

**“May Christ become
a presence in our
hearts, at the root
of all that our
person and our
being expresses.
Our companionship
will be only for this,
it will aim only at this.”**

(Luigi Giussani, 1982)



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Editorial Office:

Via Porpora, 127 - 20131 Milano
Tel. ++39(02)28174400
Fax ++39(02)28174401
E-mail: traces@traces-cl.com
Internet: www.tracesonline.org

Editor (direttore responsabile):

Davide Perillo

Editorial Assistant:

Anna Leonardi

From New York, NY:

Holly Peterson

Graphic Design:

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CLOSE UP

ON THE JOURNEY

As the first book publishing Luigi Giussani's words from the first Spiritual Exercises is being released in Italy, we offer a peek at the life of the Fraternity today, for those who've been following this road since then and for those just beginning.



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LUIGI GIUSSANI

This volume is a selection of the most significant writings by Monsignor Luigi Giussani (1922-2005), founder of the Italian Catholic lay movement Communion and Liberation, which is practiced in 80 countries around the world.

Presented by Julián Carrón, Giussani's successor as head of Communion and Liberation, *Christ, God's Companionship with Man* is the most succinct introduction to the breadth of Giussani's thought, including

memorable passages from works such as *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, *The Journey to Truth is an Experience*, *Why the Church?*, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, and *Is It Possible to Live This Way?* Many speak of Giussani as a friendly presence, a man who believed that it was possible to live in faith every day and in any circumstance. As a writer and religious scholar who was deeply devoted to his work, Giussani's teachings and reflections have come to generate worldwide recognition and support.



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THE HORIZON

It has just arrived in bookstores in Italy, with the curious title *Una strana compagnia* [*A Strange Companionship*], and a heading that identifies it the first volume in a series with a similarly unusual name: “Christianity Put to the Test.” It is the collection of lessons and dialogues offered by Fr. Luigi Giussani at the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation from 1982—the year the Fraternity received pontifical recognition—to 1984, with meditations, assemblies, and homilies, steps that recount first-hand the beginning of a reality that today involves tens of thousands of people throughout the world.

At first glance, it would seem that nothing could be more for “insiders,” intended above all for those who live the experience of CL (especially since the Fraternity is the point in which this experience tends to be the deepest, and acquires in some way a definitive expression: it is “the work of the Movement,” as Fr. Giussani said). But just thumb through a few pages and you will understand that this is not the case. It sets forth a proposal for everyone, because it speaks of something profoundly human.

The heart of these pages is faith, or better, “The impact of faith in the life of the human person, its usefulness for facing the daily toil of living,” as Fr. Julián Carrón, Fr. Giussani’s heir, writes in the introduction. Does Christianity have anything to do with our real needs? “Put to the test,” does it offer a true, effective contribution?


The Fraternity is a wager on the continually verifiable “yes,” step by step. It offers everyone a Christian experience—a method, a place, and a road—as concrete help for life, something that helps us face work, problems with our children, and a clamorous social situation, as you will see in the stories that we tell in the Close-Up, but not simply resulting from solidarity, from getting together to give each other a hand (which is something rare and precious, especially today), but because it helps the “I.”

On this point, the clarity of the book is striking. The goal of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation is not *first of all* to build things, to organize ourselves socially, “to do.” It is to help the person to grow in faith. It is to generate people who are mature in their awareness of being—before anything else—in relationship with God, because this is what changes life. “The Lord presses so that through us, a new personality may enter into the world: He has to break down the door. People who finally recognize that their nature is of belonging to an Other are people who are always positive [...] because they are free; they are always inclusive, embrace everyone, understand everything, and, I was about to say, smile at everyone,” wrote Fr. Giussani. What task is entrusted to such people? “Bowl over the world, invade the world, so that Christ may have His testimony: in fact, the world exists that it may know Christ.”

Here then, is the horizon of this “strange companionship.” It exists only so that people may be themselves, so that they can know Christ ever more deeply and, by living, make Him known to their fellow human beings. Education to faith and testimony, together. The two things coincide.

In these days—perhaps you may have already seen—there are also big changes in the way CL makes itself known to everyone. There is a new website (only in Italian at the moment, but it will be soon made available in other languages), completely overhauled for two fundamental reasons: to present more effectively the educative itinerary of the Movement, and to make even more welcoming the invitation to get to know it, to “come and see” what it is about. It is “an ironic attempt,” as Fr. Giussani would have defined it, imperfect, full of limitations, but here, too, the goal is to explore more deeply the beauty of faith, and share it with everyone, so that it may help them live. **T**


CHARITABLE WORK: I HAVE COME TO LIFE AGAIN

 In October, I started to do charitable work with the Missionaries of Charity. On Sundays, I help serve dinner to the poor and for three months now, I have stayed overnight with them once a week in the shelter for the homeless. Last Thursday, the nuns told me I would be sharing a room with a man who was coming to spend three days in Dublin. He was coming from the house the nuns run in Cork, in southern Ireland. I spoke with him in our room. He is 28 years old, and had been in jail for three years. He has a daughter and had been a drug addict (he had been “clean” for nine months after being in rehab in the nuns’ center in Cork). While he was telling me all of this, I thought, “If my mother knew that I was spending the night with someone like him, she’d have a heart attack!” And yet, listening to his story aroused in me a profound interest in him, not only because of the depth of his gaze on reality and his self-confidence, but above all because he told me, “I was dead, lying in the street and it was thanks to her (one of the nuns) that I was able to come to life again. Thanks to this person, I’m not dead.” Could there be any clearer proof of what the Resurrection is? I came to realize how my life is so changed that now with joy, I can be with a person like him, to the point of asking him questions about everything and asking for his phone number so I could visit him if the occasion arises.

David, Dublin (Ireland)




IN THE HOSPITAL THE ROOMMATE

 Dear Fr. Carrón: For the past week, I have been going to visit a friend of a friend who is hospitalized in the oncology unit. I had never met her before; she has no friends or relatives who can visit her. The woman welcomed me immediately, thanking me for my company. Having just returned from a trip to London as a guest of the Sisters of Charity, I told her about living and working with them, with their awareness of Jesus present in every gesture. I gave her a small medal of St. Teresa of Calcutta and the *Via Crucis* by Fr. Giussani. In the same room was a terminally ill woman. Yesterday, on my return, she said, “Thank you for the book. I was able to pray all day for my roommate and I also gave her your medal. Her husband came this morning to thank me, saying that recently his wife had been distressed and afraid, but since having the medal, he had seen her finally at peace.” It is He who takes the initiative to enter into the destiny of another. There is nothing we have to do; things pass from one person to another, we only have to say “yes.”

