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**Love alone
is credible**

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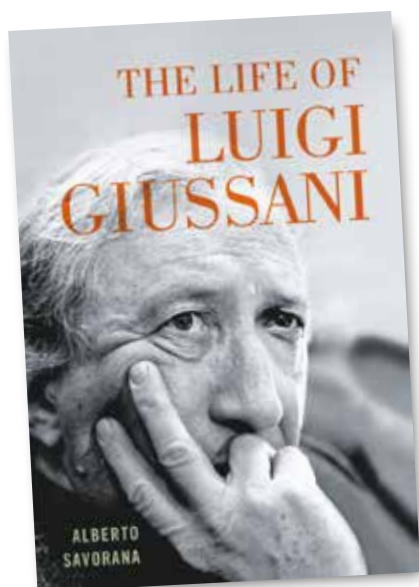
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for the texts by Luigi Giussani and Julián Carrón

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THE LIFE OF LUIGI GIUSSANI

by Alberto Savorana. Translated by Chris Bacich and Mariangela Sullivan

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

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Hope is based only on a present reality

“**H**ope is a certainty about the future based on a present reality.” Today, can anyone say something so solid without being considered naive or shameless? Read one by one, these words of Fr. Giussani's are a ray of light in a dense fog. They greet us at the beginning of a year that already seems exhausted, loaded down with uncertainties: every natural catalyst for living has been dulled, crushed by the second wave, threatened by the third. Some have lost loved ones without even being able to say good-bye, some have lost their jobs, and even those for whom things seem to be going well sense that this is not enough. Meanwhile, in some countries, the pandemic is not even the most difficult of their trials.

After a 2020 characterized as “the year of desperate fear,” we are driven to search for people in whom this fear has been overcome. When everything seems subject to interpretation, their experience stands out, freeing us from the millstone of insecurity. It is important to look at people in whom desire has been rekindled, those for whom “hope” is not a word only about the future, but also the present.

In this issue, you will find stories about people who look to the future with a certainty that nothing ends up in nothingness, a certainty based not on their own strength, but on an encounter they have had, from Erik Varden, a recently consecrated bishop in Norway to Mireille Yoga (in the cover photo) and her street kids in Cameroon to a friend in Taipei for whom even sickness is a call. Finally, we offer a dialogue between the psychoanalyst Massimo Recalcati and Julián Carrón on the “places” that reawaken the “I,” places in which things are not just said, but also happen.

A new beginning is possible because of an impact with ordinary people who are in fact extraordinary, with that “Christian grain of wheat” that falls to the earth, in the words of the great theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar taken from the passage from which the cover title is drawn: “Because for the world, love alone is credible.”

Nothing challenges our freedom like a person in whom we see the realization of what we desire.

Letters

Marta, Paola, Tommaso

edited by
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My indian friend

Two months ago, I transferred to Luxembourg for work. This is the first time I have left family, friends, boyfriend, and university for such a long time, to go and live in an unknown place, in an uncertain situation due to the pandemic. As soon as I arrived, every moment was a provocation: searching for a place to live, getting to know my roommates, integrating with my colleagues while working from home, getting used to the food, climate, and language. However, my story and my education allowed me to take a positive and interested attitude in front of every difficulty. Challenges are not opportunities to complain, but opportunities to dive even deeper into reality, to understand what good can come from them. Once the novelty of the initial period was over, I started fearing the routine: how will I remain “hungry” when all these extraordinary events come to an end? Paradoxically, I missed the difficult moments, those moments that made me restless but full of desire. While thinking about what awakened my humanity during these months, my Indian roommate came to mind. One day she burst into my room to ask for help with some difficulty she was having, and the following week she asked if she could come to Mass with me. Then, a few days ago, she asked me to go for a walk with her because she “needed my way looking at things.” There wasn’t a specific event or dialogue that occurred, but when we were together with our other roommates for a coffee or a meal, I was the only one who had a different perspective on things. We all transferred here at the same time and started working for the same company on

the same day, but where they saw another reason to be depressed, I saw an opportunity for growth. I know there is something good waiting for me, and that the circumstances are enough to reawaken me and my “hunger.” The extraordinary I was looking for was already there: reality offers everything I need.

Marta, Luxembourg

“Nothing can mar hope”

I’m sixty-six years old and I met the Movement in high school. It was a “love-hate” encounter for me, who met the striking presence of Christ in a “Base Community,” one of those communities that years later would be labeled as “Christians for socialism.” My encounter with the movement, however, has accompanied me throughout my life, and day after day molded it. I had to reach my present age to realize that all the good, the hope, the ability to judge reality, the way of living my faith—everything—came to me from the charism of the Movement. I draw from it and it nurtured me, but I never wanted to give of myself through the gesture of enrolling in the Fraternity. I considered this gesture to be more of a formality, when instead, it would have been a way to reaffirm my autonomy in front of Christ. The Beginning Day was like a slap in the face because I too, like Mikel Azurmendi, looked, but without looking all the way to the end. I saw beauty in a fire that warmed me, but from which I was trying to run. I saw Christ working through friends like Enrico Guffanti, who left us a few months ago and who changed my way of seeing life. I saw and shared his passion for education, which is fed by and becomes concrete in faith. And above all, I met friends who witnessed to me how nothing, neither pain nor illness nor even death, could mar my hope. I saw a true gusto for living life. It is therefore with emotion, and with enormous gratitude, that I ask to enroll in the Fraternity.

Paola, Varese (Italy)

A coffee at the bar

Although libraries are closed and Via Zamboni in Bologna is practically deserted, some study rooms at the university are still open, and we in the CLU will meet there as long as it is possible. The daily schedule starts with morning prayer, then we have a coffee at Floriano's, a nearby coffee bar, after which we take our places at the tables to study. A few days ago, I skipped morning prayer and didn't arrive until the others were already having a socially distanced coffee. I entered Fiorano's and chatted with the barista whom, by now, I had befriended. "How's it going?" I asked. He said, "Well, I'm lucky that at least you guys are still at the university." "As long as the university is open, we will be here," I replied, and then he said, "You guys from your association, because I know you are from CL, are the only ones who provide some breath to the university area. You are like those I used to serve coffee to in this bar thirty years ago." I make a big deal of how to bring what I have encountered to others, when it is enough to be myself, even when I am getting a coffee. The encounter I've had becomes evident to the eyes of everyone.

Tommaso, Bologna (Italy)

Dear Friends,

Starting this month, *Traces* has a new Editor-in-chief. Hers is a familiar signature, one you know and have appreciated for some time: Alessandra Stoppa.

I had the good fortune of involving her in our work years ago, and over time, of seeing her professional and human gifts flourish. Now I'm grateful for the decisive and full yes with which she has embraced the responsibility entrusted to her by Fr Carrón. I'm certain that with her, the magazine and the other communication tools of the Movement (from *clonline.org* to the social profiles) will grow even more, contributing further to its educational and missionary goals. For my part, I will continue contributing to this adventure in different ways. When I arrived here from the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* in 2007, I had great expectations. Along with a gusto for (and worries about) the new challenge, I thought, "If the fullness of life that I discovered when I met Fr. Giussani becomes the raw material for my work, then I can only gain from that." Well, what I received, and continue to receive day after day, is infinitely more. For all this, I can never be sufficiently grateful to Julián Carrón and to the journey he proposes to us. I will never be able to express a big enough "thank you" to the editorial staff, colleagues, friends, you the readers, and everyone who has contributed in thousands of ways to the life of this magazine, and to mine. Bon Voyage!

