

**Notes on the Announcement of School of Community with
Davide Prospero and Monsignor Filippo Santoro
in video conference from Milan, 25th January 2023**

Text: L. Giussani, To Give One's Life for the Work of Another, McGill-Queen's, Montreal 2022, pp. 43-58.

Davide Prospero

Good evening, we are resuming—or rather, I should say continuing—the work of the School of Community. I say we continue it because the work we have done in the past months has not been a suspension or a parenthesis. As we will now hear from the introduction that Monsignor Santoro will make, the continuation of the work on Father Giussani's book *To Give One's Life for the Work of Another* delves into the claims we have been speaking about, and above all into the content of the great proposal that the Pope made to us with his speech on 15th October in St. Peter's Square (on which we have been working personally and in our communities over these three months). From now until the Exercises of the Fraternity we will tackle the second part of the book, which refers to the 1998 Exercises. This work will conclude the School of Community on *To Give One's Life for the Work of Another*. After the Fraternity Exercises we will resume the PerCorso from the beginning, working on The Religious Sense.

Over to you, Fr. Filippo.

Filippo Santoro

Thank you, dear greetings to all! Let's not say good evening, because elsewhere it is still daytime or nighttime. In any case, we are here together to resume the two lessons of the 1998 Fraternity Exercises on "The Miracle of a Change". This is precisely what the Pope indicated and suggested to us on 15th October. The intensity and beauty of these two lessons lie in the fact that they describe the essential elements that characterize and distinguish our charism from other expressions and forms; they indicate precisely the reason for our life and our hope.

We sang the words, "When we will see everything" (*Errore di prospettiva*, C. Chieffo), precisely because faith is a seeing and a knowing. Faith is a form of knowledge. In the lesson we are presenting this evening, you will see this viewpoint unfolded. The *fado* we have been listening to, typical of Portugal, a beautiful *fado*—"porque sem Ti não sei viver" (*Por tudo meu Jesus*), without you I cannot live—, reminds us that what is at stake here is our life, not a vague and generic religiosity. We are interested in life, we are interested in the experience of life. And the Pope in Rome spoke of the development of our full potential ("the potential of your charism is still largely to be discovered [...]. There are many men and many women who have not yet had that encounter with the Lord that has changed your life and made it beautiful!" he told us)—of Fr. Giussani, who as an educator "had a unique capacity for sparking the sincere search for the meaning of life in the heart of young people [the sincere search for the meaning of life in the heart of young people!], for reawakening their desire for the truth. As a true apostle, when he saw that thirst awaken in young people, he was not afraid of presenting the Christian faith to them." (Pope Francis, "Let this holy prophetic and missionary restlessness burn in your hearts", <https://english.clonline.org/news/current-events/2022/11/07/booklet-audience-october-15>, pp. 15-16). It is precisely the experience of a new humanity, touched by the encounter with the Lord, with His presence, with His closeness.

In the lesson entitled "God and Existence" (pp. 43-58) of the text *To Give One's Life for the Work of Another*, Fr Giussani speaks to us of the "miracle of a change". Change is a "miracle", because we cannot plan it, even if we put our minds to it. Change is instead being caught up in a newness of intelligence and affection (like the one contained in these pages), which surprises us, attracts us, and sets us on a path in which—little by little—we discover ourselves as different. We are always faced with the primacy of ontology over ethics; the primacy of something that happens, of which we become aware and which touches us, with all the consequences that can arise.

We are therefore invited to try to enter into the experience that these words of Fr. Giussani indicate. But be careful! In front of such words which express the genius of the human, we cannot expect to understand everything immediately: to understand (as has happened in our life before) a history is needed, time is needed, in faithfulness and in questioning (cf. L. Giussani, *Si può (veramente?!) vivere così? [Is it (really) possible to live this way?]*, Bur, Milano 2016, pp. 541-542); one understands by undertaking a path, a journey. At the very beginning, there was a strong impact, but now there is a need to go to the heart of the experience that is proposed to us. With this realism and humble simplicity, let's begin this work together.