Monica, Italy

“HE SPEAKS TO ME THROUGH REALITY”

 This is a very intense period at work because in addition to my clinical responsibilities as a neonatologist and my scientific and educational responsibilities as a professor of pediatrics, I also direct the Neonatal Comfort Care program for terminally ill newborns. So many families ask for help, but also students, nurses, and interns ask to learn the method of the program. The commitment is such that at times, I wonder if I’m forcing reality to carry out “my project.” I pray to understand what the Lord wants from me with this program. Should I continue or not? And if I continue, how do I respond to all these requests? The hours in the day are never enough for me. I didn’t have to wait long for His answer. A couple of weeks ago, a journalist hounded me for an interview. Because I was so busy, I did everything to avoid her. But in the meantime, she was able to piece together as an “interview” the few words I had said to her, and she published it in the *Wall Street Journal*, one of the most prestigious American daily newspapers. Even though I hadn’t cooperated with her at all, this was the best possible publicity for the program. As a result, I received many messages of support. A businessman contacted me and told me that a year ago he had lost his daughter shortly before her birth. After reading the article, he decided to donate a dizzying amount of money for the program to hire a manager so as to lessen my



OUR CHILDREN

SURPRISED BY AN UNEXPECTED MATURITY

Dear Fr. Carrón: The news of the girl who committed suicide on the Cassanese road touched us closely since she was a classmate of our daughter, Letizia. Immediately we were struck by the way Letizia reacted: “Pray for her.” In these three words, there is everything: there is the acknowledgment of He Who gives meaning to such unexplainable tragedies, and she wanted to draw our attention to this. We understand, first of all, that through such dramatic events, God calls us to look as much as possible at what is the essential that makes life true. This way, relationships with family and friends are truer, life is truer. In these days, in fact, while living this tragedy together with our children, we saw them changing. We witnessed an unexpected maturity and seriousness in their relationship with us and between each other, and in their faith. Often, we trouble ourselves in an attempt to arrange everything in our life and in the lives of our children, and even when we think everything is arranged, we realize that happiness and serenity do not derive from this. This dramatic event reminds us that there is always something that escapes our control, that we and reality are made by Another. Today, in our children, there is the risk of a great fragility, so great that they might question the love of their own parents. For this reason, we feel the urgency to go back to what makes our relationship with them true, with the help of those who accompany us in our life: the Church. The Church, who makes an uncle living 10,000 kilometers away feel close to us, asking if he could celebrate a Mass for his niece’s classmate.




Francesca and Fabrizio, Milano (Italy)

workload: He speaks to me through reality, the events that happen, and the people I meet.

Elvira, New York (USA)

GS STUDENT YOUTH ONE EVENING AT DINNER

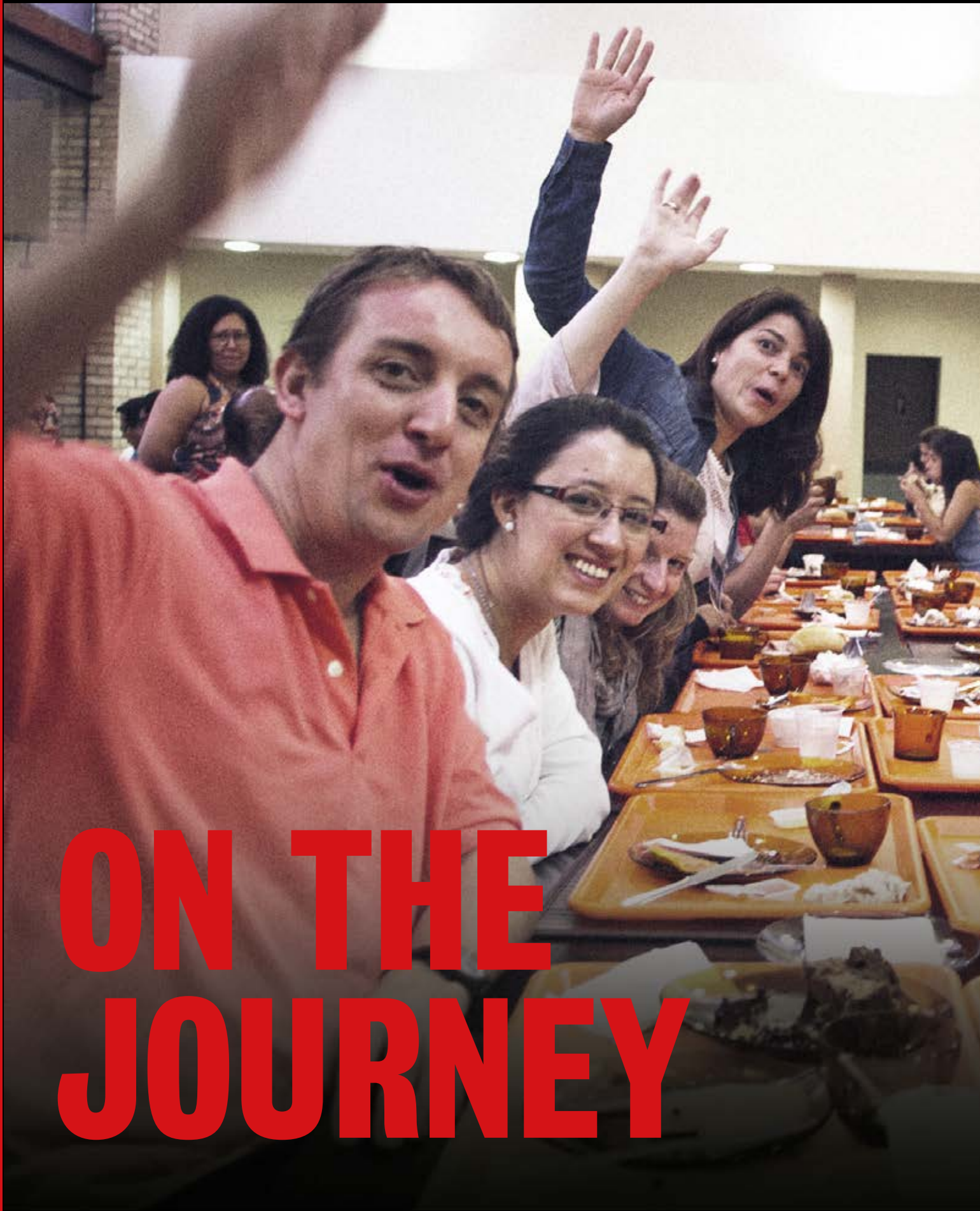
 I have just returned to work after an accident, and the routine has really bowled me over. The banality of having to print pages for the Radius, calling up the students to see if they’re coming, each time figuring out where we’ll

meet, takes a lot of time. If it were only about spending this time on doing these things, it wouldn’t be worth it. I realized that the Lord is giving me the privilege of sharing a small piece of their lives. They are there because they have seen something, something that I am not able to bring with my commitment, but that pulls all of me along in the same way. A young Irish guy has started coming to our Monday evening dinners and he always asks lots of questions. A few weeks ago,

we were invited to dinner by the family of one of the young people and when he realized that the family was Italian, he asked if he was the “only Irish person in GS.” His sense of belonging amazed me. He wasn’t worried about having to agree with us. So much so, that, even though he had known us for less than two months, he decided to come to the Triduum in Italy. I really saw that such a gaze on him, a gaze that he noticed, is truly the Grace of Christ.

Rita, Dublin (Ireland)

U CLOSE UP



**ON THE
JOURNEY**



The Fraternity of CL was born over 30 years ago, when a group of adults, having finished college, came together to support each other in “an ever-greater maturity of faith.” As the first book publishing Luigi Giussani’s words from the first Spiritual Exercises is being released now in Italy, we offer a peek at the life of the Fraternity today, for those who’ve been following this road since then and for those just beginning.

BY P. BERGAMINI, A. LEONARDI, AND A. STOPPA

“An aid to our heart, so that our life may move forward before Christ.” With these words, Luigi Giussani summarized the “central point” of the **Fraternity of Communion and Liberation**. It was 1982, the year of its Pontifical recognition and of the first Spiritual Exercises, held in Rimini with about 1,800 participants.