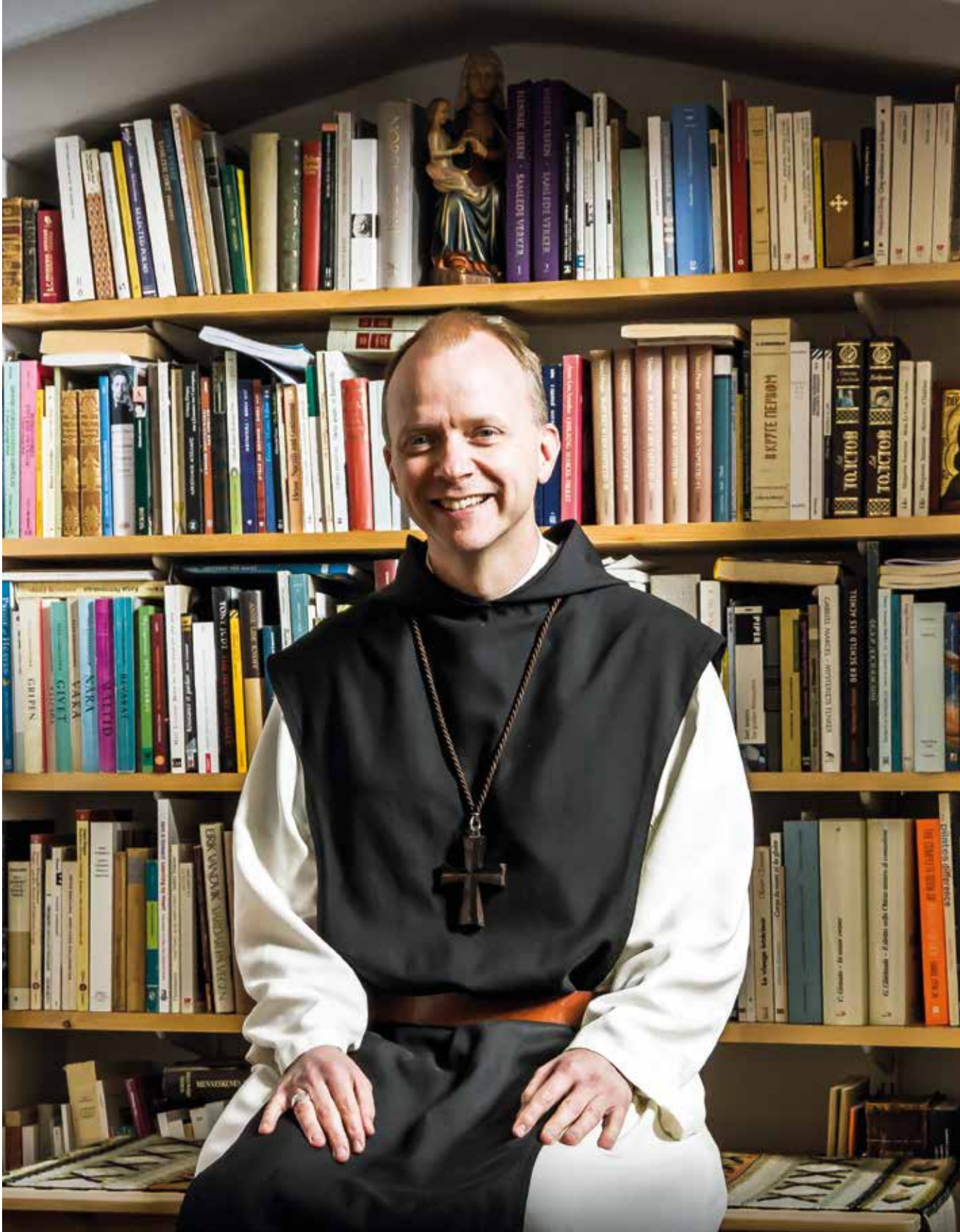
Davide Perillo

Dear Davide,

It is we who thank you for these years. We have all enjoyed the fruits of what you have received through your work and your profound dedication, including the way you let yourself be generated by the faces, names, and events of this history of grace that never ceases to grab hold of us. In a 1992 gathering, Fr. Giussani, in talking about Traces said: "We live by what we see." This is the wish I have for our life, for the life of the magazine, and for all those who collaborate on and read it. Thank you! (as)

Close-up

© Catholic Press Photo





Alessandra Stoppa

The cry of our time

In a troubled world that shuns dogmas, the path to hope is paying attention to the roads God chooses to come meet us. This is the faith of Erik Varden, a Cistercian and a bishop in ultrasecularized Norway.

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“Our time is wary of words.” Following this simple and confident assertion from Erik Varden, cited by Julián Carrón in *The Radiance in Your Eyes*, we move on to the deep, though perhaps unstated, grievance of our troubled world: we need hope to be incarnated for it to be credible. Varden is a forty-six-year-old Norwegian Cistercian abbot and, since October, the bishop of Trondheim, where he is only the fourth bishop to be ordained in the five centuries since the Protestant Reformation. In this hypersecularized land, more than in other places, Christian hope can be one of two things: either “scaffolding rigged around the existential thirst of man,” or “what in fact corresponds to this thirst.”

Faith entered Varden’s life in this form, as a “response to *my* questions, not as a series of the right questions to ask.” This response was unforeseen. He was sixteen and had a deep love for music. He was developing an interest in Gustav Mahler and bought a Bernstein recording of the Second Symphony, the *Resurrection*. Its Christian significance left him “cold,” because though he had been baptized in the Lutheran church, he had never affirmed a belief. He wrote, “if anything, I was hostile.” That evening at home alone, however, he listened to Mahler and something happened. “I had not expected to be so moved” by hearing the words of the fifth movement: “Have faith, heart, you were not born in vain. You have not lived in vain or suffered in vain.” “That



Erik Varden.

“That insistence—not in vain—was irresistible, I knew it was true. At that moment, my consciousness changed.”

insistence—*not in vain*—was irresistible,” he wrote. “I knew it was true. At that moment, my consciousness changed. With a certainty born neither of overwrought emotion nor of cool analysis, I was aware of not being alone. I could no more doubt the truth of what I had found than I could doubt that I existed.” He also became certain that the anguish of the world is “embraced by an infinite benevolence, investing it with purpose.” That evening, he “encountered that benevolence and recognized it as a personal presence. I wanted to pursue it, learn its name, discern its features.”

That unforeseen experience was the beginning of his seeking, which led all the way to discovering the Catholic Church.

Let’s begin with the quote from *The Radiance in Your Eyes*, taken from your book, *The Shattering of Loneliness*: “Our time is wary of words. It shuns dogmas. Yet it knows the meaning of longing. It longs confusedly, without knowing what for. But the sense of harboring a void that needs filling is there.” Why do you interpret our time starting from the concept of longing?