1. A Problem of Knowledge

Fr. Giussani repeats St Paul's expression "God is all in all" (*1Cor* 15:28) from the previous year's Exercises (which we began reading again last year), by asking the fundamental question: how can this affirmation—"God is all in all"—affect life? And he explains: "“God is all in all” [...] is not an absurd formulation, nor is it an abstract one. It can simply be judged, understood, or not understood, as a real factor of life" (p. 43), i.e. it is an expression of reason engaged before the reality of life.

Our reason tells us some elementary and simple things:

– Firstly, we once didn't exist and now we exist.

– The dearest faces, the most beautiful things in life came to us as unexpected gifts, just as for me to have this meeting and be a special delegate of *Memoires Domini* is an unthinkable and unexpected gift. The greatest things have been gifted to us!

– We would not have wished for the trials and sorrows of our life.

– Reality, as a whole, mysteriously pierces our eyes, touches us, wounds us, engages in a dialogue with our heart. There is something that precedes us (which precedes us!) knocking at the door of our lives. It is the starting point that we have always seen and explored in *The Religious Sense*.

"God is all in all" is therefore what reason leads to, if it is open to the totality of the factors of reality, i.e. reason lived according to its true nature. But, asks Fr. Giussani, why does the energy for change not immediately emerge from knowledge? Because only astonishment before the affirmation that "God is all in all", only original astonishment before Being can be the source of ethical change. This is a fundamental trait of our charism: from an attraction, from an aesthetic force, a new ethics arises; "[...] only if Being is attractive can it engage man's attention up to the point of sacrifice." (p. 44)

Yet we, who have come to know the Lord as attractiveness, still perceive the expression "God is all in all" as abstract. Where do we go wrong? Fr. Giussani's answer reassures, but opens a struggle.

Original astonishment—says Fr Giussani—is made difficult by the historical moment in which we live. That is why it is fundamental to become aware of the mentality of lies in which we are immersed, "We must take note of a way of thinking that, apparently exalting a religious re-birth, in point of fact wants to censure the fact that 'God is all in all,' feeling it abstractly." (p. 44) Although there is an apparent spiritual rebirth, existentially, God is abstract, and denied.

We must therefore, first of all, comprehend the context in which we live, the humanity of which we are children, "and we have to pass through all the hardships, the temptations, the bitter consequences, and keep that hope that is the life of life," (p. 44) for us and for our human brothers.

This is the situation, and here begins the struggle to which Fr. Giussani calls us, and to which the Pope has invited us: "God is all in all" is a problem of knowledge, as in the face of something by which we are touched, amazed and filled with wonder.

To understand this, let's move on to the second point.

2. Experience and Reason

In the second point, Fr. Giussani elaborates on the theme of irreligiosity as the origin of the denial of "God is all in all." There is an irreligiosity that starts, without anyone noticing, from a disconnect between God as the origin and meaning of life (therefore relating to the events of life) and God as a fact of thought, as a theoretical statement. Even businesses suggest doing ten minutes of "meditation" a day (to increase production rates, of course!), but these are minutes spent in front of no one, of pure

introspection, in which God is absent (pp. 43-44). “God all in all” is replaced by the more common formulation, “God exists.”

“God is all in all” has instead an affective claim on us, our families, our friends, our work. The statement “God exists” asks nothing of my experience because it is the formulation of God as a fact of pure thought.

Thus, there is a detachment between my experience—that is, of my consciousness’ impact with reality—and the meaning of life, which is God (cf. p. 46). A detachment between my living, my suffering, my rejoicing, what happens to me, thought, affection and God. Everyday reality follows a path in which there is no longer a reference to “God is all in all.”

