

2016

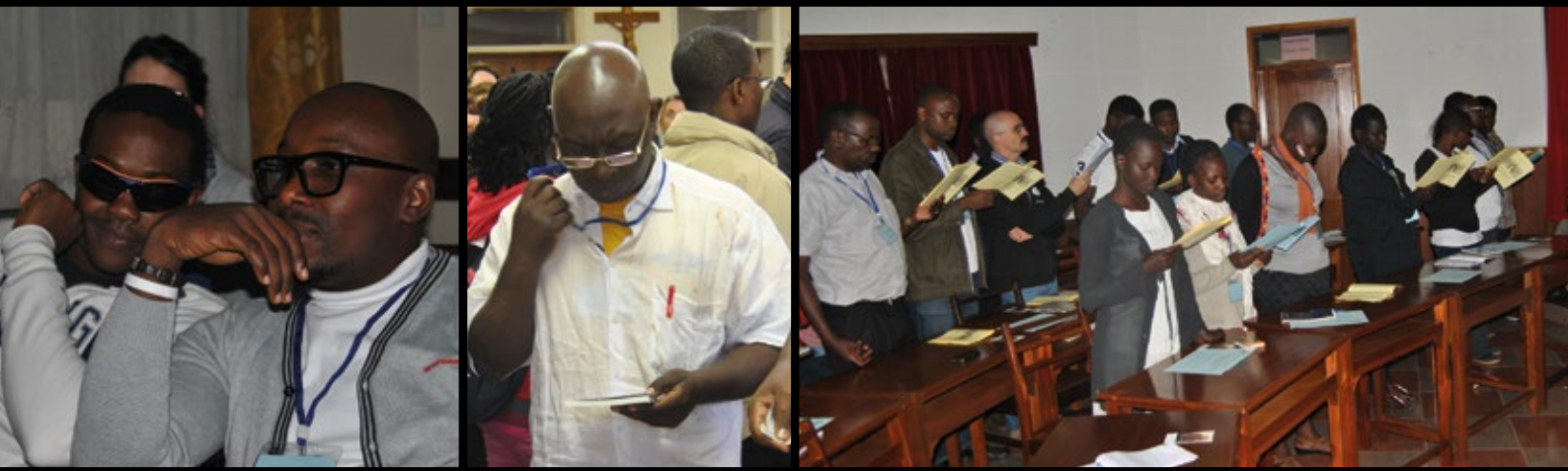
COMMUNION AND LIBERATION INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

TRACES

6

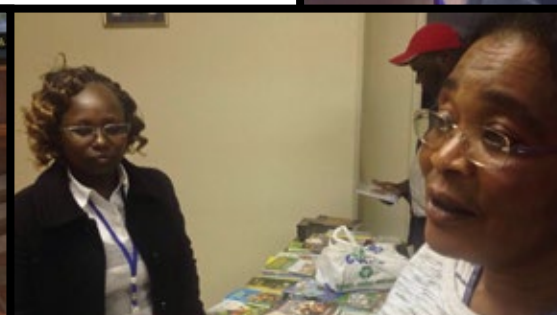
VOL. 18

LITTERAE COMMUNIONIS



**THE WELLSPRING
OF HAPPINESS**

**A report from Africa to discover what makes life beautiful.
And how God quietly builds His story within history.**



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
Vice-editor:
Paola Bergamini
Editorial Assistant:
Anna Leonardi
From New York, NY:
Holly Peterson

Graphic Design: G&C, Milano
Davide Cestari, Lucia Crimi

Photo: Kingori Simon Ndegwa:
Cover, 6/13; Shutterstock: 14-15;
Osservatore Romano: 16-17, 22;
Gettyimages: 19; Reuters: 22

Publishers (editore):
Società Coop. Edit. Nuovo Mondo
Via Porpora, 127 - 20131 Milano
Reg. Tribunale di Milano n°. 740
- 28 ottobre 1998
Iscrizione nel Registro degli
Operatori
di Comunicazione n. 6.147

© Fraternità di Comunione
e Liberazione for the texts
by Luigi Giussani and Julián Carrón

CLOSE UP

AFRICA
**HE WHO DIRECTS
THE ROAD**

One hundred CL leaders from 12 countries around the continent gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, for a three-day meeting. Here is the report of what happened.



Editorial	Seeking Nothing Else	1
Letters	Edited by Paola Bergamini	4
Close up	Africa He Who Directs the Road by Alessandra Stoppa	6
Europe	A Call for Each of Us by Costantino Esposito	14
	"Your Holiness, If You'll Permit..." by Joseph H.H. Weiler	18
The year of mercy	Confession An Amazing Moment by Alessandra Stoppa	20

**CLICK HERE
TO DOWNLOAD**



THE DOCUMENT
Address of Pope Francis
on the coferral of the
Charlemagne Prize.

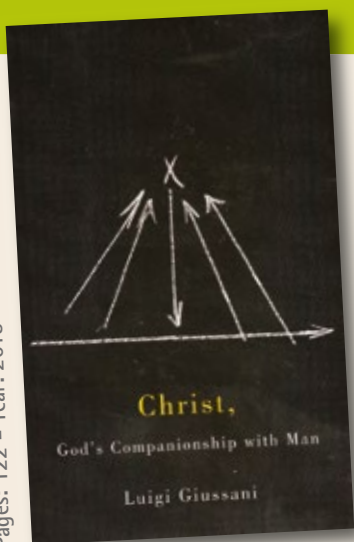
LUIGI GIUSSANI

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 practised in eighty 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.

MCGILL-QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY PRESS



Pages: 122 - Year: 2015

SEEKING NOTHING ELSE


If there's a word that can provoke instant disagreement and controversy today, it's "Europe." Not only because the Union is tangled in a knot of challenges proving harder and harder to unravel (the influx of migrants, the raising of walls, the risk of "Brexit," weak economies), but even more because of the sense of disappointment, a deep uneasiness that sometimes wells up to the point of rejecting everything: moving from a common project of peace, solidarity and well-being—a European dream somewhat parallel to the American one—to the feeling of having to deal with an entity that's at the same time distant from the needs of individual people, invasive into daily life, and incapable of solving problems.