All the desire and purpose behind the birth of the Fraternity shine forth in the words of Fr. Giussani in the excerpt printed below on the occasion of the release of *Una Strana Compagnia (1982-1984)* [*A Strange Companionship (1982-1984)*], edited by Fr. Julián Carrón. It is the first in the new series “Christianity Put to the Test” (BUR), a collection of the lessons and conversations led by the founder at the Fraternity Exercises, beginning with that first year.

Today, people are living the experience of the Fraternity in over 80 countries. It continues to be the form through which thousands of people “recognize in the life of the Movement” their own “commitment as men and as Christians,” in the Church and in the world. On the following pages, you’ll find the stories of those living the experience of this “strange companionship” in places and circumstances that are often worlds apart.

GIUSSANI: “CHRIST IS THE REASON”

The other night, at a gathering in Milan, I observed that, in these years, some 15 years or so, in all the years of our journey, it is as though Communion and Liberation, the Movement, had built on the values that Christ brought us. Thus, all our efforts at associative, work-related, charitable, cultural, social, and political activity have certainly had as their aim that of mobilizing ourselves and things in accordance with the ideals, the starting points, which Christ has made known to us. But, at the beginning of the Movement, it was not like this. As I mentioned yesterday, at the beginning of the Movement, in the early years, we did not build on the values that Christ brought us, but we built on Christ, naively if you will, and the theme of the heart, the persuasive motive was the fact of Christ, and therefore the fact of His body in the world, of the Church.

In the beginning we built, we tried to build on, something that was happening, not on values brought to us and thus on our inevitable interpretation of them. We tried to build on something that was happening and that had bowled us over. No matter how naive and shamelessly out of



Luigi Giussani.

proportion it may have been, this was a pure position. This is why, because we have in a sense abandoned it, since we have settled on a position that was first and foremost, I want to say, a “cultural tradition” rather than the enthusiasm for a Presence, we do not know—in the Biblical sense of the term—Christ, we do not know the mystery of God, because He is not familiar to us.

Christ the reason for existence, Christ the motive for our creativity, not through the mediation of interpretation, but directly; there is no

other position that can be Christian than this latter; all the rest—the mobilization of existence and creativity—will come afterwards, but Christ as the reason for existence and motive for creativity, this has to be recovered. It is like an impassioned desire for the recovery of the original purity of the life of our Movement, which many people do not know; perhaps it is known more from the simple Christian tradition they received from their parents than from the immediate simplicity of communication among us. This change is the reason why it has become so easy to identify our experience as that of an activist, organizational, or cultural commitment, sometimes very exclusive, and defined and carried out in an authoritarian manner.

I say that we wanted, with the Fraternity, to extend an invitation to a form of commitment that aimed, above all, to be an aid to each person’s heart, an aid so that each one could walk before Christ and, secondly, to assure that persons who build the work of the Movement can live an ever-greater maturity of faith, therefore in a creatively more certain way. All the hard work, all



the energy, so often painful, that a great many of you expend, give, endure because of your service to the Movement has to be supported. You must be helped more directly in the depths of your heart, at the root that is the reason your person commits itself to this toil. In short, we wanted to call the adults who wanted this, we call the adults who want it, to a more directly personal aid that ensures, precisely because of this, a more freely mature presence in the life of the Movement.

At any rate, now, describing—as came out last night in a dialogue with the Executive of the Fraternity—I would like to bring into focus certain points on how the figure of the Fraternity is conceived, on the basis of the Statute which was approved by the Holy Church. We are starting out on a journey, also in terms of awareness of what it means, what the steps entail. The companionship, the journey, will reveal what we have to imagine, conceive, or bring about in all this. This is a beginning, therefore let us not be confused by what does not appear clear to us yet, by how our relationships, especially with the life of the Movement, can seem worrisome, not sufficiently distinctive, or not sufficiently united. Let us not worry about this, but let us be really concerned with grasping the central point of our initiative, of our commitment. And the central point is what I said earlier: an aid to our heart, so that our life may move forward before Christ. Everything that is entailed by the approach that the Fraternity makes to this effort will become clear with time.

Thus, the Fraternity has the purpose of protecting, pointing the way, and sustaining the will of anyone who intends to engage himself completely in the experience of the Movement. Therefore nothing is needed more than this, than persons who want to commit themselves completely to the experience of the Movement, or to put it better, who recognize in the experience of the Movement the commitment of their faith, the commitment of their conscience as men and Christians.



GENOA Thirty- Five Years Together

Recco's "Manuelina" is perhaps the most famous restaurant and focaccia bakery on the Levantine Riviera. It's run by Gloria and Cristina, who are continuing in the culinary tradition of their parents. It's been the meeting place for one small Fraternity group for 35 years, after it began at the encouragement of a friend. Evandro tells the story. "It was 1981. I was a young professor 'parked' at the university of Genoa eyeing a chair position at Catholic University. Giorgio Vittadini had been following the CLU community from Milan for a number of years." Vittadini suggested the idea to Evandro—"the oldest," and recently married to Lella—and other recent graduates: "The first confraternities are being formed, as an adult way of experiencing the life of the Movement. From what I see, I think you could start one too. Think about it." Marco goes on to explain, "We were clear on one thing: we didn't want to lose the beauty we had experienced

at the university. Something to look to *now*, to challenge us to face reality without turning inwards on our memories or nostalgia. A passion for life you don't want to miss out on." And so it has been for 35 years, including the friendship with Giorgio, who has always stuck with them, coming to visit twice a year.

The Fraternity has had this intensity as part of its nature from the beginning. "One time Giussani said to us that the Fraternity is like the thinnest thread that is at the same time the strongest tie that you could have," Evandro remembers. And just telling their story helps us to see what this kind of friendship can become.

As time passed, they all married and had kids. Life never held anything back from them, meaning they weren't spared from anything. And that passion for life has grown into a bond that has become increasingly concrete and essential.

The night of the funeral for her sister, who died of ALS, Dana's husband took off, leaving her alone with their two kids. She recalls, "I was in so much pain, so angry at him, who had been part of this same history. I went knocking on the doors of my friends. I, who was already an orphan, was completely alone. At least in the eyes of the world. In reality, I was never alone. They helped me to raise my children. They helped me to turn my gaze upward again." >>

» When, late one evening, Marco, who is a surgeon, came to her house to “operate” on an abscess on her finger, her son said to her, “Wow, you really care about each other.”

Their fixed bi-weekly appointment become indispensable for each of their lives. Which you can see reflected in the lives of their children. One evening Paola, a child psychotherapist, heard her youngest ask his dad, “When do you have Fraternity? So mom will be in a good mood again.” She tells the story with a smile and adds, “We’re all very different in terms of our personality and temperament. I’ve always struggled to bring myself to ‘do’ the things of the Movement. I even physically struggle to go to the Exercises. But that’s never been a problem for any of them. It’s a friendship you can never take for granted.”

“THE HOUR OF FAITH.” After children came grandchildren. Evandro and Lella were the first to become grandparents. Just 48 hours after he was born, their grandson Mattia was debilitated by congestive heart failure. He needed support for everything. When Vittadini went to visit the young parents, he said, “The hour of faith has come.” They’d given him a year to live; he’ll turn nine this year. Marco recounted, “After Evandro told us what he [Vittadini] said, we started to repeat it regularly to remind each other. Over the years, our shared life has grown deep enough to be able to regenerate us.” Their way of sharing life makes them capable of changing their outlook on the problems they face every day. “The morning after getting together with our Fraternity group, saying good morning to my son who won’t wake up because he was out all night, I’m reminded of the Mystery who is his life, and not all the stupid things he’s doing,” Marco’s wife Alessandra adds. It is a friendship that gave them the freedom to ask Gloria



“ I find myself picturing their face when I have to speak with parents overcome by their pain. We all witness to each other that someone is looking kindly on our lives. ”

to hire the teen to work at “Manuelina.” “He always came home so enthusiastic, not so much for the work itself, but because of his relationship with Gloria. After two months, he decided to leave for another job opportunity that he’d found. But that was the real turning point.”