When I speak about longing, I am referring, above all, to a very simple sensation we are all familiar with when we stop to reflect on life or have a sudden intuition: “This is not enough! I want more!” It’s an experience of promise; it is the op-

portunity to raise our eyes to see an infinite *becoming*, the opportunity to recognize in this *cri de coeur*, this cry of the heart, a call directed to me by an Other. And reaching the point of asking that Other, “Who are you?” But to many, transcendence seems fantastical, like a dream. And finding oneself like this, finite and constrained by hundreds of limiting circumstances but with an infinite desire dwelling within, can cause immense, even tragic frustration. This is why I think the imperative task for Christians is simply to bear witness to the fact that our profound longing has a *meaning*.

Could you explain further?

Our longing is a sign of something we can experience, an experience that corresponds to the deepest thirst of our heart and is capable of satisfying it. In his Rule, St. Benedict has a single criterion for those considering a vocation. “Who is the man who desires life and longs to see good days?” In other words, “Are you a man of longing? If so, I am proposing a road for you to follow.” Of course, desire is not enough, but it is an indispensable foundation. Therefore, we need to listen to our deep longing with great attention, with respect.

On the day of your ordination in Trondheim you spoke often of *attention* and *listening*. You said, “A great deal of God’s revelation is silent.” What did you mean?

God’s revelation is a whisper, and what is important for us right now in the Christian struggle—the perpetual Christian struggle—is to take that whisper seriously. We need to *pay attention* because the truth is always greater than our ideas. In the Gospel, people refuse Christ precisely because they do not accept the method that God uses to reveal Himself. This is our temptation: having such clear ideas of what God “ought to” do, according to our thinking, that we remain closed to His life-bearing presence. Today, listening to the whisper has become difficult because there are so many impressions circulating around us, imposed in a somewhat violent way. So, we need to have fairly refined senses... An openness is needed: a space of profound listening and waiting.

Today, in part out of fear and anger, the discomfort of the situation in which we find ourselves causes many people to be closed.

Time is never desperate. This is the outlook we need to learn to enter into the outlook of God, who “so loved the world that He gave His only Son.” I was recently struck by a little coincidence. In a single morning, I read interviews in two different newspapers of doctors, one in France, the other in the US, who said the same thing: “We are living through an apocalyptic situation.” They were, of course, referring to



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the health crisis with its inconceivable proportions. But I thought about that adjective, “apocalyptic,” which actually means “revelatory.” When reality exceeds our categories and things do not fit inside the usual limits, we have to broaden our horizon. These singular moments are potentially times of reawakening because their very novelty raises a question about their meaning, a question that refers to the ultimate meaning of everything. It refers to the *Logos* that became flesh in history and, through the church, continues its mystery of incarnation.

What do you see in our situation today?

It is a time of great suffering. And the lack of certainty about tomorrow is striking. I feel particularly for what young people, sixteen- or eighteen-year-olds, are living, feeling stuck—full of desire to build, they find themselves frustrated. But what we are living also carries a new seed: the recognition—in a hyperindividualistic world—that we are dependent on one another. There is a thirst for relationships, to encounter others, that I hope will mark how the world is built. I think this reawakening is very significant and necessary. And within it there is a strong ecclesial vocation: whereas the factions of secular society tend toward explosion, the church—thanks to her supernatural calling and the force of her communion—tends toward encounter. A high and solemn task has been entrusted to Christians in this time, that of *living* its communion. As *Gaudium et Spes* says, “The church is called to make the seed of a new humanity present and concrete.” That challenge is enormous and facing it is demanding, but also a cause for joy.

Erik Varden was born in 1974 in Sarpsborg (Norway). He entered the Cistercian Order of Strict Observance in 2002 and was ordained a priest in 2011. In 2015, he became the abbot of Mount Saint Bernhard in Leicestershire (United Kingdom).

He was ordained bishop of Trondheim on October 3, 2020. He wrote, in addition to other books, *The Shattering of Loneliness* (Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018).

“I thought about that adjective, ‘apocalyptic,’ which actually means ‘revelatory.’ When reality exceeds our categories and things do not fit inside the usual limits, we have to broaden our horizon. These singular moments are potentially times of reawakening because their very novelty raises a question about their meaning, a question that refers to the ultimate meaning of everything.”

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Why a cause for joy?

True encounter brings joy. I am not talking about joy in a sentimental sense, but rather an ontological joy: a feeling of being understood, loved, and wanted. I believe that the thirst that is exploding, the thirst for encounter and friendship, is, though this remains implicit, a spiritual thirst. And if we, through our lives, carry the Spirit in an encounter with the world that awaits him, joy is inevitable, even in times of suffering. Suffering has to be treated with great respect, even reverence. We Christians can easily slide into a kind of rhetoric of consolation, while what we need is a vulnerable and open heart to embrace another person’s suffering. If this sharing is genuine, if the one who is suffering allows it and this encounter takes place, even suffering becomes a place of light. Joy is not just a convincing proof that grace is working—it is also a verification of Christian experience because we cannot deceive ourselves that we are joyful if we are not; we cannot fool ourselves that we are at peace if that is not the case. These are not emotions—they are the air we breathe in our deepest being.

In what way was listening to Mahler an “encounter” for you?

That interior reawakening remains a mystery to me.

Still, over time—it has been thirty years—I have verified that an experience that may have seemed fleeting was quite substantial. This is interesting, not just in understanding what happened to me, but also in communicating the mystery of God to others.

Why?

Because the God in whom we believe is a God who communicates Himself. The Word was made flesh. He became flesh so that He could share with us; he is always finding new roads, seeking particular ones inside me that are not closed. I think that in the church’s efforts at evangelization, we depend a great deal on traditional roads on which right now there is simply too much “traffic.” God, however, asks Himself what potential openings there are, what roads are cleared and then makes Himself comprehensible in a fitting, personalized way. That is what happened to me. Consequently, I have a great respect for the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of others. The Lord prepares new roads, and our task is to collaborate with Him.

Collaborating with those “whispers”?

Yes. I think about the experience I had in France last summer. On the way to Normandy, I stopped at Font-

gombault Abbey, and one day I went with the abbot who was celebrating a funeral in the town of Le Blanc. It was the funeral of a nun from the Little Sisters Disciples of the Lamb, a community founded recently, in 1985, to make it possible for women with Down's syndrome to live a monastic life. One of the first sisters, Marie Ange, who spent almost thirty years in the community, had died. In the eyes of the world, her hidden life made no sense. It was useless, without value. That day, at that funeral, however, I was a privileged witness of an essential biography.

Essential how?

In that her life was the incarnation of a word from God that is essential for our world. A word of tenderness and patience, an authoritative word. The life of that nun corresponds to a whisper, yes, but those who were blessed to hear that sweet sound know how transformative it was. I did not know her, but in that assembly full of people who loved her deeply, I recognized the fruitfulness and nobility of her life, of the gift of her life. A gift given in a very, very lucid—and luminous—manner.

Back to you—what happened after that first “encounter” with Mahler?

When I started to study the history of Christianity, I was struck by the continuity present in Catholicism. When I left Norway to go to an international high school in Wales, I had several encounters in the form of friendships. But I can say I really began adhering to the church in my encounter with monastic life: for me, those two discoveries are inseparable. When I was seventeen, I spent a week in a monastery and saw people whose life left an impression on me, attracted me—it was the incarnation of an ideal. Two years later, I was accepted into full communion. It was not a matter, however, of changing creeds. I had no roots in the Lutheran church; I did not belong.

It was a conversion.

It was returning home, a place where many things were well-known, familiar, and dear to me.

That is mysterious.