However, these contradictions could be taken as a good opportunity to learn and to understand. First of all, to learn why a condition of peace which was taken almost for granted—we've never seen three generations grow up without a war in Europe—is at risk of crumbling in a short time. Second, to see if and how we can begin again—if it's possible to hope for "a new beginning," as Julián Carrón asked in a debate, two years ago, on Europe. And to see if it's possible *now*, because a glorious history and a starting point well-grounded in firm values like those of the founding fathers is not enough. What's needed is a "rebirth," something capable of "bringing back pure water to the roots of Europe." It's just as Pope Francis suggested, in the speech he made a few weeks back, addressing the leaders of the European Union when they gave him the Charlemagne Prize, which we cover in this issue of *Traces*.

His text is very rich and direct. He asks concise questions ("What happened to you, Europe?") without sugar-coating the limitations of a "family of peoples" that has become a "grandmother" (with "resignation and weariness," that has "lost its ability to be creative"). He specifies three roads to begin down immediately ("integrate, dialogue, and generate"). And at the end of this critical yet constructive reflection, he indicates the contribution the Church can give to this rebirth. Her task, the Pontiff observes, "is one with her mission: the proclamation of the Gospel, which today more than ever finds expression in going forth to bind the wounds of humanity with the powerful yet simple presence of Jesus, and his mercy that consoles and encourages. God desires to dwell in our midst, but He can only do so through men and women who, like the great evangelizers of this continent, have been touched by Him and live for the Gospel, seeking nothing else." Humanity's wounds, and the mercy of Christ. This is God's method, which passes through "men and women touched by Him." Nothing more.

It doesn't take much to recognize that these words are capable of extending far beyond the confines of Europe. In fact, they are the key to unlock all the other stories in this issue of *Traces*; they propose the question that underlies every topic covered in these pages. **T**

A HUMAN SYMPATHY OPEN TO ALL

 Dear Fr. Carrón: I return from the Exercises totally filled with gratitude. I have been a photographer for a number of years now, working for magazines and social media. I find myself at the center of a world that generates the common mentality. Often I go to bed and awake unsettled because of my difficulty in taking a stand on what appears, to me, a battlefield where every spark of humanity is suffocated. The mere idea of taking a stand in an argument makes me feel out of place. What's more, most of my colleagues are 180 degrees from my faith and lifestyle: from homosexuality to free love, passing through the widespread emotional disorientation that at this point is so dominant. At the same time, my colleagues have a great sensibility, a desire for happiness, and a capacity for amazement that make their company and their gaze pleasing to me. Still, I am often the first to accuse myself, saying that I should judge each circumstance with strength, remembering the seriousness of their error; and that if I don't, I am an accomplice and a coward. This thought suffocates me and makes me awkward in my relationship with them, because I am always on guard. One evening, my husband began reading me parts of *Page One* [see *Traces*, no.3/2016], and this made our family life more cheerful. I spoke about this with my friends. I had the feeling I had been given some great news. I could really look at, and be true to, everyone. This feeling grew even stronger



during the Exercises. What you propose to us is something completely different from what we are used to putting into practice. But at the same time, I have the feeling of being at ease. This definition of morality as a human *fondness* for Christ—being moved in front of His gaze to look for His presence day and night—is what I have found in the Movement. And for this reason, after the first lesson I went to Confession. This is what awakens in me the presence of certain people (or their witness when I read it). All of these encounters have a taste of freedom that disappears when I find myself cataloguing the people I have a relationship with (or the movies, the books, the exhibits) according to their sins, instead of judging the life they awaken in me. While we were preparing for the Saturday evening assembly, my friends and I had the same feeling: we had no doubt. But not because you had failed to provoke us; on the contrary, we looked

at each other as if we had found a treasure. It was very clear, and everything corresponded. We had only to return home and start living. Even though I know the Holy Spirit is always present, now like never before I have the feeling of being a witness to His transformative action in the Church.

Lupe, Madrid (Spain)

MY QUESTIONS AND THE "CLASH" WITH THE TEACHER

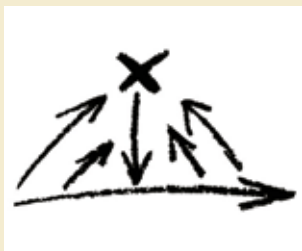
☞ This year, I have a rather difficult relationship with my Italian teacher, who is basically the only teacher with whom I have some kind of dialogue. Sometimes, however, this rather unexplainable relationship seems to vanish. A couple of weeks ago, she told me that I could not end an essay with a question, because readers are uninterested in answering questions. I was so disappointed because it was as if she were telling me to give up all of *my* questions, which are what I live for. A few days later, I went to ask her advice about a mini-research paper, and she tore it apart. I was very hurt by her attitude toward me, and so we had kind of an argument. The next day, full of disappointment, I saw her in the hall and approached her to apologize for what had happened. She began by saying that, at least in school, I have to do things in a way that "makes the others happy." I told her that I could not agree with her because my experience has been, and continues to be, that if something does not interest me, and does not make me happy first of all, then I cannot begin to



AT THE UNIVERSITY

DOREEN'S CANDLE

At Easter, our Chinese friend, Doreen, was baptized and received the Sacraments. Doreen arrived in the United States in 2010 for a Master's in Accounting at my university. My friendship with her began four years ago, when a colleague introduced her to me because she was interested in collaborating on a research project. After a few months, I needed to collect quite a bit of data, more than my research assistant's time would permit. I reconnected with Doreen and put her in contact with my assistant, who is in the Movement. After a few days, Doreen sent him a message on Facebook, having noticed Catholic on his profile, asking him to explain the difference between Catholic and Protestant. We invited her to the Lenten Retreat. From there, a beautiful friendship was born, marked forever by my having been her Godfather at her Baptism. During these years, looking at Doreen coincides with looking at Christ's presence in my life. Culture, customs, and also intellectual categories of judgment are sometimes different, and therefore a real sharing comes only when, in an honest faithfulness to experience, we track down something in common. On Holy Saturday, it is a tradition that the Catechumens



decorate their own Baptismal candle. Doreen decorated hers with Fr. Giussani's graphic of the arrows pointing toward the X and the single arrow. This is what I had showed her the first time we spoke about faith. On the night of the Easter Vigil, the joy on her face and ours (with a disarming simplicity she had invited friends, colleagues, and acquaintances) was for me truly the sign of the Resurrection, because nothing I could ever do is capable of generating such joy in my heart and in the hearts of my friends.