At this point, Fr. Giussani makes another interesting point: “The separation of the meaning of life from experience also implies a separation between morality and man’s action: thus, morality does not have the same root as action.” (p. 45) Once, when I was in Brazil, just before Easter a journalist—totally an expression of this mentality—asked me, “Father, how do you celebrate Easter? With a chocolate egg?” “With what?! With chocolate?!” That’s what one would say to children, but to tell adults such a thing means that God has nothing to do with the interests of life, with a passion for life; it’s something completely different, something else! Life flows on one side and the theoretical statement “God exists” remains—when it remains—at a level that does not affect reality or knowledge at all. Morality, what we strive for, is not determined by an event that takes us over, touches us and overwhelms us.

Life is made up of encounters, of problems, of decisions to be made. How many times a day do we have to take a stand, mostly with that immediacy that certainly does not allow us to resort to deep philosophical reflections! What matters is the fundamental attitude of our I. And here a radical alternative arises; there are two possibilities.

The first possibility is that preconception prevail, that is, we start from ideas, which we think are our own, but which, deep down, are those imposed by the common mindset: by TV, newspapers, social media (pp. 45-46). So, we continue with our preconceptions in mind.

The other possibility is to affirm reality, the you, to listen to the other, to look at him/her, to try to understand him/her. Some examples:

– In front of the poor man we meet on the street, we do not get away with just being charitable, but we look them in the face, moved, moved by their need.

– In front of someone who has treated us unjustly, we do not let the reaction prevail out of “righteous” resentment, but the consideration that they are a person like us, weak like us, who can also make mistakes.

– To anyone who has taken the risk of creating a work, we do not hold the smallest mistake against them (he who acts is not exempt from mistakes!), we do not condemn them according to an abstract and violent concept of purity, but starting with some empathy, we try to identify ourselves with them, to grasp the complexity of the factors involved.

Morality that has the same root as action is the alternative to a moralism that crushes the other, that deadens all creativity. The most obvious thing is when a misfortune happens, think of the many that are occurring, the war, the case of the flood in Ischia: everyone immediately looks for someone to blame, who was at fault, and they do not look at the human drama at hand. It is like being subjugated by a mentality, and there is a need to “break through” this mentality. And at a time like ours, when society is in such need of an impetus for sharing, of creative risk-taking by Christians!

“Moralism,” Fr. Giussani has said elsewhere, “wears you out, and moralism is everything that one does by reason of something that does not exist, that does not emerge as an expression of a love, of an adherence, of a judgment and of a love that will make one adhere, that moves our person.” (*Certi di alcune grandi cose. 1979-1981*, [*Being Certain of a Few Great Things*], Bur, Milano 2007, p. 449).

The substance—and basic outline—of the issue we are addressing is Jean Guitton’s phrase that Fr. Giussani recalls on page 46 and that we have so often repeated to ourselves: “reasonable” means to submit reason to experience. There is a need to submit reason to experience, to what our lives really consist of, and not to the ideas with which we are stuffed and filled up with. I re-propose it to you in

its entirety, because it helps us to better understand the judgment that Fr. Giussani gives: “The term reasonable,” says Jean Guitton, “indicates those who submit reason to experience, and particularly those who, when it comes to conduct and morality, do not seek to construct a system to justify themselves, but rather to find the measure of truth, proportionate to the human condition.” (J. Guitton, *Arte nuova di pensare*, Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo 1991, p. 71).

In order to defend God in his truth and to defend man, Fr. Giussani therefore asks us to recall and defend the word “reason,” which he considers the most confusing word in modern discourse.

