “If you don’t know humanity, you think it would be easy, automatic. But no, nothing is automatic. A place like this requires work, a lot of effort, but most of all, it just has to happen. Everything conspires for it to happen, but there are no guarantees. Just as in science: the more complex a structure is, the more you’re taken aback at its mysterious beauty. The efforts of all these people in motion, the gratuity they exhibit, their attention to detail, their work to

put the exhibits together... Human beings, when they live and work in relationship with each other, are a demonstration of creation.”

But is the grandeur of the *being* of everything around us enough to answer our heart’s cry? “The question of suffering is so great that only the Word could address it,” Fr. Carrón said in the talk about Job. “The Son of Man came, not to destroy suffering, but to suffer with us. He did not respond with an explanation, but with His presence.” It’s that closeness that was able to transform Melazzini’s life, even more than the degenerative disease that paralyzed him. We can see it in the way Verónica Cantero Burroni, an Argentine author, loves life: if today’s crisis concerns our attitude toward reality, it’s met by the deep gratitude and joy in the bright eyes of this 16-year-old confined to a wheelchair who has the same courage as Job. “When I was about 10 years old, I started to ask God what my condition was for, and how I could change the world just as I am. I discovered that my situation makes it possible for me to be more attentive to reality, that everything is a miracle.”

Faced with this girl and the many souls brimming with hope who were present, like Cardinal Anders Arborelius, the bishop in a very secularized Stockholm, we learn that the only revolution is when a person is changed: “This is what turns the wheels of history!” said the Apostolic Nuncio



to the United States, Archbishop Christophe Pierre. “People begin to despair, burdened by the weight of daily life, and risk forgetting how to be the protagonists of history.” In his really beautiful talk on the title of the Meeting, he walked us through the situation of the world today, along with the great difficulties we have in “attentively ‘interpret[ing]’ the epochal change.” He identified our first priority as “listening to reality,” and laid out the complete correspondence between the prophetic witnesses of Pope Francis and of Fr. Giussani. “The most effective response to the problems is, above all, a deep examination of the human person. Christ came to reawaken our humanity so that we can face them.”

How does He reawaken us? “By encountering us. He places in front of us a human presence that hasn’t

been diminished.” He encounters us in the same way as He met the Samaritan woman, whom Pierre depicted as being burdened with “a spiritual and existential ‘roadblock’ inside. Jesus, however, through his gaze of mercy and a dialogue, gradually opens her eyes and her heart so she can recognize what will make her truly happy. That encounter reveals to her all that she had painstakingly hidden deep within herself, including her humanity.”

What’s in play is not only a more acute awareness of the gravity of the challenges, but an awareness of ourselves, without which we can contribute nothing to the world. This “reawakened humanity,” which is the key to history, is always born in an “encounter.” This was evident in the young women who spoke on the

last day. They came from the “Casa Volante” center in Kharkov, Ukraine, and the rehabilitation community “L’Imprevisto” in Pesaro, Italy. Their stories and their bodies told us of abandonment, orphanages, serious disabilities, drugs, loneliness, and too much suffering; but their lives now tell us of an encounter they had that is so capable of generating them that Elena was brought to say, “My pain, even physical pain, has been drowned out by beauty. There’s nothing left for me to do but thank God for the fact that He stays close to me, and that I am the happiest person in the world.” Their gratitude for having been loved brings to mind the experience of Ety Hillesum who, as could be seen in the exhibit on Job, accompanied the whole week with the words she wrote at Auschwitz, a place where she felt God’s compan-



■
The Apostolic Nuncio to the U.S.,
Christophe Pierre.

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ionship in a real, intimate, and complete way. “Sometimes when I stand in some corner of the camp, my feet planted on Your earth, my eyes raised toward Your Heaven, tears run down my face, tears of deep emotion and gratitude.” Tatjana, Ira, Anita, Martina, and the others have made history by forgiving those who abandoned them, and by studying, working, and welcoming others as they were welcomed, by loving and hoping. Pope Francis’s message to the Meeting was that the “resurrection is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated this world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force.”

“Perhaps you don’t understand how important the Meeting is. This many good people, with palpable faith, normal people, are impossible to forget,” said Alberto Campo Baeza of Madrid, one of the most celebrated contemporary architects, who had come for the first time. “I cried the whole way through the exhibit on the Pope, then I continued crying in the ones on Brunelleschi and Job. Still, with or without the exhibits, the phenomenon of the Meeting is unbelievable. It gives you hope in humanity.” He arrived late to his own talk because he stopped to thank all the volunteers. There were 3,000 of them and, once again, they paid for their own transportation, lodging, and T-shirts that served as their uniform. Many were young people, and they did all kinds of manual labor, took care of the open areas, ushered the talks, but also curated some of the exhibits, some of which sprang out of their own interests. They’re striking not for *what* they were doing, but for *why*, even if it was just clearing tables, vacuuming, cooking,

or untangling the cords of the headphones; they don’t go numb, they discuss what is happening with each other, they want to see how the work they are doing is related to the heart that asks for everything, like the young man who, after finishing his late evening shift, stopped a priest friend to ask him a question about Job, because he couldn’t go to bed without an answer. Then there are those like Gabi from Argentina, who are struck by working together with white-haired volunteers. “I’m moved to see all these older men and women. They have the same kindness and availability as the young people, the same energy. They give me hope. The process of aging does not know how to extinguish the heart’s desire.” One couple, two retired doctors with 13 children and 24 grandchildren, were there cleaning all week.