Yes, but also *logical*. The fact that we were created in God's image is

not abstract, it is a quite incarnate reality that each of us is called to discover for himself. The more we discover the personal reality of our being rooted in God's image, the more we feel at home.

Is that personal discovery the root of the *credibility* of faith?

We can easily risk turning God into an idol, of fossilizing the font of all life into something lifeless and stunted. The first thing we take for granted is that God is real. He is present, and He speaks to us. Now! This is what we are certain of—in my concrete life, He uses what happens to me as an instrument for my conversion, and even for my sanctification. What matters is opening our eyes to see the enormity and beauty of this unprecedented opportunity—to be re-awakened, to raise ourselves to the level of God's ambition for us, for you, for me. Christian discourse has to become concrete: the Word became flesh. This is the heart of the mystery of faith: a mystery that is realized in us, today, if we want it to be. This is possible because God's grace is capable of finding me right where I am. Salvation addresses me in *my* contradictions, weaknesses, and hopes: the Lord saves *me*; He is truly God with us, not hidden in some mysterious or vague “elsewhere.” The Gospel does not propose an alternative life, but rather transfigures the life we live now. ■

“The Gospel does not propose an alternative life, but rather transfigures the life we live now.”

“I am raw gold”

“Come and see.” Those words opened up a never-ending road, which she continues to follow in her life amidst the poor and desperate of Yaoundé, Cameroon. Mireille Yoga describes the source of the new life springing forth from the Edimar Social Centre. “Every day there are things that move us to say, ‘God was made flesh.’”



Davide Perillo

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Raina arrived alone early one morning, with a grimace on her girlish face, looking much younger than her sixteen years, walking only three steps at a time between contractions. Her dress was wet: Raina’s water had already broken when she knocked on the door of the Edimar Social Centre. As soon as she saw her, Mireille ran to meet her. She needed a doctor, a hospital. “I asked her, ‘Why did you come here? What are you looking for?’ She answered, ‘I need someone who has faith in me. I need a mother.’” Mireille chokes up as she tells the story. She takes a deep breath, and says only “wow.” Then, “It was a reply I couldn’t have predicted. I thought she was looking for help delivering her baby. That wasn’t it; she wanted someone to embrace her.” She thinks for a second, as if she is just realizing something: “It helped me better understand why I come to the center—not to resolve needs, but to see who replies to a cry. And that is not me, it is the mystery.”

This is what Mireille Yoga lives on: a cry and the mystery, man’s woundedness and the real, *embodied* presence of Christ. She is forty-six years old, with the luminous gaze of a person who looks at the depth of things and a smile as bright as the clothes that adorn her and the other women of her city, Yaoundé, Cameroon. The capital city has six hundred thousand inhabitants, including thousands living on the street. Many of them are children and adolescents who’ve been abandoned by families who were not able to or did not want to keep them, or who are no longer alive. They are surrounded by a poverty even more



ferocious than Covid (which, thanks be to God, has spread less here than in other countries). Many of them steal, smoke pot, and pop pills. But hundreds of them knock on the door each day here at the Edimar Centre, where Mireille is the director.

The center was opened in 2002 by Fr. Maurizio Bezzi, a PIME missionary from Bergamo, Italy. It doesn’t offer meals or beds, but rather an educational proposal: school or professional training, along with help for families, medical treatment, sports programs, and assistance for people



in prison. It features classrooms and desks, a red-dirt soccer field, a library, workshops with kitchen implements and, in back, fields where wheat is grown and animals are raised. There are young people and smiles everywhere. They learn to read and write, and sometimes learn a trade. Above all, anyone who is willing learns how to live. This is why Edimar exists: to educate and to generate.

These words of this mission always carry a special weight, but even more so for Mireille, whose life has been marked by a wound: she never had children. This is a deep pain that for a Cameroonian woman also carries a social stigma and unimaginable pressure because her husband might leave her, abandoning a “tree that produces no fruit.” That was not at all her husband Victorien’s response. Once he said to her, “You are worth more to me than ten children.” She tells the story often, amazed each time by the miraculous change that faith can introduce into a world pushing in the opposite direction, by how Christ’s presence opens up a person’s heart and changes his attitude.

Mireille Yoga in a class at the Edimar Centre.



Street children in class.

“I learned this when I encountered the proposal that Fr. Maurizio and Fr. Marco, the missionary who came with Maurizio, brought with them to Cameroon,” she recounts. “For the first time, I saw people who speak about Christ as a love that is present, who are friends because of Him. I thought He was something distant. Realizing that He is close to me was a surprise. It lit a great desire in my heart to know Him more.”

When Fr. Maurizio invited her to follow him in the adventure of directing the center (“Come out, Mireille, do not stay closed in your tears. Come to the streets to see how many boys and girls need a mother”), she simply followed. “I didn’t go into the streets to work; I wanted to be a mother. I was waiting for a child and could not understand: How could you have one and abandon him or her? But the mystery often takes me down roads I do not understand. All I can do is follow Him.”

Everything is contained in that decision, a decision that is made and reaffirmed over and over again, following what reality puts in front of you, accepting that it is there *for you* to broaden your perspective. It happened right away, beginning with a young man who, on one of Mireille’s first nights on the street, dragged her into a corner and put a knife to her gut saying, “What are you doing here? I don’t like women. It was a woman like you who brought me into this world. It could have been you; I don’t know her...” “I was afraid,” Mireille says, “but I saw in his eyes the pain of not having a mother. His pain helped me to understand mine; it helped me look it in the face. I said to him, ‘I am looking for the same thing you are looking for. We can look together.’ This is the beginning: someone who looked at me without making me close my eyes in my own pain.”

It was a beginning that is repeated for her with every encounter, with every new name and face. She told the story of Bali, nineteen, who walked her home one day and, seeing how she sat on her husband’s lap, hugging him in greeting, waited for her to stand, then threw himself into Victorien’s arms. “I wanted to feel what it was like to be in the arms of a father.” Or Bilanda, twelve, who

could not even speak French when he arrived at the center, and not long ago took the test to graduate middle school. One of the officials offered to give him the answers for two thousand francs, about three euros. He said no: “I learned at Edimar that I can do it. I want to use my head.”

“**How could you help seeing** the tenderness of the mystery in these things?” Mireille says. The word “mystery” comes up often as she tells her story, without a hint of sentimentality. “The street kids are like me, like us: they need God’s tenderness to learn to look at themselves with tenderness. They’re broken... but to this day I’ve never seen one so hardened that he is not touched by a gaze that makes him understand that he is loved. And I’ve been working here for eighteen years.”

A few days ago, she thought she had really found one: a boy “so marked by pain that I thought there was nothing we could do. He was high on drugs from morning to night and violent with everyone... When I saw him coming, I thought to myself, ‘Him again? What can I do?’” The answer came to her through *The Radiance in Your Eyes*, the book by Fr. Julián Carón that CL recently read for School of Community meetings. “I read the part in which he quotes John Paul II about the ‘the ability to feel with and for the whole person’ and was left speechless. When I saw that boy again, my gaze was different. For the first time, I looked him in the eye, not as a drug addict or a thief, but as a man. I wanted to know who he was. I

said to him, 'Come in; sit down.' He was surprised. Before, I just told him to go... He sat down, and I asked him, 'Who are you? Who is your father? Your mother?' He looked at me and a tenderness took hold of him...he started talking. For a moment, he spoke of the truth about himself, and for me that moment was a gift. A tenderness that doesn't come from me is capable of changing a person who doesn't love himself." He stayed there a long time, with his head on the table. "I was almost embarrassed about my history with this boy," Mireille says. "We hold in our hands the possibility of learning what man, our humanity, is; who we are... but we are not capable of living it in every moment."