When reason is translated as a “measure” of reality, reason becomes a preconception, that is, “as something that would have a strange effect on experience, in order to reduce it and not recognize what is present in our lives” (p. 46). Reason as measure eliminates attention to all aspects of reality and tells you that “beyond that measure there is nothing.” I give two very simple examples: when I went to Brazil, I thought that as far as music was concerned, there was no one greater than Verdi, Rossini, Mozart and Beethoven. Instead, I was faced with Brazilian traditional music, full of the drama of existence. To name one, Vinicius de Moraes, in the song “Samba of Blessing,” says that life is made up equally of sadness and joy. So, Brazilian music kind of opened me up to another world, like some of our songs which give expression to important questions about life do. But if you limit yourself to what you know (“there is nothing better than what I know already”), you are not open to reality. Another more practical example: as you know Pelé passed away; he is, for Brazil (and also for many others), the greatest of all. But if you then see Maradona strike that genius goal with his hand, reason begs to be widened! He is a genius, albeit in his own specialty! Therefore, Pelé remains *o rei*, even if the Argentine press says, “he is one of the best,” leaving the issue open. Understand? A closed reason says, “No, there can be no other explanation other than what I have planned.” Instead, reason is openness, a door wide open to reality and thus to what fully responds to the heart’s yearning.

3. Three Serious Reductions

In the third point, Fr. Giussani describes three emblematic cases in which reason as a measure distorts experience, affecting all behavior in life. Let us listen seriously, because we are not talking about the world, about others. Fr. Giussani says, “I am describing the genesis of our behavior in its dramatic and contradictory aspect.” (p. 47) Here we are truly educated on our journey, in our history, in our experience.

By reflecting on these three reductions we will better understand what we have said about the use of reason, the value of experience, and the reduction of morality to moralism.

(a) *Ideology in place of an event*

It is the violent prevailing of preconceptions over fact. (p. 47) The most classic example given in the New Testament is the healing of the man born blind: to the Pharisees who ask, “Who has sinned?” he replies, “There is a fact: I could not see and now I can see.” Preconception wants to eliminate the fact, but the blind man is there crying out and proclaiming a truth, a fact that happened.

Fr. Giussani’s example makes this clear: a serious train accident does not first and foremost impact us, or make us question the mystery about pain and suffering, it does not put us in an attitude of prayer. The focus is immediately on the hunt for the culprit unleashed by the media (pp. 47-48) (as I mentioned earlier). In short, reason is not opened to the fact in all its elements, it is immediately imprisoned in a cage, it is not left free to operate.

Let us ask ourselves: when are we victims of this dynamic? Are we open to “living reality intensely?” Because the whole question is how I live reality, how my person stands in the face of reality, as we have said to each other so many times over the years: do we help ourselves to live it, to go through suffering, to be questioned by what is happening? Do we let ourselves be wounded by what happens, by reality as it happens? Here’s another example: in early January in Brazil, there was an assault of many people on the Congress building. It was a disjointed and therefore unacceptable reaction for the dominating mainstream mentality affecting culture, education, life, which wishes to impose itself everywhere. It is a way of thinking that exists everywhere in the world, not only in Brazil. Faced with

it, it does not help to have a disunited reaction, but a judgment must emerge that takes all the factors involved into account, in order to bring forth a truly more humane response. The proposal that—according to the Christian perception of reality—is summarized by cultural pluralism, which does not enclose reality in a predetermined ideological scheme, but opens to a larger and plural horizon in the field of culture, education and politics. This is the same criterion that applies to the issue of peace. It is disastrous to take the shortcut of making everything consist in the arms race, while the Pope insists on another factor, on another more inclusive, deeper element: dialogue and the serious search for diplomatic negotiation.

(b) Reducing the sign to appearance.

When faced with reality, one gets stuck at the perceptually immediate aspect. (p. 49) One empties reality. Reality is sign, a sign of something else. A child giving flowers to their mother is a sign of a love. The value of a determined thing is its' being a sign of a greater horizon, of a greater reality.

To understand this reduction, I remind you of our friend Hassina's story before the Pope. She participates in one of our vacations and takes a trip to the mountains. At the end everyone says, "Beautiful!" Then Fr. Giorgio asks, "Why was it beautiful?" General silence ensues! He says, "Even if you all joined together, you couldn't make a single pebble out of that mountain, not even a little flower growing out of the rock...the only person who can do it is God." There is Another, of whom reality is an affirmation, a sign. And reality as a sign takes nothing away from the beauty of things, but enhances it, reveals its reason, its meaning. The other, the beloved or loved one is a sign, opens you wide to the horizon of the truth of the other person. And the horizon of the truth of the other person points you to a way of treating him or her that is morality and not moralism. It is attention to destiny and reality. That is why reducing the sign to appearance is precisely an emptying of reality.