Alberto is the lead doctor in the pediatric oncology division at Gaslini hospital in Genova. Every day, he comes face to face with suffering. “I find myself picturing their face when I have to speak with parents overcome by their pain. We all witness to each other that someone is looking kindly on our lives. Every time we see each other, it’s really Jesus acting, above and beyond our temperaments or our personal histories.”

Two years ago, Francesca, who visits a few inmates at the Chiavari penitentiary as a charitable work, called Alessandra. “I’m going to visit a prisoner at Porto Azzurro. Will you come with me?” Alessandra and Patrizia turned

it into a three-day vacation on the island of Elba. “We knew that it was a difficult time for Francesca, because of some problems that were starting to come up in her family. So we accompanied her.” These were serious problems that dramatically came to a head when Francesca’s daughter was forced to move back home with her parents. “I found myself full of hatred. Of experiencing evil first-hand. I felt suffocated,” Francesca tells us. Until her friends told her, “Look, good things are possible. Jesus is here; He won’t abandon you. We won’t leave your side. I felt like Moses, held up by Aaron and Hur. And the same thing happened for my daughter.”

A TEXT MESSAGE. Six years ago, Alessandra and Marco, along with two other couples they know, opened their families to welcome children through foster care or adoption. “We live all the daily questions we have to face together with these other families, so much that at one point we asked ourselves if it wasn’t a good idea to be in a Fraternity with them. But then we realized that we needed the gaze of our ‘old’ friends to be able to live this experience.”

It’s a gaze that also touches those who experience this long history of friendship indirectly. One day after Mass, Gloria found the following text message from her husband, who is not in the Fraternity: “Today I was thinking how wonderful it is to have you with me, along with your friends from the Fraternity. I’m not a man of great faith. I don’t get the ‘I,’ or the ‘we’ or all that, and following the teachings of Christianity is difficult, but I recognize that you all love me and each other unconditionally. It’s not a calculation, but a given, and I really appreciate it. Knowing you all are there allows me to say that life is worth living, with joy and a sense of irony at its imperfections, even when it’s difficult.”



VENEZUELA

The Strength to Ask for Help

For Guillermo, briefly put, the experience of the Fraternity is like being tested in fire. “It’s not easy to depend on your friends to be able to eat.” He lives in San Antonio de Los Altos, a small city near Caracas. He has two small children, Samuel, six, and Alicia, a little over a year. His wife Daniré, who is a doctor, hasn’t worked since she was pregnant with their second. He is a teacher in a Catholic school, which means he works a lot to earn a little: he battles to support his family on 50 dollars a month in an economy with 500% inflation.

“At the beginning of the year, I was bracing myself for what I thought would be the hardest months of our life. Instead, they’ve been the most beautiful.” Nothing had changed in the circumstances in Venezuela, where the constant dynamic is the struggle to survive,



with a crisis that’s getting worse every day, rising tensions, and shortages of food and medicine. What *had* happened was a friend, hearing him speak about his situation, suggested he ask for more help. “And I thought, ‘More? What else can I ask for?’ The Fraternity was already giving me financial help each month, and through our friends’ charitable initiative, the *Bolsa Solidaria*, we get packs of food,” he says. “But the truth is, we needed more help.” And so he asked. “A group of friends came over, went with me to buy food and helped me to pay for it. But the best part was that we ate

it together. It was one of the happiest days our family has had.”

THE CHOICE. Guillermo met the Movement as he was finishing middle school. He came from a Catholic family that wasn’t practicing the faith. “When I met CL, it had a strong impact on me. The friendship that started with Fr. Leonardo, who was the pastor in our town, grew more and more beautiful.” Since then, he has been totally committed to the life of CL. “My life has moved forward—my time at the university, my studies, and working to make a living; the discovery of my vocation to be a teacher; marriage—but over the last three years, the provocation from reality has grown really hard. Most Venezuelans like me are either going hungry or they’ve left.” About himself, he says, “I don’t know how much I’ve understood in all these years in the Movement. But I have definitely been educated about one thing, there’s one thing I’ve learned: to have the strength to ask for help without crippling the person I am.”

The financial help that he receives from the Fraternity has become a steady judgment on >>



Guillermo and Daniré (first two on the left) along with their friends from the Caracas community.

» his life. “It’s a help that allows me to make a judgment. First and foremost, it doesn’t make me perceive my need as a failure. On the contrary, it reveals to me a greater dependence, one we all have. But this ‘depending’ has to take over my awareness. When I discover it, it gives me peace; it frees me. It makes me happier.”

He has also learned that not all help is equal; there are different ways of giving. He talks about Henry, the head of the *Bolsa Solidaria*, who works hard to find food and distribute it. “One day, my wife was really worried and Henry said to her, ‘We’re here to accompany you in whatever you’re going through.’ To ‘help’ us, or to ‘accompany’ us? It’s a small choice of words, but sometimes the two experiences are very different. There’s a kind of help that’s a relationship. It’s not just giving money; it’s a companionship. What you experience isn’t humiliating, you aren’t mortified, it makes you free. It’s easy to find people who ‘help’ by just giving you money, or those who, with good intentions, are too invasive and ‘replace’ you.” He describes how help that comes from people acutely aware of their needs is different; it’s a sign of something else. “It’s a sign of the choice that God made, as a friend reminded me: God chose to make Himself needy, in order to accompany us in a fuller, more human way.”

The chaotic situation in their country makes everyone act instinctively. “It’s as if the day were a race to beat reality. I’m grateful, because what I’m living helps make me more mature. More human. At least that’s what I ask for, I ask not to be like I was before, to be better. I know that what I’m going through is the starting point to grow in awareness.”



“ Life would be a constant strain, if not for the presence of our friends. Which isn’t in the flesh—we hardly ever see each other; there’s no form or formality. ”

Seeing the fruit of this awareness in his son, Samuel, is what moves him the most. One day, he really wanted something sweet and Guillermo told him that, unfortunately, they didn’t have anything. The little boy responded, “Don’t worry, Papá! You’ll see; there’ll be something sweet in the package our friends bring us.” Guillermo says, “It’s painful and humiliating for your son to know that his father can’t satisfy him alone, and that we depend on help from others. However, today I give thanks for this opportunity to educate our children through our circumstances: they’ll grow up with a clearer awareness of their need and their true nature. It means communicating to them that you live life with friends. That what your parents give you is not enough, that Papá isn’t the hero he’d like to be, and that life is full of depending on another.”

Three years ago, the Fraternal-

ty wasn’t as essential for him as it is now. “Even after many years, I hadn’t understood what it really was. I was enrolled, and even had a Fraternity group, and it helped me to judge things, yes... but it’s only now that I realize how vital it is.” And he’s not talking about the food. It’s the everyday awareness, in the morning when he wakes up thinking how to get by. “Life would be a constant strain, if not for the presence of our friends. Which isn’t in the flesh—we hardly ever see each other and don’t have a Fraternity group; there’s no form or formality. But we are constantly in relationship. Even with those we don’t even know, with the entire companionship that’s out there even if we don’t see it. I’m learning about the unity in the Fraternity. It’s the same here, in Italy, in Mexico...”