Lorenzo, Denver (USA)

even try to communicate it to others. At that point, she told me that it is evident that I have an intelligence and a depth in my life that not everyone has, and that this makes me the person I am; but in the scholastic environment, she said, I must try to balance what I find interesting with what might interest others. I thanked her and asked her to keep correcting me even if it meant "clashing" with each other. She replied, "I will always tell you what I think because I hold you close to my heart, even if it means making you

angry. And to think that yesterday, after our quarrel, I thought about you all afternoon." She concluded, "Know one thing: I care for you deeply, exactly because we are polar opposites." Following this conversation, what came to my mind was the comparison with what Fr. Pigi said during the Triduum, that is, that what we have in common with everyone is the heart. But really, at the time I could not understand what he was trying to say; it was something vague and distant. But in the conversation with my teach-

er something happened, a point of encounter appeared before my eyes and before her eyes, not at a theoretical and ideological level, but in experience. I continue to discover that what is of fundamental importance in my life is that I not lose myself, because when I have the grace of rediscovering my deepest self in a totally unexpected circumstance, I am free and no longer afraid, to the point that I can even tell my teacher who I am and what is in my heart, even if it means "clashing" with her.

Signed letter

J CLOSE UP





HE WHO DIRECTS THE ROAD

Mothers and fathers, missionaries, teenagers and seasoned professionals. They've come from 12 countries around the continent, but the gathering in Nairobi, for the Assembly of CL leaders, is without ethnicity, race or age. Because where you find happiness, you also find "the source."

BY ALESSANDRA STOPPA

Fr. Eloi climbs into the “vintage” bus, in his hand a piece of wood he’ll use to keep the door latched. He has ahead of him five days of travel and various means of transportation to get home. He’ll spend another five to get to Nairobi from his village, Minembwe, close to Lake Tanganyika in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). All to spend 48 hours in Kenya. In his mind, there was no question about going. “It’s not every day you have an opportunity like this!” To get together with Fr. Julián Carrón and approximately 100 friends from 12 countries throughout Africa to discuss life, which is happening every day.

The journey is worth it for this, for ordinary life to be made new: a failed exam, having to move, sad events on a Sunday afternoon, or something a colleague said at work. They could be insignificant moments, or a series of “free gestures from Christ who directs the road each of us is walking. And comes to save us from the desert in which we live,” as Carrón would say. This group of friends, leaders of the communities in Africa, shared what has happened in the last year during the three-day Assembly held in Kenya. Over the three days, “the battle between two ways of looking at reality” appears again and again, between “our rationalistic one, which sees only appearances, and the one that God calls us to, looking at the truth of things. Looking at them as they really are: full of Mystery.”

YELLOW FEVER. Grace, with a head full of black braids, is a teenager from Kampala, whose pure and beautiful voice accompanied the days through

song. Her mother had left her behind, going to live far away, and she’d like to go find her and stay with her, but she’s afraid of losing Jesus and the friendship that she’s met in the Movement. “What is it that we’ve met? What does it mean to have met Christ?” she asks Carrón. “He found you and said to you, ‘You are mine, Grace. I love you; I will be with you forever.’ This is the bond he establishes with you. Anywhere you go, at any moment, Christ is with you. When you’re with your friends, when you’re with your mom, when you wake up alone... Your life is forever accompanied by Christ. The problem is not one of distance, because He is present in every instant; the problem is awareness. We’re not alone! We’re distracted. This is why so often it’s fear that dominates our life.”

“As I listened to this discussion, I found Jesus again.” They are the words of a priest, around a table in the evening. Fr. Adriano is from Angola, where is a pastor in Lobito, in the Diocese of Benguela. He’s 48 years old and stands out because of his joyful face. “Today it’s as if God took away the ‘vestments,’ the ‘role’ of priest, to speak to me.” He’d met the Movement years ago in Italy, but just found it again a year and a half ago in Angola, through his Bishop’s request that they connect with CL. That prompt led

to a new chapter of relationships and a School of Community with the teenagers of the parish. In February, when they had just begun to read *The Meaning of Charitable Work* together, there was a terrible outbreak of yellow fever. The number of victims kept growing, and many people couldn’t afford to get vaccinations. The young people in his parish started offering

“Christ is present in every instant; the problem is awareness. We’re not alone! We’re distracted.”

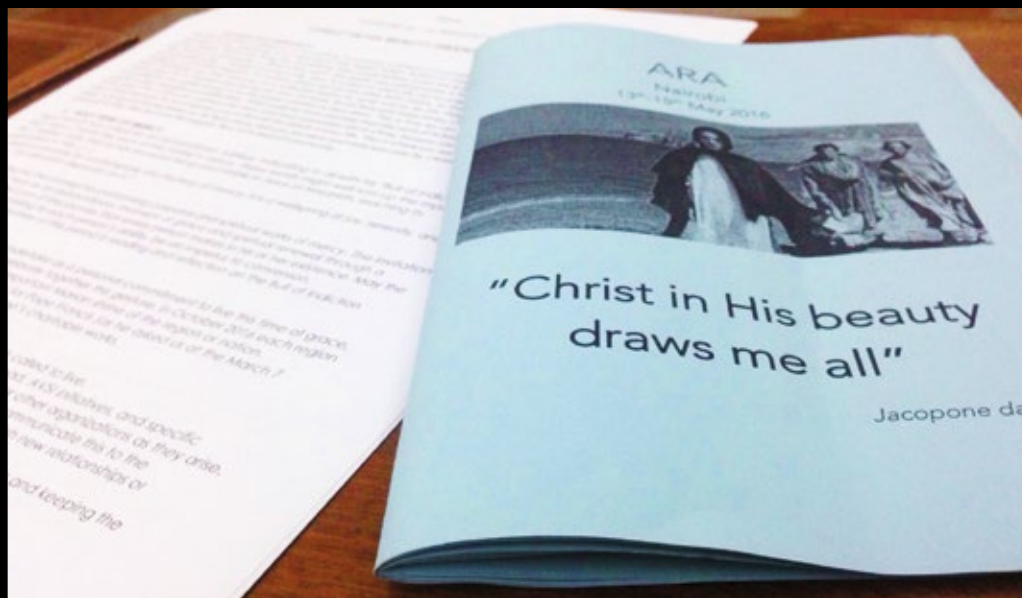


them for free, even out on street corners. “When people asked them why they did it, they said, ‘We’re reading a book... by a priest named Fr. Giusani!’” This makes him laugh because he is happy—not that life is easy in his country, which came out of a war in 2002 and has many intractable problems, like the president who has been in office since 1979.