Another characteristic of the force capable of influencing history is a respect and attention for the single person, not just generic humanity. Cardinal Luis Tagle, the archbishop of Manila, told this story: a woman who worked for Caritas in Lebanon went to Syria for a conference. She took a taxi, and when she arrived at her destination, the driver told

“Pope Francis’s message to the Meeting was that the ‘resurrection is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated this world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force.’”

her she didn’t owe him anything. Why? “I won’t take money from Caritas.” Surprised, the woman asked him how he knew what she did. “Three years ago, I was in prison in Lebanon as an illegal immigrant. One night, I was sick, and the guards wouldn’t give me medicine. You came to me and gave me some. That night, I slept well. I’ve always remembered you.” Tagle commented, “For three years, that woman’s face had stayed imprinted in that man’s memory. The Church is renewed when it is a door through which the Gospel encounters the cry of the world.” Mariella Enoc, the president of Bambin Gesù Hospital, circulated around the Meeting while she, with one phone call after another, personally ensured that an 11-year-old African boy could take a plane to come be treated in Rome. On stage, she spoke about Pope Francis’s visits to Africa and how he, in the course of three hours with sick children, said, at most, 20 words. For her, that’s the most important thing to do in front of another person: “Stop. In silence.”

“We are only capable of being witnesses if we recognize the witness of other people,” said Wael Farouq, an Egyptian academic, after lengthy applause for the General Secretary of the Muslim World League, Muhammad Bin Abdul Karim Al Issa. “We are not here to have meetings, go home, and forget what we encountered the next day. A witness generates a meaning, in small things and great ones. And it provokes other witnesses that blossom in many places far from here.”

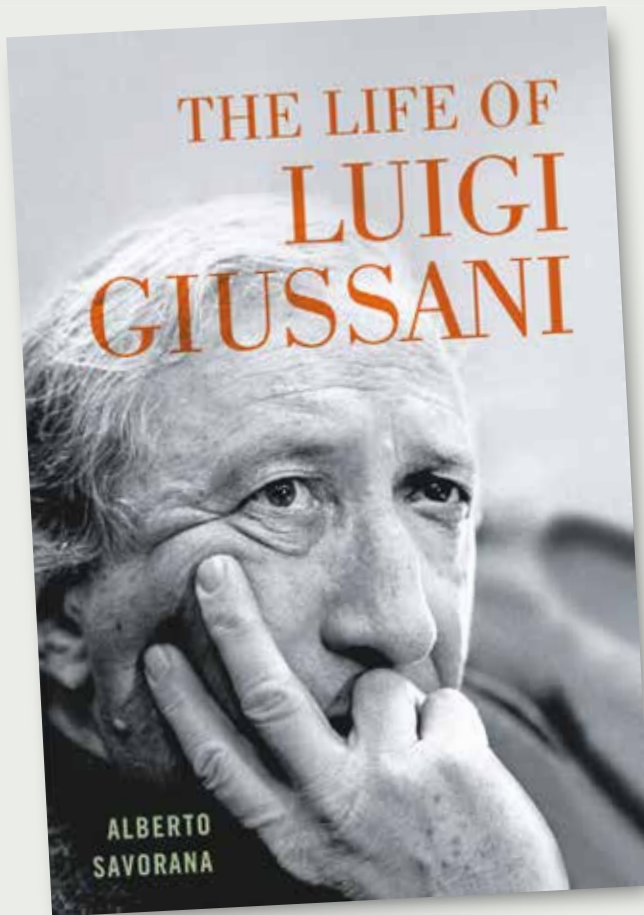
That same evening the halls of the Fiera were filled

with a small nation of young immigrants accompanied by their teachers and other adults. They were Muslims, Christians, atheists and Orthodox from all over Italy. It was the living movement that sprang forth from the exhibit on “New Generations” at last year’s Meeting, which toured many schools and cities and gave birth to a friendship among very different individuals and groups, including students, teachers, and families. The exhibit inspired all kinds of welcoming and new projects, and changed the fate of the young people who arrived in Italy by boat and those who accompanied them. Diella has been in Italy for three years and now says that the terrible trip he made “was worth it”: he found a family and friends; he started to go to school and discovered “the riches inside of me” he didn’t know he had. He helps other immigrants learn to read out of gratitude. Tawfiq, an Egyptian and the son of an imam, thought that Christians were “like ghosts,” before they became his friends. Now he’s full of questions as he considers new facts; things he once took for granted he now appreciates. An encounter opens up a new outlook on the world.

“A joyful Christian witness demonstrates Christ’s attractiveness, which makes other people ask, ‘What is it that moves that person? What inspires that person to act?’” Archbishop Pierre said. “We know that for us, it’s Christ.” And he repeated the words Giussani said after the phrase that was the title for the Meeting: “The force that makes history is a man who came to dwell among us, Christ. Rediscovering this is what prevents our destruction as men and women; the recognition of this introduces the sounds of happiness into our lives.” ■

THE LIFE OF LUIGI GIUSSANI

by Alberto Savorana. Translated by Chris Bacich and Mariangela Sullivan



A detailed account of the life and legacy of the founder of the Communion and Liberation movement.

1,416 Pages, December 2017

Monsignor Luigi Giussani (1922-2005) was the founder of the Catholic lay movement Communion and Liberation in Italy, which has hundreds of thousands of adherents around the globe.

In *The Life of Luigi Giussani*, Alberto Savorana, who spent an important part of his life working and studying with Giussani, draws on many unpublished documents to recount who the priest was and how he lived. Giussani's life story is particularly significant because it shares many of the same challenges, risks, and paths toward enlightenment that are described in his numerous and influential publications.

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