This is the love that becomes "credible," as it is described in the same book. It is not "credible" at a merely intellectual level: it can touch the depths of anyone's heart and redeem any situation. "Every day, there are things that move us to say, 'The Word was made flesh.' If we do not go so far as to say this, we are not telling the truth." This can be seen in daily things, details that may be small in scale but are enormous because of what they bear within them; for example, the three kids who took the middle school exam last year and passed, the sixty-seven young people who went back to their birth families, in a kind of double miracle, the one who went to music school, and the four who went on to study law, economics, and agriculture. Then there was another who, a few days ago, all puffed up, said to one of the educators, "Mr. Bidias, I decided to ask the president of the republic to intervene so we can open a high school here at the center." This seems like a little thing, but it says everything. It says that there is a man who can say "I," or rather, "I am raw gold," as another young man described himself during a meeting.

Today, Mireille looks at all this with surprise. "You can't take it for granted." That has always been true, and it has become even more clear lately. Fr. Maurizio went back to Italy two years ago for health reasons, and he entrusted the care of the center to her. "When the person who founded something leaves, you cannot guarantee that those involved will stay united, that a desire to keep following in his footsteps together will prevail. In my mind, that this has happened has truly been a miracle." There is a little video clip circulating on Facebook that shows the camera panning around a classroom filled with about forty teens divided into groups and six or seven of the Edimar educators recording their greetings in Italian for their friends in Europe. One said in explicit terms, "We are merely following in the footsteps of a great man," and

another revealed even more about the bond, saying, "We don't know you, but we can see the power of your friendship with Fr. Maurizio and Mireille from here. Thank you."

For you, what does it mean to be a daughter? "To follow. I followed for a long time without understanding. But all the things I followed were saying, 'come.'" It was the same as when she first encountered CL. As she described it, "I had no expectations, no plan. I had nothing. All I had were two girls I saw who were very happy to be each other's friends. When I wanted to understand what made them the way they were, they said to me, '*Come and see.*' Those words opened up a never-ending road." Come and see. As she says the words, she makes a gesture with her hands like a doctor embracing an infant, pulling him toward himself and toward the world. "That call is the strength that brings you out of yourself. It is greater than, and overcomes, my resistance. So, I follow."

It is impressive to see the way in which this method is present in her, not just at the beginning of her encounter, but always. "I have been graced to participate in many moments in the life of CL, including the Rimini Meeting and other meetings...Years ago I heard Fr. Carrón say this: 'Every circumstance is for our vocation.' Over time, those words led me to love and to seek a great deal. What does 'every circumstance' mean? Really, 'every' one? I started to look at reality from this point of view. Even the difficulties." Why? "He said the mystery is inside reality, and I am a beggar for that mystery; I seek to see and know him every day... If God is in reality, I have to embrace reality. I have to look there if I want to see Him."

This is what, she says, "started to *eliminate* my fear. I can look at ugly circumstances not because they become beautiful, but because the mystery is inside them. To see this, I only have to open my eyes. This is how I began to look even harsh realities in the face," like the day at the end of October when there was a massacre at a school in Kumba in the southwest region of Cameroon: seven children died and thirteen were wounded. "There was a video with the children screaming, you saw the blood... I never could have made it through before. Now, it made me ask, 'Where are You now Christ?' It made me look at my 'kids' with tears in my eyes, and love them even more. Them, and my country. Who do we belong to? What kind of people are we? How can we grow?"

These are the same questions she asks about her daily work, which has changed in recent months. "Over all these years, the point for me was never to manage a charity; it

was to live well, to welcome young people and care for them, and to respond impulsively to my heart. Now, we have grown. There is more urgency to organize the center better and to be an administrator... it's another kind of work. I had to leave even more room for surprises. I really like living with surprises. Within the unexpected, the mystery is always there, saying to me, 'It's me!'"

And it was a surprise when she received the NGO AVSI's proposal to include the Edimar Centre as one of the projects for its annual Christmas campaign. Funds will help about a hundred young people learn a trade. "But, above all, I want the campaign to help our humanity, that it communicate to everyone the education we live daily, Fr. Giussani's method." When they told her they had chosen the center for the campaign, she was speechless. "I thought, 'How can it be that people so affected by Covid in Italy take such an interest in us here in Cameroon? Why do they want to help us? It had a dizzying effect... But I understand that it is this friendship, which extends all the way to me, that gives me the strength to look at my kids.'" Her eyes shine and she smiles as she pauses. "It makes me understand a little bit what Mary felt, you know? When something is really great, it makes your head spin. You can't think, 'Okay, I get it now.' All you can say is, 'Be it done according to your will.' I would like to just stay in that silence, like Our Lady, and watch. It's very, very powerful."

To watch and to follow, "to feel your heart burning with a friendship whose only reason is Christ," she said later. Nothing else is needed to generate life. "The Word was made flesh: this is everything. We simply want to be this presence, letting our humanity be

The Edimar Social Centre.



opened wide by His presence. I am full of gratitude for this place that helps us not to forget anything. This is how we continue on the road so that no part of humanity is left behind, abandoned. We do not know exactly how, but we know that nothing is lost."

A few days ago, Claude came to the center. He is about twenty years old, and has gone to prison many times for stealing. "He said to me, 'Mireille, my girlfriend gave birth.' I knew she was only five months along. 'Where's the baby?' He replied, 'Here in my bag. Dead.'" Silence. "He had his bag over his shoulder. I stood up, closed the door, and took the bag. I opened it, slowly. I took the tiny body in my arms. I sat down and looked at it carefully: the face, the hands. Then I looked at the calendar. 'Today is the feast of this saint'—now I can't even remember which one—'Let's give him that saint's name.' I traced the sign of the cross on his forehead and invited his father to pray with me." Claude stayed there, watching. "Then I gave him some money and said to him, 'Now, go bury your son.'"

A few hours later, he came back to the center. "Mireille, I won't steal or do drugs any more. I'm done, I swear to God I am. I saw how you looked at this baby, blood of my blood. You treated him like I have never looked at anything that comes from me." As he was speaking, she told us, "I think back on that moment. I don't even know if he was sober... but he was watching. He saw something. And I, too, saw something in him." What? "A heart that wants to live." ■

EDIMAR AND OTHERS SIX AVSI PROJECTS NEEDING SUPPORT

The Edimar Social Centre-Princess Grace was founded in Yaoundé, Cameroon in 2002 to help young people living on the street. It offers classes and tutoring, professional training, medical assistance, recreational activities, and family education programs. In 2019, it helped around 120 young people each week: 81 reenrolled in school, 51 are receiving regular psychological assistance, 67 have returned to their birth families, and dozens participate in music courses or the football academy. There were over 5,800 outpatient visits. The center is one of the projects highlighted in the annual campaign for the NGO AVSI, an effort that attracts the involvement of thousands of people in Italy and abroad. The 2020-21 campaign, entitled "Expand Your Horizons: Hope Alongside Those in Need" will support, in addition to the work directed by Mireille, five other initiatives in Burundi (professional training), Syria ("Open Hospitals"), Lebanon (a distance support program), Mexico (migrant children), and Italy (families facing Covid-related hardships).