BITTERSWEET. A question his wife asked stumped him. “How can we repay all the help we’ve received?” The answer became clear little by little, thanks to the School of Community on *Why the Church?* “Giussani says that the Church educates us to be in the right position to face problems. It doesn’t resolve them for us. This saved my life, because I started to ask myself what God was educating me to through all of our need. It’s bittersweet. I could’ve stopped short at saying the Movement helps me financially, but that would’ve been very harmful. Instead, there behind it all is God who is acting, helping me to grow in my relationship with Christ, to become more true. With this understanding, every instant of difficulty is immensely valuable.”

Now the question his wife asked has shifted: “How can we repay Christ for all of this help?” He responds, “I don’t know. But, like Zacchaeus, I can watch for Him to call me, and can say yes to what He asks of me.”



LONDON

The Beginning on Two Wheels

All four of them came to London because of a passion. Saverio, for cycling; Paola and Teresa, for contemporary art; and Tommaso, for Teresa. Today, they make up a small Fraternity group in the heart of the city. And it's the last thing any of them imagined when they met in England. Teresa was the first to arrive, five years ago. "After graduation from Brera Academy, I was accepted at University College London for a Master's in Visual Arts," recounts the 26-year-old who started a small studio to work on expositions and run workshops for museums. Three years after she arrived, Tommaso, leaving his wood-working shop in Caravaggio, near Bergamo, joined her. "We wanted to get married so, in 2015, I decided to close everything down, even our tax registration, and try my hand as a carpenter across the Channel." The moment he landed, he realized that life there moved at 300 km/hour. He was quickly hired at a company that sells luxury furniture for big-name offices in the city. At the same time, he managed to open up his own side business. Then, once he was settled, he married Teresa. Before long, they found out they were expecting. "And as all that was happening, we became friends with Paola and Saverio," Tommaso says. Paola is a long-time friend of Teresa from when they were at the Academy in Milan together. They met Saverio by chance. Someone had given him Teresa's cell phone number before he



Left to right: Tommaso, Teresa, Saverio, and Paola.

“ Everyone was telling me that it was simple: you go to the Exercises, the retreats, and pay the Common Fund. But how can it transform the way you live? ”

left Italy on the chance that she might help him find a place to live. He's 28 years old, from Torino. He graduated with a degree in History from the State University of Milan, but his true passion is cycling. "I thought I'd like to work in that field and after a few years as a bike mechanic in Italy, I decided to try to make a career in London," he says. "After just two weeks, I was hired by the city's biggest chain of bicycle shops."

A BROKEN BIKE. The four friends don't get a chance to see each other often; it's a big city with a frenetic pace. There are two things that hold them together: their Wednesday evening School of Community and the fact that, to save time and money, their primary form of transportation is on two wheels. "You could say that the most important stops on the road to forming our Fraternity group were reached while perched on the seat of

a bike," the four joke.

The first stop was at the beginning of 2016. A broken bike drove Teresa to visit Saverio's shop. "That day, I simply said, 'What would you say to getting together once a week to go over the School of Community reading?'" Saverio recounts. "Because, by myself, I'm getting lazy and I ended up never getting around to it." She answered in all frankness, "Sounds good to us, because we have the same problem." And then they invited Paola.

The second stop came during a ride through London's parks. Teresa had just gotten a letter from the CL office saying that her request to enroll in the Fraternity was granted. The gesture wasn't a formality for her; she thought about it for over a year. "I wanted this great companionship in my life, but I didn't feel ready for such a radical belonging. When the letter came, all my >>

» questions about what it meant to adhere were broken open again.” During their ride, she talked to Saverio, who was already enrolled, about it. “Everyone was telling me that it was simple: you go to the Exercises, the retreats, and pay the Common Fund,” Teresa remembers. That afternoon, she asked Saverio, “But how can it transform the way you live?” He answered, “Our friendship is what has sustained my life since I got here. We share everything. Maybe we’re already a Fraternity.”

Then, the third stop. One evening, even though it was pouring rain, the four bundled up and rode their bikes to a pub in the Balham neighborhood. Their friend Peppe, a *Memores Domini* who leads their School of Community, was waiting. They wanted to ask him about the nature of their friendship. “He answered by telling us about his own experience. And he said that a Fraternity is not something you decide sitting around talking about it; it’s the recognition of something that’s already happening,” Paola says. With that, all of their hesitations were overcome.

But Peppe’s words weren’t the only thing to convince them. Over the last five months as a group, the familiarity among them has grown to encompass everything in their lives. “Here everything moves so fast, including interactions with others. You’re constantly meeting people, but it often ends up as a one-time thing. You go home with a face or a quick exchange or a joke in mind. Sometimes it bothers me, because initially it feels like everything is disconnected,” Teresa says. For example, the meeting with Hafida, a young Muslim woman she met along with Tommaso at the gym where they go climbing. “She was the one who came up to us and introduced herself. She told us about herself, about her studies and her work in a big consulting firm. And then she dropped her filter, confiding in us how sad she is because it’s



difficult to make friends.” Impulsively, Teresa invited her for dinner. “There, I realized the value of our small fraternity, because two minutes after having invited her, I was already going back and forth in my head. I was tempted to forget it... instead I remembered that we had planned a barbecue with Saverio and Paola and we invited her to come to that.”

BARBECUE WITH HAFIDA. The dinner was a surprise for everyone: for Hafida who felt included starting with the grocery shopping, which they did making sure to find *halal* meat that she could eat; and for the young friends who saw in their guest’s eyes and in the questions she asked that the unity they live is something profoundly new. “Hafida asked about us, about how we met each other. She, whose religion is so important to her, wanted to know a ton of things about

ours.” And she perceived right away that they were free with each other. They weren’t afraid to tell each other things. Even further, they shared everything: what happens to one affects all of them. Their friendship is a spark, but it illuminates everything. “London is a city that seems like it wants to ‘suck you in.’ It’s a jungle that makes you feel all alone,” Tommaso explains. “I’m the first one to be amazed that a friendship like this exists, where it’s possible to really meet one another and recognize that we are loved in this life.”

The morning after the barbecue, pedaling toward her studio, Teresa was full of gratitude. “If Hafida hadn’t been there, we never would have become aware of what we’re living together. Our little group is what sustains all my enthusiasm and widens my horizons. The Fraternity is my heart being broken wide open.” **T**

A Christian woman
with her children in
Qaraqosh, near Mosul

A DAY AT HOME

We have been to the “ghost towns” around Mosul, where Christians are persecuted by Daesh. It is possible for them to spend only a few hours at the site of their homes on the Nineveh Plains. Where war is raging. But some hearts have already been set free.