Instead, when reason considers reality as a sign, it finds the energy to move from appearance to the fullness of the sign. It is not blocked by appearance, but grasps an even greater fullness.

Let us ask ourselves then: how much does the miracle of the presence of the other (in particular, that of our loved one or a friend) become for us a sign of the goodness of the Mystery, a sign of the goodness of Another, of an even greater goodness? The extraordinary thing is that the real and loyal use of reason brings one to the threshold of the Mystery, and when Mystery then comes to us and manifests itself to each of us, it is like the experience of an even greater embrace. How much does beauty refer us back to Him? How much does the beauty of our companionship lead us to remember the One who made it possible? Undoubtedly, we notice it in the most dramatic moments, for example, when the Lord calls some loved ones to Himself. Their response is of those who share in God's immortality, Christ's resurrection, His victory. But if everything is reduced to appearance, everything is destined for destruction. The fullness of life is "when we shall see everything," but even now our gaze is opened to the final reality.

(c) Reduction of the heart to feelings

Feeling becomes everything, while the heart indicates the unity of feeling and reason. A great reduction takes place when feeling becomes everything, sentiment becomes everything.

Let me give an example. It is a testimony of Fr. Giussani, which you can find in *Is It Possible to Live this Way?*: "One time, I said Mass at eleven o'clock in a church in Milan. The mass ends, I go into the sacristy (it was a tiny sacristy because the church had been bombed). In walks a pale woman, with a baby in her arms, who tells me, "Father (I had never seen her before), my husband left this morning." I stopped in my tracks. "What? Why did he leave?" "He left because he fell in love with his secretary." "Why, had you fought?" "No, no, no. He even left home crying, saying, 'I feel terrible about the pain I'm causing you. I'll regret it, but I have to do it. I'm in love!' And he held the baby and kept kissing her." Look how low you can sink! Torn up because he had to leave her, but he had to do it because he was in love. This is the emblem of emotion elevated to judgment. Am I making myself clear? From emotion, he establishes a criterion of action without judgment. What does judgment mean? You're in love; you're in love with the secretary, as can happen to many people; as happens, especially nowadays, to everyone. Does this correspond to the plan that God has for your life, and therefore to your path to happiness, or not? Let's see: you're married, so married that you have a

baby. Therefore, if you abandon your wife and child, you betray the task that God gave you, so you're no longer on the path to happiness," says Fr. Giussani (*Is It Possible to Live this Way? Vol. 1*, McGill's-Queens, Montreal 2008, p. 46).

Do you understand how important it is that emotion and feeling be judged? They are to be judged within the context of the larger design which my life is founded on: the plan willed by God. Your life and the lives of those around you depend on it! The feeling that an encounter arouses must be judged by reason.

So, let us ask ourselves: what can make me faithful to my wife when I am attracted to someone else? The judgment of what builds my life in the face of Another's plan, in the face of the Lord's plan for your life, and that is a fullness, even in sacrifice and self-giving. What makes me unyielding and creative in the face of my son who, after COVID, is apathetic towards everything and tends to bring me down too? What allows an initial impact of antipathy toward someone not faze me, but open me to a path of friendship? These are all situations in which, if the heart is reduced to feeling, the power of judgment, and thus the possibility of a path, is lost. Judgment is within a path (it applies to vocation to the priesthood, to *Memoires Domini*, to marriage), within the wondrous design in which our life is found.

4. The Corruption of Religiosity

The fourth point is like a refrain of all the themes mentioned so far and to which I have rigorously stuck to.