For more info: www.avsi.org



The life of the community in Taiwan; Xiao Ping is seated in a wheelchair.

The beating heart of Xiao Ping

This is the story about the woman from Taipei that we heard mentioned at the CL Beginning Day. She dedicated her life to her career and had no religion until she became ill. The encounter that changed her life continues to transform the lives of others.



Paolo Perego

She is now in a wheelchair and every day she must go to physical therapy in a rehabilitation center. “But I am happy.” She has been diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. We have already heard about her story during the Beginning Day, when Fr. Julián Carrón read one of her letters and asked himself, “What experience must our gravely ill friend Xiao Ping have had to make her become ‘the beating heart of the community’ of Taipei?” She was a career woman who at fifty years old had to stop working because her illness worsened. “But when you see how she lives, it is impossible not to be moved,” explains Fr. Donato Contuzzi, a missionary of the Fraternity of St. Charles Borromeo and pastor of St. Paul Catholic Church in the capital. “Looking at her, listening to her... introduces a new gaze on life.” He speaks for himself and for the other priests who share his mission, working at Fu Jen Catholic University and in two parishes (St. Paul and St. Francis Xavier, in the Taishan district in New Taipei). Fr. Donato also described the small CL community of about fifty people, some of whom are not Catholic, that has grown up during the twenty years that the Fraternity has been present on the island of Taiwan.

Xiao Ping first encountered Christianity five years ago through a colleague. She found the movement right around the time that she dis-

covered she was sick. After doctor’s visits and exams, she received the diagnosis. “There is nothing to do,” except to live. She told her story in a letter [see the October 2020 issue of *Traces*] and then she gave a witness online at an assembly of the Asian communities with Carrón last November. She talked about her father, who spent fifteen years bedridden in a nursing home, and about a group of people that regularly went to visit the residents there. “They were from a parish near the nursing home. I felt very grateful that they were coming to visit, even though I did not know them. Thanks to them, my father was not alone and forlorn in the dark times of his illness.” At the time, she thought to herself, “In the future, when I have the chance, I also want to volunteer.” Then she discovered the Movement and a new concept—charitable work. “I started to visit the elderly in a nursing home, just as others had visited my father.” It is a “school,” as she put it, where you learn to love and to be loved.

But what about now that she can no longer participate in the charitable work due to her illness? “She is happy,” confirmed Fr. Donato, while in the background, the bells of the nearby Buddhist monastery ring for the evening prayer at the end of the day. “Here, Christians are a minority. People have a strong religiosity, even though it is expressed in rituals and customs aiming to ful-

fill their personal wishes.” This fits with a culture and society in which the only thing that matters is one’s success and performance. “In work, academics, and relationships... you matter if you achieve, if you make it.”

However, this is not how life works. We are reminded of the words of Xiao Ping from her witness of her experience of going to treatment every day. “Around me there are many other people who are sick, young and old. Some of them who try to engage me in conversation ask me about my stroke and they show me some exercises to do. I must explain that I have cancer, that I did not have a stroke. They reply, ‘That means that you can get surgery and then heal.’ I find myself repeating often that there is nothing more that can be done...”

It is hard to have to explain, and because of this, Xiao Ping began to isolate herself. Still, she could not forget her father’s experience and that “when I used to go to charitable work I was good at keeping people company, especially the elderly.” One day, a woman who had always kept to herself approached Xiao Ping. “I was praying. I thought that she might want to say good-bye to me before leaving. Instead, she stopped in front of me and stared at me. I saw her use all of her strength to say three words. She said, ‘I love you.’ I was stunned and I did not know what to say. Automatically, I said ‘thank you, grand-

St. Francis Xavier parish
in the Taishan district in New Taipei.



mother' in dialect. I thought to myself that 'God spoke to me through this woman.'" Xiao Ping saw her again four days later. "This time, I immediately told her that I loved her too. She was overjoyed. Since then, she always greets me, cups my face in her hands, and says 'come on, we are in this together.'" The days of going to treatment became her "daily charitable work."

"For me, for us who consider her a friend," continued Fr. Donato, "we see the victory of Christ when we look at her. Not sparing us anything, this forces us to confront the meaning of life and death. You can't help but think about what makes her this way and about the hope that she has and that she brings." She does not try to act tough. Fr. Donato said, "She tells you about all her struggles and her fear and suffering. 'Why does God not take me now?' But this is not disappointing. In fact, it is comforting, because it demonstrates that what she is living does not come from her. Something else is the origin. She is a sign of something I also want to experience and I am not the only one to say that."

Fr. Donato looked back on the fruits of grace he has seen lately: "what God is creating among us." Among the group of university students that do School of Community in the parish, there are many who are not Catholic but are attracted by a proposal to live life differently.

Recently at the university, three students committed suicide in the course of one week. "This is not a surprise, given the high rate of suicide in this country." Psychology is used to answer this problem, "but this is not enough. No one tries to get to the bottom of it, to try to explain why these people do not have hope."

One young woman, who had distanced herself from her friends in the movement after her graduation, returned not long ago. "She told us that one day she was walking on a bridge with a cup of coffee in her hands. She wanted to jump, but then she realized that she would never taste the wonderful flavor of coffee ever again. This may seem insignificant, but who introduces us to this way of looking at reality? When she came back, she said, "Thanks to you I have understood why it is worth living and that I am loved."

No culture or ritual is enough. Only the heart, the place of our need to feel loved and wanted, can be moved in this way. When it happens, one can feel hopeful again. "The mother of one of our friends, who is elderly and comes from mainland China, and does not profess any religion, joined us on a short vacation in September. At the end of the vacation, she was touched and said, 'I have had a hard life. I took care of my husband who had cancer for thirty-one years while raising my daughter. Yet I never felt alone, as if someone were constantly sustaining me. I always thanked the 'God of the heavens,' just like the emperor, who they say prayed to this god in the temple. Now I know that it was Jesus who never abandoned me.'" This happens through Another who can be perceived and recognized, "to whom you can entrust the people you love, like Xiao Ping did recently one evening for a group of long-time friends." At the end of the evening, Fr. Donato said, "These five or six people saw that she had changed, so they wanted to meet 'those priests.' All of them came with Xiao Ping for dinner. We spent the evening together and she was happy. After dinner she said, 'My friends are your friends too.'" ■

Where *the fire* is lit

Massimo Recalcati and the leader of CL Julián Carrón shared an intense exchange of ideas on education, bringing together two worlds that at first glance might seem distant. Why is desire everything? What sets it a fire? What is the task of adults in sparking desire? We report their conversation by focusing on some key terms.



Davide Perillo

18

There are some crucial words for describing the period we are living in, and when they are spoken they place us at a fork in the road. They are often repeated, inserted into discourses but have no firm connection to reality; they usually ring empty. But it is incredible when you see them emerge from experience, when they express *something that is happening* in those who speak them. When this occurs, they become a road that it is possible for everyone to travel; they generate relationships, even between worlds that at first glance might seem distant from each other.