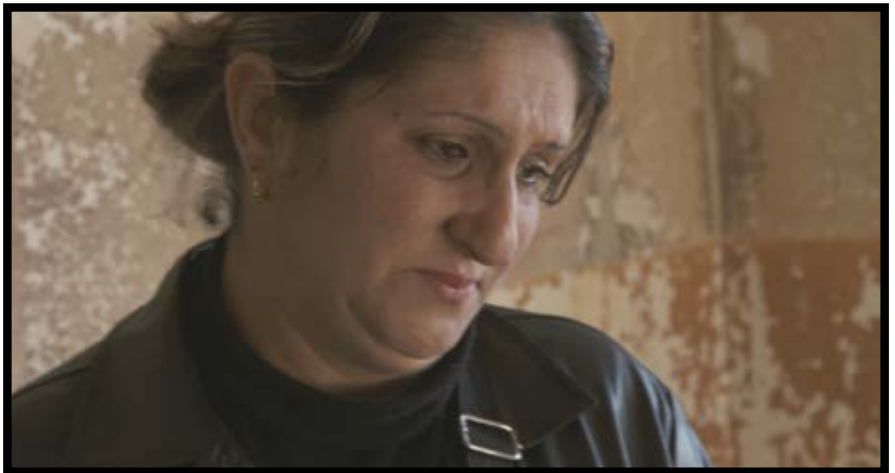
BY FERNANDO DE HARO

KEREMLES

Almass speaks the Syrian dialect of Keremles, a Christian village on the Nineveh Plains. In Qaraqosh, a few kilometers away, yet another dialect is spoken. Keremles has a long history that extends back to the time of the Sumerians. To this day, in the town center, now abandoned, there are public buildings with characteristics that resemble Assyrian motifs. The oldest church in the town, St. George, is from the sixth century.

Almass, a mother, dries her tears with a tissue. She cries at the sight of what used to be her home, before she and her family were forced to flee by Daesh [the Arabic term for ISIS], in a night still painful to remember. The vinegar on the kitchen counter, the beds out on the sleeping porch (on summer nights with temperatures over 120°F, they slept outside), the toothbrush left on the sink, all tell the story of those hours when she left everything behind. “My children were sleeping, it was midnight, I woke them up and we got in the car,” she recalls. Before evacuating the village, after two years of occupation, Daesh burned down her house, along with 80 percent of all the houses in Keremles.

Two summers have passed, but Almass still struggles to understand. “We had a good life. In the morning, I would go to the church to pray and then go back home to take care of the house.” Her husband was a man of many trades, like most of the inhabitants of the village. He worked some hours in the field; he was a bricklayer and also worked in a mechanic’s shop. She proudly points out a prayer for the “guest” on the door. A sturdy fig tree in the small garden with the chickens, stands firm in the midst of war. Her husband is a deacon and he taught Chaldean, a variant of



BRINGING BACK MEMORIES. Almass left Keremles with her husband and children two years ago.

Aramaic, to children at the church’s school. For this reason, he carefully kept a large library next to the house, that now is nothing but ashes.

We walk through the desolate village with Almass and her husband. The sun is shining, and under its soft winter rays that warm the heart, the deserted streets, the abandonment, and the loneliness are not as dreary. The church was spared from the fire, but its crosses, as usual, have been mutilated. Its atrium is the site of a double martyrdom of a priest from Mosul. Father Ragheed, born in Ker-

emles, was killed at a young age by Al Qaeda in Mosul. He had received death threats from them, but he did not want to leave his parishioners. And now his tomb, in what was his parish in Keremles, has been desecrated. Daesh did not let him rest in peace. The tombs at St. George parish nearby also suffered the same fate. One coffin lies open in front of the church entrance.

Almass holds tight her soaked tissue in her hand as she lets out a sigh. She has tears her eyes, but she wears a smile on her mouth. “We can only



WOUNDS. The statue of Saint Quarikosh, in Tel Eskof.

live by entrusting our life to God, in prayer,” she says. Few words, clear and certain. Few words that sum up a difficult life.

Keremles is riddled with tunnels, which Daesh used to escape. We enter one that stretches about 200 feet. Bags of dirt line the walls. On the ground, there is a shoe left by a militant and the grime of war: dirty laundry, an opened package of cheese from Egypt, a burnt-out fire, the black marks left by a generator and the names of militants scribbled on the walls.

THE MILITANTS AND THE SUNSET. Like all of the Christians on the Nineveh Plains, Almass used to go visit the Monastery of Saint Behnam, built in the fourth century. In this region, next to the tomb of one of the founders of Christianity, a church was built, richly adorned in an alluring Eastern style. It was surrounded by many restaurants where families used to spend holidays and festivals.

We head toward the monastery, located in an area controlled by Shia militants. To get there, we must travel six miles from Mosul. We pass by a

truck carrying dead bodies wrapped in carpets. The Shia decorate the checkpoints with colorful flags and plastic flowers. Once again, we see the grime of war: young militants, as dirty as beggars, carrying guns with frightening ease. The Monastery of Saint Behnam has been transformed into an operation center for the Babylon Brigade, comprised of both Shia and Christians fighters. The dome that hovered over the tomb of Saint Behnam had been decimated by dynamite. The most important Christian monument on the Nineveh Plains stands in ruins. Next to the rubble, two metal barrels have been converted into bombs, ready to explode. The new monastery, with its majestic stone portals from the sixteenth century, is still standing. But the statue of Saint Behnam has been mutilated. The figures of the 12 apostles on one of the door jambs have been struck at with a knife. The militant who shows us this makes the sign of the cross before a statue of Mary that has had its hands cut off. His companions play cards under the warm sunlight. One of them is wearing a track suit and flip flops,

while another is wearing a military uniform and an athletic shirt. We are surrounded by the grime of war. From one side of the monastery comes a strong stench of urine. These young men who leave loaded guns carelessly about have not had a good shower in days, weeks. The rations, chicken and rice, are distributed from a civilian vehicle.

It is almost time to leave the Nineveh Plains. We move quickly to get out of the military zone. We pass by a convoy of American soldiers in enormous clay-colored tanks. A gigantic helicopter, like a large flying monster, flies over our heads, making a deafening sound. When it is long gone, it is silent once again. The last light of the sun illuminates all the shades of the landscape on the horizon: fields that are fertile, wind-blown, already covered in stalks of wheat. A land that, perhaps, will never belong to the Christians again.

Almass looks into the distance. She is a woman of few words. She smiles. With her serene gaze, she says, “We can only live by entrusting our life to God, in prayer.”

TEL ESKOF

Marvin is 20 years old. Tall, thin, reserved, gentle. He had never left his village, Tel Eskof, until Daesh came and he had to escape. He walks with us through an area that at one time had up to 4,000 inhabitants, but is now deserted. Only the cleaning crews break the silence in the suburbs. But Marvin likes the center of the village, where his grandparents lived, where he used to help his friend at the market. In this area of Tel Eskof, the architecture is traditional; some buildings could be defined as Assyrian. Perfectly cube-shaped exteriors, mud walls, extensive balconies.

Marvin insists that we should go visit his grandfather, in the cem- >>

CURRENT EVENTS

» etery. His grave is close to the entrance. It lies open and desecrated. We stand in silence. After a few minutes, Marvin, full of emotion, says: “They do not want to let the deceased repose. This is a peaceful place; my grandfather was resting.” There are other opened graves, and broken crosses lie on the ground.

We walk to Marvin’s house. One of the alleyways is filled with shoes. Perhaps Daesh militants did not like them, or maybe another raider discarded them after trying them on. There is silence. The destruction is not as drastic as in other places—the houses are still standing, but this perhaps only causes the desolation to be greater. The village is still there, but it is empty, as if a bomb had dropped, wiping out all the people. A village without a sign of life, shops abandoned in a hurry, and the rooftops without singing and chattering all together make a great outcry of absence.

Marvin’s house in Tel Eskof is big, with a spacious kitchen on the first floor. His father worked in the fields and he is one of six children. We enter the bedroom of the two eldest siblings. “I have many childhood memories here,” says Marvin. “But every time I come back and open the door, I remember the day that at 10 p.m. I stuffed some clothes in my bag and in tears I shut the door because I was escaping from Daesh. We were all crying. My father said that we must leave because Daesh was advancing toward Tel Eskof.”