First, love of reason, trust in reason, which he calls our "weapon both for attack and defense". (p. 53) Think of the apostles meeting the Lord: reason is exalted, it is elevated, it recognizes, and in the recognition of reason, affection is also involved, adherence comes into play. Therefore, the important point is precisely a love for reason, which is the good of the intellect, certainly, but insofar as it is united with affection, to something, toward someone who has attracted me, who grabs me, to someone who conquers me and draws me in deeply. Let us think instead about how little we trust what our reason makes evident to us: in the face of the responsibility which reason points us to, to what reason indicates to us, we prefer the comfort of passively absorbing what power propounds to us.

Fr. Giussani again insists on the importance of understanding the context in which we live. A context in which a generic religious sentiment, denying the reality of "God all in all," progressively but inexorably leads to the elimination of the religiosity proper to Christ and the Church. (pp. 53-54) Religiosity is affirmed as a "belief in something superior," but not that religiosity indicated in the path of *The Religious Sense*, of reason that opens itself to reality, that encounters the Mystery, that stands before something Other than ourselves with a desire for this Other to reveal itself. And when it is revealed in an encounter, the whole path of reason is enlightened and is exalted. Reason is exalted and is deeply affirmed.

I recently came across a passage of a famous Harvard speech, in which Solzhenitsyn blamed the crisis of the West, which struck me both for its similarity with Fr. Giussani's judgment and for the particular significance it has at this moment in time: "I am not examining the case of a disaster brought on by a world war and the changes which it would produce in society. But, as long as we wake up every morning under a peaceful sun, we must lead an everyday life. Yet there is a disaster which is already very much with us. I am referring to the calamity of an autonomous, irreligious humanistic consciousness." (June 8th, 1978). It is the reduction of the human, of the original greatness of our being.

Prosperi

The crazy thing—if I may—is that we are precisely in a "war catastrophe" situation, but we are so asleep—by now—that not even this affects us anymore.

Santoro

Yes, the two go together. But this crisis is not only the world's crisis; it pervades the Church as well. So much so that here Fr. Giussani inserts the powerful quotation from the "Letter to the Christians of the West" by the great Bohemian theologian, Josef Zvěřina. It reminds us of the need to not conform to the world's mentality, not to adopt the world's way of thinking. It provokes us, with a lashing irony: "You are being assimilated by the world, whether quickly or slowly, but late all the same." He warns us, "We cannot imitate the world precisely because we have to judge it, not with pride and superiority, but with love" (pp. 54-55).

This misunderstanding of the need for a different mentality from the world's mentality, explains why, within the Church, a misunderstanding of the problem of Christian education, mission, conversion and the very building of the Church has been facilitated. These problems demand a change that has to take place in us. Fr. Giussani concludes: "Through a change that has come about in other men whom he meets, a Christian is helped to perceive and to pursue a change in himself. The miracle is this change in oneself." (p. 55) It is precisely the change of our person, following the steps indicated to us.

5. Tradition and Charism

A fifth point strikes Fr. Giussani, in full agreement with what the Pope told us on October 15th. The last paragraph of the lecture begins with a precious sentence: "Faithfulness to Christ and to Tradition have to be sustained and strengthened by an ecclesial ambit that is truly aware of this necessary fidelity." In other words, a context, an ambit, an experience is needed.

In these pages, you will find many of the things we have been saying to each other over the past few months by working on the Pope's address, which through his words found a point of culmination:

- the value of charism as a gift of the Spirit (p. 56);
- the fact that "it is no charism if it is not recognized by the authority of the Church, that is, by the Pope" (p. 56);
- the importance of attending with wholehearted readiness to the indications of the movement (p. 56);
- the fact of charism and institution being co-essential (p. 57);
- the importance of comparing oneself, in the movement, with "those who are recognized by the Church as the guarantors on her behalf of the truth of the Spirit's gift" (p. 57);
- the fact that the Spirit of Christ "takes in certain people [...]" so that the whole Church be rejuvenated and reborn with awareness before everyone's eyes." (p. 58).