No one could take getting to Nairobi for granted. For some, it meant major challenges to cross borders, with visas and security checks. The Nigerians were delayed for four hours at the airport, and the Cameroonians were not allowed to leave due to a question of security, but also of prejudice. There’s nothing common or automatic about the fact that there was no ethnicity, race, language, or tribe in the flower-filled courtyard on Karen Road that hosted the Assembly. It’s a community: that impossible familiarity among strangers; those who’ve known each other for years; the beauty and difficulties of continuing to build together; the dramas closest to



THE THEME. "Christ in His Beauty Draws Me to Him." The words of the Franciscan friar Jacopone da Todi (13th century) provided the title for the three-day Assembly, which took place from May 13-15 in Nairobi, Kenya.



THE 12 COUNTRIES Participants came from: Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Mauritius, Angola, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Africa, and Ivory Coast, as well as from Italy.

their hearts; songs in Swahili and *canti alpini* intoned by Roland, a young, muscular Nigerian who will be leaving his friends in Lagos and moving to Abuja for a new job in a matter of days. "Before today," he said, "I was afraid of making the change. But now I know I'll never be alone."

Jean Marie from Burundi was there thanks to a picnic. "I sat there, watching the people around me, and I understood that faith wasn't something abstract for them. In this companionship, I've felt loved. Experiencing this love is now the only thing that matters to me in life. I don't need anything else." Carrón describes the choice we have in these words: "We're either visionaries, or simple enough that we accept being surprised, amazed by someone." And the other anchor of salvation is "your own heart," that grabs you by the collar when you get complacent.

Matteo, an Italian in Uganda, says he's discovering more and more that "any newness in my days is brought by Christ." He was amazed to see >>





» how an Italian airline steward who visited their school in Nairobi was moved. The steward lives in Dubai, and the road that brought him to the school was an unlikely one: he was drawn by the “gaze” he saw in a teacher when he was sixteen, seen once again in the CL 60th anniversary video, given to him as a gift. Together, they had inspired him to take advantage of his work travels to Uganda to go and meet the people he saw in the video; but on that trip the resort where he was staying was so nice that he ended up staying put the entire trip. On the return flight, he was filled with regret. “How stupid of me.” But on that very flight there were three friends who caught his attention, again because of “that gaze.” So he asked them, “Are you in CL?” And the story began again.

On the return flight, he was filled with regret. But there were three friends who caught his attention...

“A different way of being together at a picnic! Or a gaze!” Carrón insists. “For us, what is a gaze? Almost nothing. Yet it’s something alive that you can’t forget. And it’s capable of changing lives. How many times have we seen this gaze toward us? We lack awareness. But time is given to us in life only so we can grow in this awareness of how much Christ loves us and continues to accompany us.” Sometimes, even through the ephemeral emptiness you experience, even when life is going well. Manolita from Kampala told the story of a friend whom she invited to teach catechism class together. She herself had never received Communion, but she got involved and rediscovered her faith. One day she told her friend, “My partner, seeing how happy I am, asked me to marry him.” Beautiful

things are happening, even every day, and yet that feeling of restlessness, the impression that nothing is ever enough, still lingers, as some people described. “This is His preference [for us]! Because only He suffices. It’s the way that He pushes us: don’t you miss *Me*?” Carrón responded: “It’s the way that our desire manifests itself, helping us to recognize it.”

One Monday morning, Barbara, an Italian working in Nigeria, was listening to a colleague list the countless challenges she faces at the school where she works. “I can’t take it anymore, there are more problems than children!” And there are 700 children. Barbara doesn’t hesitate. “But is that the whole story?” The other woman gets angry. “Don’t give me School of Community! I’m talking about a real problem.” Barbara paused her story to say, “I didn’t want to take the answer to that question for granted, either. I gave it time and space so it could dig deep. And that week was stupendous.” It

opened a new world for her. “I started looking again at all of Christ’s presence in my life. It helped refresh the memory of all the signs of Him, including the people He is giving me now.” And so everything becomes “a dialogue, an opportunity to make ourselves more aware of the grace that we have received.”

ROSE AND THE LETTER. One evening there were witnesses given by Teddy, Arnold, and Cyprian, a teacher in Mutuati, a village in the forest about 250 miles from Nairobi. For his children (12 of them) and his students, he desires one thing: “That the gaze of Jesus that I’ve encountered happen to them too. It’s all I was looking for.” Teddy is from Uganda. She had decided that her happiness lay in getting married, so she did, but her husband became violent and tore the family to pieces. Later, he came back to her. Strengthened by her encounter with Rose and Meeting Point International in Kampala, Teddy decided to stay with him. Even though he didn’t change, she stayed with him until the end, when he passed away two years ago. When they came to speak about his inheritance, her husband’s relatives accused her of being proud because she didn’t assert her claim on anything, while they took everything they could. “Yes, I’m proud,” she said. “Proud of Him who is providing for me, who gives me everything, who gives me breath and makes me myself. I belong to this place.”

You hear incredible stories. “And a second later, we already want to hear another one,” Carrón said. “Our problem is being aware that what strikes us is the same gaze that is present in every moment of our lives. Christ continues to happen, second after second. Even if we don’t realize it. The Church wouldn’t exist without being made by Christ in ➤



» every moment. Each of us is here because Christ is happening.”

The three days of the Assembly are beautiful and intense, but not automatic, nor are they generated by anyone’s own energy. “It’s Jesus who makes us beautiful,” Rose Busingye, leader of CL in Africa, had written in her invitation letter. “Now I am even more certain,” she says, resting on a couch during one of the breaks between assemblies, which were striking in the freedom with which participants spoke, even the young people, and the long lines of people wanting to ask questions. “We are all so preferred,” Rose goes on to say, “we who are nothing, who could be thrown away with the trash; we are loved. We can only believe it because it happens.” As she traveled here she asked herself: what will we do? What will we say? “But God comes before us. He happens and attracts us.” Thinking about the upcoming days, she wanted Carrón to explain that the Jesus met by the Apostles is the same Jesus of today, because she often sees an incredulity about this. “But Jesus spoke for Himself!” she says, smiling. “Appearing through Carrón’s face, he spoke to everyone.”