Marvin sits in a chair between the two beds. On the floor lie the clothes that either Daesh or raiders threw out of his closet. Broken chairs, shards of a mirror on the beds without mattresses. Everything destroyed, filthy.

WORDS WITHOUT ANGER. “The first months after I had run away, I was confused,” remembers Marvin. “I believed in God, but I seldom went to church. I decided then to go to

MAP. The Christian villages around Mosul (among them Qaraqosh, the most significant Christian city in Iraq), seized from ISIS by the Kurdish and Iraqi armies in October of 2016, still stand vacant. They need water, power, and most of all safety. The front lines of the war are not far.



BEDROOM. Marvin, 20 years old, escaped from Tel Eskof, and is now staying in Al Kos.

church more frequently. I asked God why he had allowed this to happen. I was a normal kid, I wanted to go to school, I wanted to hang out with my friends. I had spent all my life in Tel Eskof. I asked God why he let them do all these things to us.” Marvin’s voice begins to break; he takes a deep breath after every sentence he utters in the English he learned without ever leaving his remote village in Northern Iraq. “During the past three years I have been reading the Bible, I have met people that have helped me, I have a stronger relationship with the Church, and now I know that God

is by my side, sustaining me, walking with me.” When he says, “by my side,” he stretches out his arm towards the space next to him. “These three years have been tough, but I have become someone new. I want to come back here as soon as possible, to sleep in my room, in my bed.”

Marvin, 20 years old. A kind face, a firm certainty, words without anger, without hate. A victim of the genocide in Nineveh, with a heart free from the storm of hate spread by Daesh. The evil brought by the terrorists will end. Marvin, 20 years old, a man fully grown, fully transformed. More



VIGIL. Easter in Saint John Church (Mar Yohanna), in Qaraqosh.

Christians who had lived in the valley to travel back to their homes, but not to stay overnight. It is a military zone.

Qaraqosh was once the largest among the Christian villages on the outskirts of Mosul. Now, it is deserted. During these day-trips, the refugees try to fix up their houses, which had been burned down and raided. Some, actually most, intend to return home. Unlike Neval, they want to stay. Though they still have to make the final decision.

We spent several hours in Erbil. Thanks to a colleague who once worked at the BBC and decided to come lend a hand, and to an old woman who lives near Mosul, we were able to speak with many people. Church leaders, refugees, young people assisting the refugees, Kurdish politicians, and many more. It would not be inconceivable for most of the 120,000 Christians to return home. But there are several factors at play. Most importantly, there must be some level of certainty that this will not happen again. They want the same security that there is in Erbil, peaceful and orderly, like Baghdad in the nineties. Next, there must be infrastructure, money to rebuild houses, to restore electricity and water. Should a more formalized declaration of genocide be made? Should a special tribunal be set up? Yes, it is appropriate above all to preserve the memory of the victims. Some support a Kurdish government in the whole Nineveh region. Others want Baghdad to designate an autonomous region, but so far it has not taken this step.

Neval may be able to go to Australia. The younger generation wants a new start. Neval will leave her homeland, “But what I will not renounce,” she says firmly “is Jesus. I will always be Christian.” **T**



IN A TRAILER. Neval, a 24-year-old woman from Qaraqosh, lives in the refugee camp in Erbil.

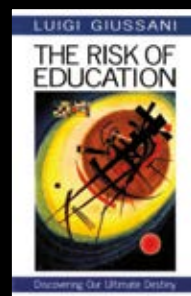
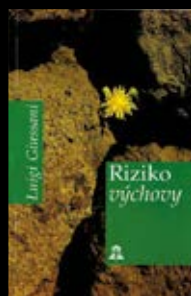
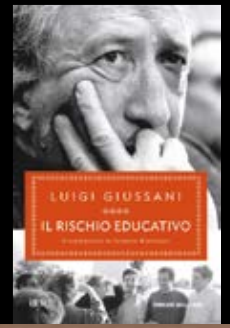
Christian, more human now than before his escape. The village, the street, the alleys, will be rebuilt with a great amount of effort, money, and international aid. Who will heal wounds of the heart? Who will give peace to the living and the dead?

ERBIL

A boy in the first row falls asleep. He is three years old and cannot follow the classes given by Neval Nabil, an English teacher. She dedicates herself to the elementary school in the Ashti 2 refu-

gee camp, in the village of Ankawa. Neval teaches in a trailer; she also lives in a one-room trailer with her husband and her 10-month-old son, who was born in the camp. Neval has her mind made up: “I do not want to return to Qaraqosh. I have no future there. I want to go to Australia.”

She is 24 years old and speaks perfect English. Her husband works from nine in the morning until midnight in a bar to support the family. She went back to Qaraqosh after it had been liberated. The Kurdish army had allowed





EDUCATION

RISK AND CHANGE

Forty years after the first Italian edition was printed, Fr. Giussani's *Risk of Education* has become a method for 25,000 teachers from Uganda to South Sudan and even Jordan. Here's how.

BY PAOLO PEREGO

Kampala, 2002. Kizito and Robert were teaching at a private high school. They had encountered CL a while back and went regularly to School of Community. But in the classroom, something was off. The conception of school and education was limited to lectures; no one paid much attention to the students themselves, so long as they memorized facts, even under threat of physical punishment. How could they translate their experience of the Movement to the classroom? The proposal they received was, "Let's get together to read Fr. Giussani's *The Risk of Education*." It came from Clara Broggi

and Giovanna Orlando, two *Membres Domini* living in Africa and managing a number of educational projects for the Italian NGO AVSI.

"That became our first 'professional development course' for educators. From that one up to the latest with the officials of the Jordanian Ministry of Education, we've met over 25,000 people all over Africa [and beyond]." The speaker is Mauro Giacomazzi, from Mantua, Italy, who went to Kampala to work for AVSI in 2007. He witnessed the birth and growth of the Permanent Centre of Education, now called the Luigi Giussani Institute for Higher Education, where he currently works. "It's an institution of higher

learning where we provide formation for teachers and organize continuing education courses for them. With that book always as a guide." The "book" being the educational method that Giussani first set down on paper in 1977, summarizing his experience as a teacher and educator. "Education is a communication of one's self, of the way one relates to reality," wrote the founder of CL, describing a journey in which students and teachers are called to put all their freedom into play.

"Words that are still alive today, 40 years later," Giacomazzi says, thinking about his latest trip to Jordan a few weeks ago after a request "through AVSI to hold a course on highly >>

» Education. I was expecting it to be the usual staffers and functionaries, but all the top officials were there. I did a presentation on what we do, about *The Risk of Education*, and the topics I would cover. ‘We’re interested in the first part. We don’t want to forget any of what you told us at the beginning, that’s what we need,’ they told me.” At the end of the course, which was basically Fr. Giussani’s method, one official, an expert in the psycho-social aspects of education with her hair covered by a veil, shook his hand. “A Muslim woman, shaking hands with a man.... She thanked me, telling me how much she learned about her work.” Now the Ministry has decided to add the course as a standard part of the professional development of their teachers.