Let me cite some excerpts related to these points.

- "Hence the moral impressiveness of the participation to an ecclesial movement, as a belonging to an ambit in which the gift of the Spirit that comes from baptism becomes concrete in forms that are demonstrative and persuasive. This gift of the Spirit is called *charism*. But it is no charism if it is not recognized by the authority of the Church, that is, by the Pope." (p. 56)

- "There is no other way in which the Spirit can come to meet us more simply, more persuasively, more powerfully, than in a present reality." (p. 56) A present reality that is outside of us but becomes an internal experience, a presence that is in me, so much so that I find myself treating others as that encounter would treat them, as the mystery of the present Lord would treat them. It is a benefit for me, a change, a miracle. A miracle that can happen, whereby reality is treated according to that good that comes to us. The apostles who meet the Lord begin to live in a different way, they treat each other in a different way.

- "There is no other way in which the Spirit can come to meet us more simply, more persuasively, more powerfully, than in a present reality, in a present context. [...] a charism recognized by the Church is a gift of the Spirit of Christ that brings you to live the institution in a global way." (p. 56)

- "John Paul II said: 'An authentic movement therefore exists as a nourishing soul within the Institution. It is not a structure that is alternative to it. It is rather the wellspring of a presence that continually regenerates the Institution's existential and historical authenticity.'" (p. 57)

- Here is another quotation from John Paul II (which Pope Francis recalled during his speech): "In the Church both the institutional and the charismatic aspect [...] are co-essential and work together

for life, for renewal and for sanctification, in different ways. [...] Charism and institution are co-essential in the definition of the Christian life of the Church, of ecclesial life. So, a movement is exemplary and demonstrative, it is persuasive in the dioceses and parishes themselves and useful for pastoral life. The way of living the gift of the Spirit has to reach every single person in a capillary way.” (p. 57)

There is a constant reiteration here of what the Pope told us.

- “You truly live the charism the more you compare the whole of your life with the charism’s own ideal, as it is affirmed by those [the whole of your life! We profit if the whole of our life is compared], who are recognized by the Church as the guarantors on her behalf of the truth of the Spirit’s gift; following them [the guarantors of the truth of the Spirit’s gift] is an ultimate obedience that tries to incarnate the imitation of Christ and fidelity to the Church down to the last capillaries.” (p. 57)

- “What changes in us, through the intervention of the movement in our lives and out of coherence that it demands, should begin consciously, reasonably, and should have knowledge as the first locus of the event, because all that man does depends on the way he conceives. So, it is a way of cognition that can limit or eliminate this conception that the world passes on to us according to which God is dealt with in the wrong way, He is not asserted as He wants to assert himself, because God asserts Himself in Christ. We cannot know the Mystery unless Christ tells us of Him. And the Church—this is an analogy not blasphemy—brings about Christ with greater clarity, more persuasively and with a life-giving support, through the movements.” (pp. 57-58) Giussani concludes by saying that “the Spirit of Christ, who has created the Church and sent her into the world, comforts and builds her, fortifies her with charisms. The Spirit takes in certain people, in one charism or another [there is no monopoly of charism or charisms], so that the whole Church be rejuvenated and reborn with awareness before everyone’s eyes.” (p. 58)

If we had read these pages carefully some time ago, so much confusion regarding knowledge, so much inappropriate behavior, and certain struggles would have been spared.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by quickly going over the five points of the lecture in the form of questions. Questions that can be an aid to the work of your community or fraternity groups. They can help us discover some traits of the “fruitful potential of [Fr. Giussani’s] charism.”

1. The first point speaks to us about a central aspect of our charism: it is the theme of knowledge and the primacy of aesthetics over ethics, of the fascination, the beauty of the encounter to which we follow up. What does this mean in our days and presence in our work and study environments?