Take the gathering, “Desire is Rekindled in a Place,” organized by a group of Italian associations concerned with education. The topic was the situation of the emergency facing education, and the title hinted at some unusual ways of discussing it, far from the standard debates of those in the field. Though it took place on October 22nd,



The psychoanalyst Massimo Recalcati.
On the facing page, Julián Carrón,
president of the Fraternity of CL.

it is worth returning to it because of the face-to-face conversation between the two protagonists, in which unexpected assonances emerged, accents that suggested that these two people of different backgrounds shared similar ideas and sensibilities and might be capable of setting out on a beautiful stretch of road together.

One was Julián Carrón, the leader of Communion and Liberation, whose recently published book (*Educazione: Comunicazione di sé [Education: Communication of One's Self]*, San Paolo) is a contribution to the work on the Global Compact on Education launched by Pope Francis. The other, the psychoanalyst Massimo Recalcati, often writes for the Italian daily newspapers, and is the author of a number of books exploring the present-day state of our souls, with particular attention given to young people, the father-son relationship, and the drama of a society that seems to have lost the guideposts of a healthy educational itinerary, causing a bewilderment that has become all the more intense with the pandemic and the constant shifts between in-person and online lessons.

Ezio Delfino, the president of an association of school principals and moderator of the dialogue, noted that these conditions make the title of the gathering, taken from Fr. Giussani, all the more pressing: "There will be a need for places where the desire dwelling in each person's heart will be reawakened by seeing them." These conditions also prompt hard questions: Is school truly such a place? Does school perceive and reawaken desire?

The answer to the first question was contained in a brief video that showed a collage of teachers and principals talking about the "challenge of starting anew" in the midst of protocols and quarantines, welcoming students "following the regulations but not starting out from them," and discovering that when you look into the eyes of children, you can find a light that gives them a new impetus that is stronger than the many words spoken by adults. And in all this is the most burning issue: "Their great hunger, the need for meaning that they cry out to you," as one educator put it.

This is the first key word: *meaning*. It poses the great problem of our day—nihilism—the loss of an attraction to reality, of the meaning and enjoyment of life. Delfino started



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at this point, from that "theoretically asymptomatic but concretely present disease, as Carrón defined it," which manifests itself in the young "in unease and apathy" and in adults "in uncertainty and fear," both of which block the "I." How can we start anew?

Carrón was clear. "It seems to me that the situation already contains the point of departure for starting again." We will not emerge from all this by relying on rules because what is needed is our *responsibility*. In a word—the second crucial word in this dialogue—what is needed is our "I." "The challenge of Covid, in addition to bringing out the weakness of the subject, can become the stupendous provocation that the 'I' needs in order to reawaken." The impact with reality causes radical questions to emerge, "as in that student quoted in the video." For this reason, in the face of the lack of meaning, "young people need someone who communicates the meaning of and gusto for everyday life." Thus, "the only question is whether we're honest about these provocations that reality does not spare us, whether we follow them." Our very humanity "will depend on this, on the fact that our 'I' does not look aside, but truly engages with these questions."

Thus the importance of reality and, a statement emphasized by Recalcati: "the wager of education is always in relation to reality," not to an abstract ideal. "It is in relation to the roughness and harshness, the trial, of reality. In some

way, Fr. Giussani said this too.” This was his first surprising statement, but others were to follow. Recalcati returned to the video: “It struck me. We saw that school is not just an authoritarian and repressive device,” a “gray and anonymous” sphere, as it is so often perceived to be. In the testimonies of those teachers, he said, “we see school as an experience of light and welcome.” It is light, first of all, because “when something is illuminated, this is educational discourse; when a maestro speaks, things are brought out of the darkness.”

When this happens, you can begin to respond to nihilism, for which Recalcati proposed a simple and effective definition based on his experience as a doctor working with those who suffer from depression. “Nihilism is when life and meaning are dissociated,” and the problem is “how we can reassociate and unite them.”

We can no longer expect unity a priori ensured by God and His dictates, as in religious societies. This God-guarantor no longer exists. “He dissolved under the blows of the Enlightenment.” Rejoining life and meaning depends on us. How? Through a word that startled Recalcati’s listeners: “experience.” He asserted that the educational gesture must be “a secular way of bearing witness to the possibility of giving life meaning,” not of “saying a priori what it is,” but of “showing that, even where the darkness is the deepest, it is always possible to give life meaning.”

It was no coincidence that the professor drew a quotation from Pasolini contained in Carrón’s book. “If someone has educated you, it could not have been done except with his being, not with his speaking.” This is what educates: being, acts, existence, testimony, not words, and even less the other

weak link in a pedagogy that no longer has meaning: rules. “Rules are insufficient,” insisted Recalcati. His explanation referred to Giussani (recounting that “in these weeks I have dedicated myself to listening to his voice”): “One of his objectives was to emancipate educational discourse from a reliance on rules.” Rules have nothing to do with what he called “the law.” The law is not a rule, something external: “It’s in the heart. It’s what orients life.” For this reason, Recalcati said, “I agree with Carrón’s statement that ‘basically, the educational task is to set freedom into motion,’ not to conform life to preexisting values, but to set a life on a search for its value, its meaning.”

This in some way means reawakening desire, another key word in this exchange of ideas. Recalcati has written entire books on it, while Carrón often speaks of it in his continuous dialogue with young people and adults. The second round of questions was on this topic: “Why does the rekindling of desire need a place? What characteristics must this place have?”

Recalcati responded with two possible images of the educational itinerary. The first “is a ladder. There is potential in the life of children, and some make the argument that education is a linear progression upwards,” but this idea “is not convincing.” The second is completely different: a fire—“shedding light on life, bringing it out into the open, causing life to rise into life.” Desire is “what makes life more *alive*.” But one condition is necessary: not reducing desire. One cannot give in to what Recalcati, echoing Giussani, calls “two great deceptions”: seeing desire as “the rush to pursue what you do not have,” causing “breathless anxiety, cursing, and discontent: it is a nihilistic version,” or, conceiving of

desire

it as “transgression,” following a certain kind of moralism that permeates us. On the one side there is my need for fulfillment, and on the other side there is duty, which kills this need. “What if instead we conceived of desire as the true name of duty, conceiving of desire as the thing that allows life to reach its realization, that allows us to achieve goals and generate what is truly valuable,” in a word, the thing that makes life alive?

This is familiar terrain, and Carrón was quick to join in and add that in antiquity, desire was something to be moderated: an excess of desire was hubris. But Christianity itself, “when it failed to make present an adequate proposal, once again began to fear desire.” In the Christian sphere a certain attempt to “hem in desire with rules” arose from having lost “a proposal that was able to fulfill it.” Jesus’s proposal appealed precisely to the desire of women and men, to “this structural disproportion, as Fr. Giussani called it,” to their being made “in the image and likeness of God, that is, for a fulfilled life.” Jesus appealed to the thirst of the Samaritan woman at the well and to Zacchaeus’s hunger for fulfillment. He proposed “the hundredfold here below!—the opposite of the mortification of desire, of what we often think.”

The focal point is desire, a “capacity the kids have for identifying what can truly fulfill life. Thus the question is: is there something able to fulfill it?” For educators this translates into a challenge. “Do we have something to propose?” If desire is the engine of living, there is a constant need to turn on the ignition.

“And there is a constant need for a presence that turns it on,” so that the search for fulfillment can begin again.

