


TRACES

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Communion and Liberation  
International Magazine

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02



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**What is man  
that you care  
for him?**

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## TRACES

Communion and Liberation International Magazine  
Vol. 24

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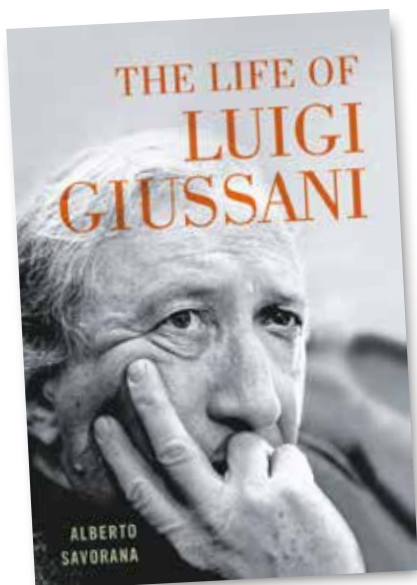
# n° 02

## April 2022



A father says goodbye to his daughter fleeing from war at the train station in Kyiv.

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*God gave us two books*



# THE LIFE OF LUIGI GIUSSANI

by Alberto Savorana. Translated by Chris Bacich and Mariangela Sullivan

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

1,416 pages | December 2017

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## Unassailable

**T**he conflict in Ukraine has awakened a distress that has all the weight of history and of the future, with its rupture of the global order and of the tragic illusion that it can be recreated at the expense of the absolute concreteness of the person. What is happening reminds all of us to think about our destiny. Together with the pain and fear, we see the explosion of that which defines humanity more than DNA ever could: the irrepressible need for justice, for truth, and for meaning in this life. These are unquenchable desires that power cannot crush. This truth is in the faces of all the wounded and the refugees, and it was in the faces of Tetjana and her children, who were killed as they tried to flee, beside them their suitcases that could not fit a full life inside them. It is in the gloomy lines of tanks in the snow, the raids gutting entire buildings, the sound of sirens echoing even in the ears of those now far away, and in the frost and the hunger in the bunkers. Then there is the hatred that devours relationships, the adolescent faces of the soldiers, the young father who ran in vain to the hospital with little Kirill in his arms, the doctors operating by the light of cell phones, the darkness, the silence, and all those good-byes said without words on railway platforms.

**“What is man that you are mindful of him, mere mortals that you care for them?”** Man, who seems to be of negligible significance, who can be torn out of the world. And yet, he belongs to a different order, as Giussani says in *To Give One's Life for the Work of Another*, so much so that all of reality receives its meaning from “a point beyond our grasp, yet in which everything is mirrored: the I.” This beacon is a light by which we judge both our personal and shared history. It is the factor that cannot be manipulated. And it is a beacon because, if it is fully self-aware, it is free even in the face of oppression. This is what we seek in the witnesses set forth this issue, in the people who are facing the present head-on, including in their attempts at dialogue and in welcoming strangers, allowing us to reach the same conclusion that the writer Vasilij Grossman was able to reach: no violence can eliminate the unassailable heart of each person because this heart is our relationship with God. Giving this mystery room to breathe introduces a change even in the darkest moments of humanity. Recognizing the absolute impossibility of doing justice and the total need for something else that frees us reveals the “anthropocentric presumption,” as Giussani calls it, “according to which man is capable of saving himself,” according to which we claim we can change the world even after excising the one thing capable of changing life: the presence of God, who makes Himself visible through men and women who truly love with a different logic, which comes purely as the result of having an encounter with Christ. Christ, a man who, living in the immensity of the Roman Empire, silently conquered death and did not distance himself in his relationship with the Father, not even on the cross. “Christ’s resurrection is not an event of the past,” as the pope’s words in the CL Easter Poster put it; instead, “it contains a vital power which has penetrated the world.”

# Letters

## Massimo, Sr. Maria, Arianna, Enrico, Guglielmo

edited by  
**Paola Bergamini**  
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### Another World Within the World

I serve in the Air Force and would like to join the Fraternity. Through my life partner, in the past two years I have met people (who have become my friends) who were following the School of Community. Among these people was a priest who often referred to Fr. Giussani in his homilies. In response to an invitation, somewhere between curiosity and amazement, I participated in a meeting online. Listening to them, I became aware that something attracted me, made me feel at home, a precise “place” that made me truer. Shortly after that, I bought the book *Generating Traces in the History of the World* and began to read it; I was blown away. From that day forward, I began attending the School of Community, where people opened for me another world within the world. The School of Community has helped me take stock of my life: where I was and who I was; where I am and who I am. Thanks to the help from this companionship, I have come to an awareness, a new understanding, which does not depend on me but on an event that I can no longer ignore. It is a living reality.