WITHOUT END. Arnold, who is 17, shared his questions about Jesus and how to recognize His presence. “When did you encounter Him? What was *the moment*? What were the facts that made you recognize this encounter?” Carrón challenges him, even asking him to write his answer as if in a journal. He doesn’t hesitate; he writes it all down and shares the gift of his story by reading it aloud. “I was forgetting the beauty of what happened to me.” He told the story

Priscilla thought, “How can you have friends who you miss so much?”

of his encounter with “the life of Fr. Luigi,” as he calls Giussani, at school. When he was able to visit his tomb for the first time, during a trip to Italy to treat a serious problem with his eyes,

“I didn’t ask him not to become blind. I asked to have the same desire he has.”

Hearing what Arnold says gets Priscilla, who is shy, to open up. The 35-year-old Kenyan IT specialist told her story at dinner. “For me, *the moment* happened a few months ago. And I never want to forget it.” She was at home on

a Sunday afternoon, feeling very sad. Not knowing what to do, she picked up the magazine she buys at her parish, *Traces*, and opened it. There’s a letter from an Italian girl who is

studying in Germany which describes how much she misses her friends. Priscilla thought, “How can you have friends who you miss so much? Could I have friends like this, too?” She sent an e-mail to the address she found in the magazine, and now she’s come to Nairobi. “I’m not perfect, but I’ve met friends who love me as I am.” She calls what has happened her “revelation,” that gradually touched as well the heart of her sister, who hasn’t even been baptized.

“You have a value.” How many times this phrase has been heard, spoken by Rose to the women living with AIDS at Meeting Point International in Kampala, and lived out by them and communicated to others, and the chain continues. During the days in Nairobi, it becomes clearer that life has a value because so does every instant: “Nothing is wasted,” Carrón says, “if we look at everything





GROUP PHOTO. One hundred people took part in the Assembly with Fr. Carrón.

as it is offered to us by the Mystery,” who quietly builds His story within history. This saves “us and our way of treating things just like everyone else, even though we believe in Christ.”

You can even organize an important event and watch all your planning unravel. Fr. Gabriele, a missionary priest with the Fraternity of St. Charles Borromeo in Nairobi, was angry. The light made it hard to see the video, and a noisy party in the next room made it hard to hear. At the end, as people said goodbye they told him, “We’ve encountered something new. It’s incredible.” He described his reaction: “My heart was closed. I started to ask to learn from them.” Or from the priests he lives with. “When I was looking at everything the wrong way, Fr. Valerio told me, ‘Watch, watch what’s happening.’” “Either we are stuck alone with our own perception,” Carrón

said, “or we accept Christ who comes to save us through someone we can’t reduce to our own measure.”

The last assembly was dedicated to the three dimensions—culture, charity, and mission—that together make an action true, full and human, a Christian action. The key is “not reducing desire, whether ours or that of others, because then we can’t respond to anything.” And in these countries where the needs are so expansive and so numerous, “it’s even more important,” Carrón says. “What does it mean to truly love? Not sparing them the difficulties, but generating a person who is strong.” Two days before, at a meeting with the college students in Kenya, Daisy had spoken about their charitable work in an orphanage. “There, I learn about the relationship Christ has with me. And I find myself happy. What is the source of my happiness? This question keeps growing.”

“Little by little, Christ reveals Himself to us more and more. But there is a starting point,” Carrón emphasized. “The experience of happiness. Christ doesn’t enter our lives because we speak about Him, but because we experience happiness. May you all be this happy!”

The Assembly is not over, though it has ended. Many left right away to go home, while others were generously hosted at the home of the *Memores Domini* who live in Nairobi: Masu, Nino, and Andrea, who tirelessly take care of each person’s needs. With lots of singing. While Fr. Eloi continued his long journey home. The bus he traveled on with young people from DRC and Uganda was stopped at the border because of a visa issue, and some didn’t have the money to go on. But all the others quickly took up a collection. Now, who could stop them? **T**

EUROPE





A CALL FOR EACH OF US

The “European dream” is in permanent crisis and needs the Pope’s help to have new life. Here we explain why the path he points out touches us all.

BY COSTANTINO ESPOSITO

What does it mean that it's the Pope who is asking Europe to "find itself" again today, to recover its "soul"? After the controversies and debates over the absence of any reference to "Christian roots" in the Constitution for the European Union (EU), Francis has chosen a third way. One that may appear a bit daring, or even dangerous, in the eyes of those who maintain that what's most essential is reiterating principles and reaffirming moral values born from the Christian tradition. What Francis sees with acute realism is that this tradition is increasingly in the minority; for most people, it's now a faded remnant. Not so much because relativism and secularism undermined its ancient foundations (this is rather a consequence, not the origin, of the crisis in Europe), but because the greatness of Christian history can only continue if it happens again today, in the present. It's because of the fact that our gaze is not directed to this contemporaneous presence of God-made-man who comes to live among us that Christian values lose their radiance and attractiveness, not the opposite.

CREATIVITY AND GENIUS. This is where Francis's "risk" comes into play: looking, as only a Christian can, at the history, present challenges and future opportunities for Europe, and a possibility that today's Europeans might feel truly understood within this gaze, one that meets them at the most profound and often hidden root of their crisis. This, in fact, is the great shift of perspective brought by the Incarnation: only when a person feels acknowledged and valued for what he or she is—or rather, for the mere fact that he or she exists—with a gaze that Francis is teaching us to call "mercy"—only



ROME, MAY 6th. The conferral of the Charlemagne Prize and Jean-Claude Juncker's embrace.

“Creativity, genius and a capacity for rebirth and renewal are part of the soul of Europe. In the last century, Europe bore witness to humanity that a new beginning was indeed possible.... The ashes of the ruins could not extinguish the ardent hope and the quest of solidarity that inspired the founders of the European project.... Europe, so long divided, finally found its true self and began to build its house.”

Pope Francis

then can he or she understand what is truly needed in life. My need, and that of all who live alongside me.

With greater depth than any analysis, no matter how necessary, and greater foresight than any of the inevitable strategies, it's this gaze that indicates the place and dictates the rhythm of today's Europe. We see this in the fact that, this time, it was the European political leaders who came to Francis to learn the irreducible depth of Europe's need. And, in his beautiful speech for the conferral at the Charlemagne Prize, Francis indicated at least two essential considerations (from which all the others flow): the "soul" of Europe is in always knowing how to begin again; it has always been a place with a history of "beginnings." And it can continuously begin again, because its greatest genius is in being in relationship with what is "other" to it: "Creativity, genius, a capacity to



begin again and go beyond its own limits are part of the soul of Europe. In the last century [after the tragedy of world wars and totalitarian states], Europe bore witness to humanity that a new beginning was indeed possible.” And this was the case only because it’s “made up of states united not by force, but by free commitment to the *common good* and a definitive end to confrontation,” as its founding fathers foresaw in the time after the world wars.