At this point, the key word in the title, “place,” emerged powerfully for Carrón. “A place is needed, it’s true. School should be a place where you’re not afraid of desire, and where you can find adults in whom desire has not been extinguished.” If kids cannot see in educators “people in whom life is fulfilled, it is useless for us to talk about desire because they will not find confirmation of its fulfillment in the experience of adults.”

The challenge thus shifts to the role of adults. Delfino asked whether educating is a “communication of one’s self,” as in the title of Carrón’s book, as well as two other questions: If the educator in some way “is the incarnation of a working hypothesis” then what is the task of those who educate? What does it mean to *embody* a proposal?

Carrón stressed two more words that, to his mind, are inseparable. The first is *reality*. “What does a mother communicate to her child? Her way of being in front of reality.” There can be no cheating—“The way we adults live reality shows in our faces.” The second is *experience*. He returned to Giussani’s fundamental intuition: “Show a road that enables young people to see the pertinence of the proposal to the needs of living.” For this, the main road is experience, or in other words a verification “in a close comparison” of the proposal against “what I perceive as the need for meaning, truth, beauty, justice.” This is why “desire is fundamental: we compare everything against it.”

Recalcati picked up the idea of a working hypothesis and used four words and phrases “to describe the stance of the educator,” “biblical” and “Christian” words, he observed, but it was not strange to hear them used by a secular person because they describe experiences. The first is “*here I am*.” “In the Bible it had formidable power. Just think of Abraham.” Now it implies the first fundamental condition of education: the *presence* of an adult who doesn’t allow the life of a young person to “fall into solitude.”

Then, another verb, with an apparently opposite meaning: “go,” in the sense of opening the family fence, letting the young person go. “There’s a certain contrast between these two words, but it becomes pathological only if we have the one without the other,” if we hold the young person too close or if on the contrary, we are not present. “The effectiveness of the educational discourse lies in keeping together these two movements,” and in continually stressing the freedom of young people without letting their expectations prevail. He identified two other fundamental words. The first, previously mentioned, is “testimony.” Carrón talks about it as

the ‘method of God,’” observed the professor. For him, it lies first of all in the testimony of love, a preference for the young person that is always precise and unique. “As Lacan says, love is never for our life. It is for our name.” It does not exist in the abstract, but is something incarnate and singular. But “testimony” also refers to “testifying to your own desire. This is the only condition for transmitting it.” Recalcati’s last key word was also familiar to Carrón: “faith.” “A good parent must believe in the child’s desire. Having faith in that desire is what sustains and strengthens it.” This was not the last point of contact between the two men. There



was still a question, and it concerned school. “So then, for school to become a place that generates people, what is the role of culture and innovation?”

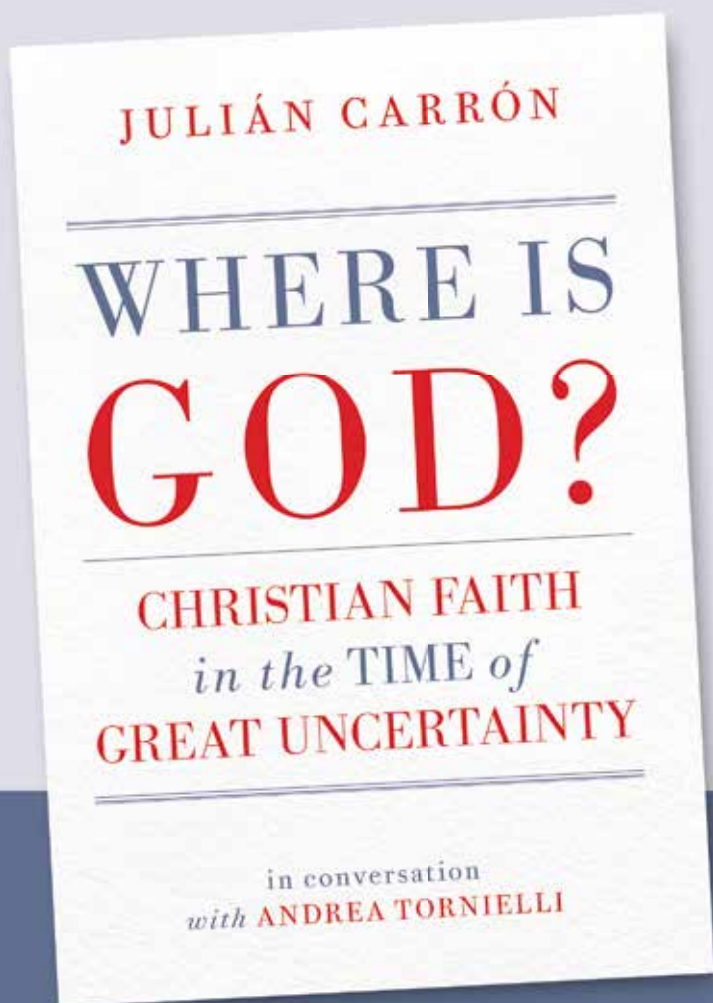
Recalcati returned to the beginning, to the video. “School is first of all this: a place where you light fires,” not because certain things are said, but because *they happen*. “The eroticization of the desire to know” can result from

teachers “making their students fall in love with their subject.” This is what sets desire into motion.

Carrón picked up on this idea and developed it. For education to be a “communication of one’s self,” then it must offer a working hypothesis. “After all, this is what every mother does from the beginning.” With her presence, she offers her children a tradition, “a set of answers to the fundamental questions of living that we transmit from generation to generation.” It should be “offered to the person for her or his own verification.”

“*Verification*” was the next to the last crucial word in the dialogue, and the last—“*freedom*”—involves its logical development. Every educational itinerary is necessarily rooted in the fact that young people “decide in their own unique way which of the things that are transmitted are useful to them.” In this, all of the risks of freedom are in play.

Thus, a school carries out its task if it is capable of offering a proposal “that can truly take root in the heart of young people because it offers something that illuminates life and kindles desire.” And in this, observed the leader of CL, “we all are on the line because if we do not succeed in this, if society fails to transmit the reasons for its own existence, there will be big trouble.” In a society like ours, “an educational compact is fundamental for shared living; without it, we can no longer walk together.” He concluded by saying that if the compact succeeds “we will see it along the road,” a road we can travel together, finding companions we did not expect to find. ■



WHERE IS GOD?

CHRISTIAN FAITH
in the TIME of
GREAT UNCERTAINTY

Julián Carrón
in conversation with
Andrea Torielli

Should we battle a plural and relativistic society by raising barriers and walls, or should we accept the opportunity to announce the Gospel in a new way? This is the challenge Christians are facing today.

In an extended interview with Vatican expert Andrea Torielli, Julián Carrón examines the historical moment we are living through in order to revive the essential core of Christian faith. Starting from the realization that the world is experiencing an evolution in which the difficulty of finding shared values and natural morality makes sincere dialogue between believers and non-believers challenging, Carrón reflects on the possibility of communicating the essence of the Christian faith in a form that can inspire interest in modern times.

Addressing the central questions concerning the announcement of Christian faith in today's less regimented society, *Where Is God?* discovers and rediscovers the contents of Christianity and asks how they can be witnessed again in a society that is not yet post-Christian, but potentially headed in that direction.

Julián Carrón is President of the Fraternity of the lay Movement of Communion and Liberation and Professor of Theology at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan.

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