2. In the second point we looked at Jean Guilton’s quote: “reasonable” is to submit reason to experience, to fact. Let’s ask ourselves: under what circumstances has this method enlightened our lives, saving them from preconception and moralism? Let’s describe how we have been freed from preconception and moralism.

3. Among the various reductions of reason described in the third point, I would like to focus on sentimentalism, which seems particularly pervasive today. The dominant idea is that it is convenient to follow only what one “feels,” or that which involves sentiment. This exile of reason overwhelmed by sentiment has an impact on the way we live: think of what happens in our relationship with work, in our affection, and in the way we experience the movement, if the only criterion is sentiment. Let’s be careful; sentimentality is one thing, the heart is another. In our experience the leap of our heart is indispensable, the leap of the heart in the face of the event is essential, it is like the point that moves us, just as with the apostles; we may be fragile, weak, but we are together. That’s why we do ten minutes of School of Community, choosing it over something else and alongside something else, precisely because (at least this is the case for me), rereading texts like these causes that leap that renews my gaze on my work.

4. In the fourth point, Zvěřina, with his letter, encourages us to a courage of judgment. In recent years, we have often confused the need to avoid a superiority in judgment and to avoid seeming proud—which we must never be—with a renunciation of all judgment. We have even gone so far as to theorize

that judgment is, as such, “divisive” and therefore alienates us from one other. But without exercising reason in the face of circumstances, our intelligence is impoverished and our capacity for encounter is diminished. I am talking about the exercise of judgment, the constant comparison of what feeling illuminates within us about destiny, about truth, about our lives. One question: how can we make Zvěřina’s claim our own? How can we help each other—in the great company of the movement or in our own community—to respond together to the urge of using reason in various circumstances? We have been given is a great gift and we are called to live it consistently.

5. Regarding the fifth point, on charism, let us witness how the potential of the charism is developing among us. After the meeting with the Holy Father, wherever I went—in the movement, but also in so many circles of the Church and outside the Church—, that meeting had as if marked a change in the way the movement is perceived, both internally and externally. It was a grace and an amazement, not only for the number of people present, but for the way with which we were welcomed, treated and invited to walk a certain path. Let us help each other in comparing our lives with the event that conquers us day after day.

This is why, at the next School of Community, on March 15th, we will begin with some of your testimonies or questions, which you can send to: annunciosdc@comunioneliberazione.org

Thank you all for your attention and for the journey of this evening.

Prosperi

Thank you, Fr. Filippo. As we have seen, we have a very fascinating, dense, but certainly extremely timely journey ahead of us in all respects. The method that we propose for ourselves for the next two months—acknowledging the suggestion that Fr. Filippo entrusted us with already at the beginning, at the first announcement—is that the shared work be accompanied by a personal work, ideally, on a daily basis. All that is needed is those ten minutes, and that those ten minutes be dedicated above all to reading, understanding and deepening the text, thus letting the questions from the comparison with the text emerge; it is important that the text not be purely a “pretext” for talking about other things, and that our getting together—which necessarily implies regular appointments (the most frequent Schools of Community are weekly, if not fortnightly)—be a moment of real comparison with the proposal that is made. In this comparison, let’s keep the questions that Fr. Philip has just suggested in mind, which can help guide the work we will carry out. You can send the questions that arise to the email given, so that next time we can begin precisely with a dialogue that will act as a summary of the work of the next two months on the first lesson of the 1998 Exercises, from p. 43 to p. 58 of the text *To Give One’s Life for the Work of Another*.

The next announcement—on the second lesson of the 1998 Exercises—will be held on Wednesday, March 15th at 9 p.m., in the same manner as tonight.

Santoro

Let us say a Hail Mary, remembering especially those affected by the war in Ukraine and also our brothers and sisters most in need in various situations of conflict around the world, as the Pope always does, in the knowledge that the proclamation of Christ opens our hearts wide to live every aspect of reality and thus to communicate the grace that has reached and conquered us.

Hail Mary.