In the same way, Europe is called today, with the memory of its history, to live the pressing crises (of migration, the urgent state of finances and employment, of political and administrative structures, of cultural reductionism, of environmental abuse, etc.) without falling into “weariness” or “resignation,” but rather, “learning to integrate in new syntheses the most varied and discrete cultures. The identity of Eu-

“This culture of dialogue should be an integral part of the education imparted in our schools,....helping to give young people the tools needed to settle conflicts differently than we are accustomed to doing. Today we urgently need to build “coalitions” that are not only military and economic, but cultural, educational, philosophical and religious.... Let us arm our people with the culture of dialogue and encounter.”

Pope Francis

rope is, and always has been, a dynamic and multicultural identity.”

BEARING FRUIT. The encounter and dialogue with others is not just a gesture of compassion, but rather the possibility of finding ourselves again, that our identity be restored to us, like one of the “talents” entrusted to us to invest and bear fruit in the world. From this perspective, being open to those who are different—whatever the nature of the difference, whether foreigners or migrants, young people who can’t find a job, or those “discarded” by an economy concerned only with profits—not only does not compromise our personal and national identities or history, but is in fact the only possibility to recover them. “The true face of Europe is seen not in confrontation, but in the richness of its various cultures and the beauty of its commitment to openness.” >>

» At the end of his speech, Francis spoke of a “new European humanism” as his “dream”; not as a proposed strategy, but rather as his urgent, all-consuming desire for “a constant work of humanization” in Europe and among Europeans. Precisely in this, we can see the source of his gaze in action, which coincides with what he says the Church can and must contribute towards the rebirth of Europe today: “the proclamation of the Gospel, which today more than ever finds expression in going forth to bind the wounds of humanity with the powerful yet simple presence of Jesus, and his mercy that consoles and encourages. God desires to dwell in our midst, but he can only do so through men and women who, like the great evangelizers of this continent, have been touched by him and live for the Gospel, seeking nothing else.”

TRUE VOCATION. At a time when the wounds of Europe’s humanity, felt in the hearts and minds both of residents and those who come to Europe seeking the minimally human future denied to them and their loved ones in their own homelands, at a time when the presence of the “other” is pressing upon the weary identity of those who thought they were secure in life and just sought to make a little more profit, there is only one way that a life at the true level of human dignity and creativity can be reborn. This way is in recognizing all these circumstances as a call from the Mystery for each of us. The willingness to listen and to respond to this true and proper “vocation” (which, throughout history, is the vocation of European culture and humanity) is the true root of the personal, social, economic, and political responsibility we are waiting for. **T**

YOUR HOLINESS, IF YOU’LL PERMIT ME TO RESPOND...

Three long processes which began after the Second World War have led the “community of fate” to a crisis. An internationally renowned legal scholar, European by adoption, explains why.

by Joseph H.H. Weiler*

Your Holiness, I’d like to try humbly to respond to your question, which was so simple, so direct, and so “typically Francis”: Europe, what happened to you?

But before answering, I’d like to underline the symbolic significance of the fact that, not only has the Charlemagne Prize been conferred upon you, but that “all of Europe” came to celebrate the occasion. Only a few years have passed since the almost absurd debate in which the proposal of inserting into the European Constitution a reference to Christian roots, along with the tradition of Greco-Renaissance humanist tradition already inserted—a proposal that seemed so natural and, constitutionally, more than legitimate to me—was rejected. It is clear, however, that the soul of Europe, in its values and sensibilities, is rooted in Athens as well as in Jerusalem, and I see in the awarding of this year’s Prize not only a manifestation of love and respect for your person, but also a recognition, albeit a bit late, of this fact.

The two of us belong to very long lines of tradition: your Christian one, going back two thousand years; and my Jewish one, almost five thousand. We are accustomed to look for explanations for the human condition through long processes. And so the response I would like to offer to your question is found in three processes which began as reactions to the Second World War and have progressed over the last decades.

The first process. For reasons that are quite understandable, the

very word “patriotism” became “unprintable” after the War. Fascist regimes (among others), by abusing the word and the concept, had “burned” it in our collective consciousness. And in many ways this has been a positive thing. But we also pay a high price for having banished this word—and the sentiment it expresses—from our psychopolitical vocabulary. Since patriotism

also has a noble side: the discipline of love, the duty to take care of one’s homeland and people, of accepting our civic responsibility toward the collective. In reality, true patriotism is the opposite of Fascism: “We do not belong to the State, it’s the State that belongs to us.” This kind of patriotism is an integral part of

the republican form of democracy.

Today, we may call ourselves the Italian or French “Republic,” but our democracies are no longer truly republican. There’s the State, there’s the government, and then there’s “us.”

We are like shareholders of an enterprise. If the directorate of the enterprise called “the Republic” does not produce political and material dividends, we change managers with a vote during a meeting of shareholders called “elections.” If there is anything that does not work in our society, we go to the “directors”—as we do, for example, when our internet connection isn’t working: “We paid (our taxes), and look at the terrible service they’re giving us...” The State is always the one responsible. Never us. It’s a clientelistic democracy that not only takes



Joseph H.H. Weiler.



away our responsibility toward our society, toward our country, but also removes responsibility from our very human condition.

The second process which helps to explain what happened to Europe comes, once again, as a reaction to the War, and is paradoxical. We've accepted, both at the national and international levels, a serious and irreversible obligation rooted in our Constitutions to protect the fundamental rights of individuals, even against the political tyranny of the majority. At a more general level, our political-judicial vocabulary has become a discussion of rights. The rights of an Italian citizen are protected by our Courts, and, above all, by the Constitutional Court. But also by the Court of Justice of the EU in Luxembourg, and—again—by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. It's enough to make your head spin.

Just think about how common it has become, in the political discourse of today, to speak more and more about "rights." It's enormously important. I would never want to live in a country in which fundamental rights are not effectively defended. But here too—as with the banishment of patriotism—we pay a dear price. Actually, we pay two prices.

First and foremost, the noble culture of rights does put the individual at the center, but little by little, almost without realizing it, it turns him or her into

a self-centered individual. And the second effect of this "culture of rights"—which is a framework all Europeans have in common—is a kind of flattening of political and cultural specificity, of one's own unique national identity.