But to understand what’s happening in Jordan, we have to go back to 2002, when Kizito and Robert asked to enlarge the gatherings to include their colleagues. “It was a brief interactive ‘training’ on the book, using visuals and film clips to accompany topics such as ‘tradition,’ ‘authority,’ ‘personal verification,’ and ‘freedom.’” In 2005, the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum* decided to support the initiative and the number of courses grew. “Then AVSI decided to support and ‘use’ our courses in their work,” Mauro says. But they needed to get better organized. This is where the idea of the Permanent Centre of Education (PCE) came in—“a center with the goal of proposing to everyone the challenge Giussani describes in *The Risk of Education*; in the words of the Austrian theologian Jungmann, that education be ‘an introduction to total reality.’”

The Centre started in 2009. “We had a budget of just over 5,000 euros. It was me, Clara, and two other ‘facilitators’ in a brand-new building not far

from the shore of Lake Victoria.” The only one missing was Giovanna, who had passed away the year before from a tumor.

THE SAME VALUE. What they presented was revolutionary for the African conception of teaching. “Not only that. The idea of the value of the person in these societies is also lacking.” The profession of teaching is often underpaid and considered to have little dignity. “So, before getting into all the technical aspects of teaching, you first start helping them to understand that the child has the same desires and the same value that you have. And education isn’t just inculcating concepts, as you find in the programmatic documents from the Ministry; it’s helping the person to flourish.” Nothing can be

taken for granted. “Sometimes we have to start with why it’s important to take students’ attendance at the beginning of the lessons. Very few do so, and it’s hard to find teachers that know the names of all their students,” Mauro explains.

The PCE continued to grow over time, spreading beyond Kampala, to South Sudan, in the Education Department at the diocesan university in Juba, St. Mary’s; to the Dadaab refugee camp on the border with Somalia in northeastern Kenya, in order to train Muslim teachers as part of AVSI programs there. And then to Congo, Myanmar, Rwanda... “We’ve always followed things as they happened,” Mauro continues. Like the time two new factors intersected in the life of the PCE. On the one hand, there was the request of many women at Meeting Point International in Kampala, an association that grew out of the initiative of Rose Busingye, a nurse in CL who provides a place of welcome and help for women living with AIDS.



Mauro Giacomazzi.



COURSES IN EDUCATION. Among its many courses, the Luigi Giussani Institute trains teachers in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya.

The women wanted to have a school where their children could grow up within the same experience they were living. “On the other hand, we needed a place that would give continuity and concreteness to what we were doing at the PCE,” Giacomazzi interjects. “So that we could learn on the ground, get feedback and try out new things.” This led to the founding of Luigi Giussani elementary and high school, serving over 1,000 students in the Kireka neighborhood of Kampala.

“Right in *The Religious Sense*, Fr. Giussani gives a definition of the word ‘problem’ from the Greek: ‘something before one’s eyes.’ This is the challenge we face. One day at a time, we try to respond to the situations reality brings to us, beginning with the experience we have in the classroom.” This happened at the Luigi Giussani school, as well as in other institutions that have been founded within the experience of the Movement, for example the schools in Nairobi, Kenya,



work hard and get good results, and even their families are changed. They're more open, undaunted in the face of all life brings, which is a trait that's difficult to find in Africa, where their questions have often been suppressed from the time they were little." One American benefactor, on his visit to help fund a few projects, recognized this. "I've never seen kids talk so passionately about what they do, about themselves, and about their school," he said.

TOUCHING THE HEART. A number of years ago, the PCE was contacted by a foundation in Washington, DC. "We met, they approved the grant, but then we didn't hear from them again." For two years, Mauro and his team used the donation for their work. Then, almost out of the blue, the group sent a representative. "She was of African origin. We had prepared a little presentation on the second floor, but the electricity for the elevator was out, and she was disabled." They moved everything downstairs. Little by little, the woman's face, which had been clouded by impatience at some setbacks, started to change. To the point of being deeply moved: "You know, Mauro, when people talk about education in Africa, it makes me cry because everyone thinks there's no hope. But today, I saw hope," she confided in him.

"When you touch the heart of a person, you never know what might happen," Mauro went on to say. "I'll always carry with me the words of a teacher the day after one of our courses in South Sudan. She told me how, the night before, as she got home, she saw her five-year-old son running like crazy toward the house. She told me, 'He knew that if he had got there after me, I would spank him. Instead, I saw him and I told him to go back outside to play, and that I'd call him in for dinner. He obeyed because he was afraid, but I would like for him to love me.'" **T**



THE HEADQUARTER. The Luigi Giussani Institute for Higher Education, inaugurated in 2009, in Kampala.

and those in Nigeria. "This is the road to discovering new didactic methods and innovative ways of approaching the material. Always focused on the goal of building up the relationship between educators and students, as Giussani intended. Pedagogy, the classroom, becomes an instrument to reach the hearts of the boys and girls."

Somewhere along the way, the Ugandan Ministry started to notice the PCE and recognize the value of its work. "They asked us to become accredited as an official teacher training institute and to change our name. They themselves, seeing that the center was dedicated to him, suggested Fr. Giussani's name," Mauro says. It was a third level: elementary, high

school, and now courses at a university level to earn a teaching license. "Why limit ourselves to training them once they're already working?"

And this brings us up to the present. With a significantly larger budget, 17 employees including trainers, administrators, and various other staff members, and supported by AVSI and other partners, including the American Notre Dame University. "We're offering courses and running projects all over Africa. We've also started to do research studies to document the results our approach has on students—at the academic level, but also at the human level. And on how faith can have an impact. It's evident: our students at Luigi Giussani are happy to come to school, they

JULIÁN CARRÓN

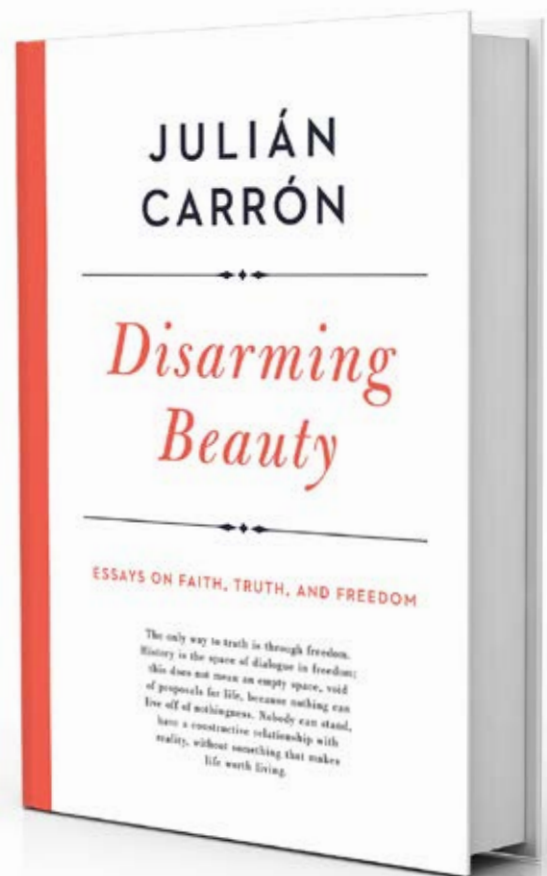
Disarming Beauty

ESSAYS ON FAITH, TRUTH, AND FREEDOM



In *Disarming Beauty*, Julián Carrón addresses the most pressing questions facing theologians today and provides insights that will interest everyone, from the most devout to the firm nonbeliever. Grappling with the interaction of Christian faith and modern culture, Carrón treats in very real and concrete ways what is essential to maintaining and developing Christian faith, and he invites an ongoing conversation about the meaning of faith, truth, and freedom.

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