The notion of human dignity—the fact that we have been created in the image of God—contains, at one and the same time, two facets. On the one hand, it means that we are all equal in our fundamental human dignity: rich and poor, Italians and Germans... On the other hand, recognizing human dignity means accepting that each of us is an entire universe, distinct and different from any other person. And the same is true for each of our societies. When this element of diversity is diminished, we rebel.

The third process that explains what has happened to Europe is secularization. Let me be clear: this observation is not an evangelical rebuke. I do not judge a person based on his or her faith or lack thereof. And even though, for me, it's impossible to imagine the world without the Lord—The Holy Blessed Be He—I also know many religious people who are odious and many atheists of the highest moral character. The importance of secularism is in the fact that a voice which was at one time universal and ubiquitous, a voice in which the emphasis was on duty and not only rights, on personal responsibility in the face of what happens to us, our neighbors,

our society and not the instinctive appeal to public institutions, has all but disappeared from social praxis.

This process also began with World War II. Who among us, after having seen the mountains of shoes from millions of assassinated children at Auschwitz, didn't ask the question: God, where were you? And please forgive me, your Holiness, if I say that I'm not sure that the Church, from the time after the War up to the Council, did not in some way exacerbate this crisis of faith.

It has taken decades for these three processes to mature and produce now their "sour grapes" (*Is 5:2*). We see the impact everywhere, not least in matters regarding the European Union.

Beyond its economic purposes, the EU was conceived as a "community of fate." Our fate as Europeans, determined by our history—horrendous and noble—by the values we've inherited, by our geographic and cultural proximity, required a reciprocity, a responsibility and a solidarity that went beyond standard international relations. I do not want to preach a sermon about peace, but simply would like to observe that this peace, in Europe, is different: it is a peace based on forgiveness and humanity, not only on interests and guarantees.

But today? The EU has become something entirely different. Perceived as a threat to national identity, it has become a union of interests, of calculating advantages and disadvantages. Of solidarity that is present in times of prosperity, when it is not put to the test, but disappears in times of need. A union of rights, but never of duties.

Your Holiness, I've only been an Italian national for a little while. This could be why I am not embarrassed to call myself an "Italian patriot" and to love this country that has adopted me. And being Italian, I must also be European. I will not lose hope, because, whether we like it or not, we are in a Europe that is a "community of fate." What that fate will be depends on us. For better or for worse, we cannot help but call ourselves Europeans.

*President of the European University Institute



The Year of Mercy



AN AMAZING MOMENT

He is one of the thousands of Missionaries of Mercy invited by the Pope for the Jubilee. Fr. **EMILIANO ANTENUCCI**, a young Capuchin, explains what the Sacrament of Confession is—and is not. Because when you meet Him face to face...

BY ALESSANDRA STOPPA



“Because the Church, in the midst of this historic change, is called to offer greater signs of the presence and the closeness of God.” This is the explanation that Pope Francis gave during Easter last year for the Holy Year dedicated to Mercy. Then, in the Bull of Indiction, he announced: “I intend to send out the Missionaries of Mercy. They will be a sign of the Church’s maternal care for the People of God, so that they may enter more deeply into the richness of this mystery that is so fundamental for faith.”

Fr. Emiliano Antenucci is one of the thousands of Missionaries of Mercy chosen by the Pope. He is a Capuchin friar, ordained a priest in Manopello in 2011 at the Sanctuary of the Holy Face, where he had been sent for his summer assignment to be a guide for pilgrims. Thirty-six years old with a volcanic personality, he was born in Vasto, but his vocation took him to Assisi, Foligno, L’Aquila (before and after the earthquake), to Penne, and now to Chieti, in the Convent of *Mater Domini*.

For one year, he lived in hermitages and in monasteries all across Italy, researching the topic of silence. From this came the Course on Silence that now accompanies many young people in Italy, in Ecuador, in Mexico, and in other countries, where it is growing. “What does a friar and silence have to do with my life?” He laughs: “The answer is that silence is the greatest teacher. When I speak with young people, I sense much sadness. This means that it is difficult to hear what God wants to tell us.” Saint Bonaventure used to say that friars are the “workers of the second shift.” He was referring directly to their duty to preach and to confess, sustaining the spiritual life of the people and parish priests as well. And he drew attention to the fact that the most important thing is not getting lost in administering, organizing, and holding down the fort, but instead says Brother Emiliano: “The most important thing is tending to souls.”

What did the Pope ask you before sending you off?

First of all, to be “the living sign of the love of the Father.” But this goes for all priests, who are all Missionaries of Mercy. Not just priests, but all

Christians are called to bear witness to what is known as “the second name of love.” This is mercy. In my mind, there is one specific image: the cry of the heart of Christ on the Cross. Mercy is the gaze of the heart on ourselves and on everyone. Truly, everyone. But it is only because God is merciful on us that we can be merciful.

Your task as Missionaries of Mercy is to “celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with their people so that the time of grace made possible by the Jubilee year makes it possible for many of God’s sons and daughters to take up once again the journey to the Father’s house.” It is also to be “heralds of the joy of forgiveness.”



Fr. Emiliano Antenucci.

Yes, we are called to hear confessions, with the possibility of absolving some of the sins that are reserved to the Holy See: profaning the Eucharist, physical violence towards the Pontiff, the violation of the sacred seal by the confessor and participating in the violation of the Sixth Commandment. The absolution for abortion, during this Holy Year, is granted to all priests. In addition to Confession, we Missionaries are called to teach catechesis, and to preach about mercy through the “missions to the people” organized by the Dioceses. I feel supported in a special way, because we Capuchins can look to our “expert” saints, including Saint Leopold Mandic and Saint Padre Pio.

What do they teach you?

First of all, hearing a confession is not the same as making a black list. It is not even an exoneration in order to come before the Eucharist. Instead, it is a walk of conversion. I prefer to call it Reconciliation: even more so than Penance or Confession, this is the >>



» name that harkens back to the fundamental character of this Sacrament, which does not merely consist of accusing oneself of sins, but of the increase of Grace. Confession is the place where Grace is received. In fact, the Pope says that the very act of going to Confession is already a grace. It is called the grace of acknowledgement.

And Francis says, “Shame itself is a grace.”

This is so true. The veil of shame is transformed into tears of remorse and joy. We must recognize that we are sinners to know what mercy is. But this does not mean that Jesus became Incarnate for the sake of sin: Jesus became Incarnate because He loves us. This is very important. I believe that through a certain form of catechesis on sin we have demoralized many people, we have created a kind of “asceticism of sadness.” Instead, in the beginning, it was about joy, light, Grace. Not about sin and the shadows.

During the Audience with CL last year, Pope Francis said: “The privileged place of encounter is the caress of the mercy of Jesus Christ regarding my sin.”

Yes! This asks us to respond freely. Let us reflect on what the French writer Léon Bloy said: “A saint can fall in the mud and a prostitute can reach the light.” This is the experience all of us have when we receive mercy. The parable of the Prodigal Son does not have a happy ending, because the choice is left up to us: to continue on a path of sanctity or in the shadows. It is a matter of freedom. We do not know how the story continues, where the older son goes or what the younger son does. We decide how our story ends. “Then the angel departed from her”: just as it happened to the Virgin Mary after the Annunciation. The Lord gives us Grace, the gifts;



SENT. The Missionaries of Mercy with Pope Francis, on February 9th.

He shows us good and evil: “I placed you... on the holy mountain of God”; after that, it is your choice. This also allows us to remember that Confession is not psychoanalysis: the priest gives you God’s Grace, the psychoanalyst does not.

What can help a person be conscientious when experiencing Confession?

What is helpful for me are the three passages pronounced by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini: the *confessio laudis*, the *confessio vitae*, and the *confessio fidei*. First of all, the *confessio laudis*: before making my confession, I must thank God for all the gifts that I have received. For being given life, a vocation, a family—which many do not have—health, studies, work, friends...for everything. Everything is given. The point is this: having a grateful heart. As for everything else, the fundamental sin is being “forgetful.” Being forgetful of God’s love. To sin is not to break a law, but to betray the Beloved and His love for me. Then there is the *confessio vitae*. The act of confessing to a priest—who is a man just as I am, a sinner, weak like me—all of my contradictions, my

misery: “My misery; your mercy,” St. Augustine used to say. What strikes me is that often we confess sins that have already been confessed. I am not referring to those that we always fall back into, but the sins that have been committed and are already forgiven, which we drag back out. This is because we do not forgive ourselves. The drama is inside of us. Most of all, because we still do not believe in God’s forgiveness. But this forgiveness is not an emotion!

Could you explain this further

For God, to forgive is to forget: for Him, it is as if you never did that thing. For us, though, this mercy is a scandal.

Is this what the *confessio fidei* is about?

Yes, it is being certain that the mercy of God is greater than my misery. I do not know if the sun will rise tomorrow, but I know that mercy will come before the dawn. The point is to grow in this certainty: God envelops us in his cloak of infinite mercy, which is far greater than our problems, which He has cast down to the bottom of the ocean.



What is your experience of Confession? In particular, of the objectivity that you mediate: acting in persona Christi?

For me, the experience of welcoming each one of God's masterpieces, each individual, is amazing. And I am very conscious of the fact that when I administer a confession, I am not the one speaking. It is Another who speaks through me. I have photographic images of the faces in my mind, but I do not remember the things that I say. In that moment, it is the Holy Spirit. It is an experience that I have on the other side as well: for example, I went to have my confession heard by a Benedictine monk, with an urgent question inside about what prayer is; we begin, and he starts to talk about prayer. Without me even saying a word. Just like that, you experience God speaking to you. This is exactly why it is important to prepare oneself for Confession, and not come "cold" as is often the case, but "warm." It is also essential to first invoke the Holy Spirit: on ourselves, so that we may receive the grace to recognize our sins, and on the confessor, so that he is given grace and words to speak to us.

The Pope says that the mystery of the mercy of Christ is that He "goes beyond the law and he forgives, caressing the wounds of sin, just like a confessor."

Jesus does not use the law to judge, because the greatest law is love. Instead, we burden ourselves with fear of God, that God will condemn us and punish us. The way we "communicate" God in the Church is part of our responsibility. God does not look at our sinful follies: He is crazy about us. God became Incarnate despite our sins, He loves us in spite of what we do. Because he loves us as a father would. Then, this also becomes a method of catechesis. To speak of Christianity as mortification, as a reduction of life... on the contrary! It is a fuller life. Is this not what Father Giussani taught us?

What does it mean that a confessor is merciful?

Mercy is not a reward. The confessor must help the person become aware of the encounter that he is living. It is not a conversation between friends: the other person is not meeting Fr. Emiliano; he is meeting Christ. And when you meet Christ you are afraid and trembling, yet you are filled with amazement and wonder, like a child. From this wonder emerges a new way of life. Therefore, the confessor should not pry, as the Pope reminded us, but he should not stay silent either: he must give words of healing. Words of consolation and of hope. We must pay attention to the words that we say.

The Pope puts the words *mercy* and *justice* side by side and says: "Sinners yes, not the corrupt." To be merciful does not mean covering up scandals

with a secretive silence.

The Pope also talks about this issue within the Church. We cover up, and cover up... but this causes great suffering. We all live corruption when we get used to sin: we are so immersed in it, to the point that we no longer see the harm that we do. We must keep watch, never stay settled. To be ready and alert, allowing ourselves to be awakened by daily life.

How does the confessor experience the relationship between truth and charity?

In this sense, it is also the duty of priests to educate. In other words: to lead the other gently to the truth about himself. To lead him "outside of himself": from *amor sui*, *amor proprio*, to *amor Dei*. It means liberating him from himself: from the false image of himself, from the burdens he carries, and it also means liberating the gifts and charisms he has. We priests must not be administrators of what is sacred; we must be educators. We must be able to sanctify and to discern, but also to educate souls. I had the blessing of spending some time at the Certosa di Serra San Bruno, a place familiar to André Louf, one of the great masters of discernment, who said: "It is necessary to walk with a soul through everything, but always a step behind, so that at every crossroads it may choose." Freely. Lastly, I think that we confessors should remove this word from our vocabulary: rigidity.

Jesus does not use the law to judge, because the greatest law is love. He loves us in spite of what we do.

What do you mean?

Rigidity creates soldiers. God wants us to be His children, not soldiers: a soldier obeys, but his heart may not; the child is gentle and obeys out of love. Because he feels loved. **I**

ARTIMONDO

BY
ARTIGIANO IN FIERA

THE BEST ARTISAN-MADE PRODUCTS
FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD
DELIVERED STRAIGHT TO YOUR DOORSTEP
IN JUST A FEW CLICKS



The Online Shop of Artigiano in Fiera

The world's largest fair of handmade goods



www.artimondo.it