**Massimo**, Cicciano (Italy)

### Inside the Treasure Chest

Dear Friends of CL, I am a nun who, while living with parents of students who went to the school where I taught, had the good fortune of meeting the charism of Fr. Giussani and of witnessing how you live it in your lives. For going on nine years now, I have been following you through *Tracce* and in particular through the books published by Fr. Julián Carrón. For me, meeting you has been a guide to

rediscovering my faith, which I never wanted to be just a religiosity made up of pious practices, separate from life. When you arrived in my path, you captured my desire to experience Christ as a living person, working for me now in the church. It was like rediscovering the profound meaning of my life: to work with a presence. Little by little, this communion with the mystery is becoming the measuring stick for my lived experience. The texts that come to me from the Movement are like a treasure chest; I savor them moment by moment and I enjoy the flavor that comes to me. I find full correspondence between what is written (especially by Fr. Carrón, a man inspired by the Holy Spirit to give flesh to Fr. Giussani’s words) and the profound demands of my spirit. It must have been like this for Jesus’s disciples—finally, Someone spoke in a way that bumped into their profound desire for the infinite. We are all poor men and women, but we notice when someone “speaks with authority.” I am thankful for your being here, for my having been able to meet you. Someone told me that I’m more CL than those who are “in” CL. What I am, God only knows. But one thing is certain: I have rediscovered Him whom I had been following without knowing Him fully, without being happy for having met Him, without having perceived Him as the presence who is interested in my life.

**Sr. Maria**, Trent (Italy)

### The To-Do List

A few days ago, I started talking with a classmate whom I didn’t know very well. He told me about his struggles during the period of COVID and even now. He said, “I couldn’t get out of bed, I wasn’t able to follow the lessons online, and at the end of the day, I went to bed unhappy. This still happens to me: I struggle a lot to come to school because I don’t see the point, and when I do come to school, I still go home unhappy.” A friend who was there with us said, “Look, what helps me a lot is to write down a list of the things to do during the day.” So I answered that

this wasn't enough; you can write a to-do list and check everything off, but at the end of the day, things still seem empty, meaningless. Then I asked my classmate, "Do you have any friends who can help you to start over again?" He answered that he had friends to go out with, to have a smoke and to joke around, but after that, once he got back home, he still wasn't happy. As I was asking the question, I found myself looking at my own life, and I realized that the first faces that came to mind were my friends from GS. And so I invited my classmate to the "ray" [a periodic meeting of GS students]. The fact that I did this really amazed me and accompanied me for days afterward. I am so very grateful for having someone who takes my questions seriously and accompanies me through the beautiful and tiring things that happen in my life. Thanks to dialogues like this, I am made ever more aware.

**Arianna**, Brugherio (Italy)

### At the Office

All of the employees at work received an email urging them to support the Ukrainians, along with a list of possible ways to contribute. One of my colleagues immediately responded to everyone that he would surely do so. A minute later he called my cellphone saying, "Enrico, this isn't enough for me. I must do something more. What are you doing?" I was amazed by this question. We thus began a ten-minute conversation in which he explained that the woman who cleaned his house is Ukrainian and that her daughters are still there. He told me he can't sleep at night because he is tormented by his realization that he has always lived life superficially. He began to cry. I tried to say something, but I understood that I was in front of a wound I could not heal. At a certain point, he asked me if I was going to contribute and to whom, because "you are different, and I know that where you look is also something good for me." The next day he told me he had donated to AVSI and wanted to spend more time with me. I understood that there was much more... It was as if he were saying to me, "I want to be with you, are you with me?" Maybe we should be more aware that in whatever place we live, we are what we bring, and not what we are able to do.

**Enrico**, Italy

### A Trip to the Borders of Hope

A young woman who studies at my university asked me to help with an initiative to bring some people fleeing the

city of Kharkiv to Italy. She called on Sunday morning, with our departure scheduled for 3:00 that afternoon. I didn't know anyone else in the group, but from the very start, this seemed to me an opportunity not to be missed, so I decided to go. The trip turned out to be longer than expected, and after two days traveling by car through Slovenia, Hungary, and Slovakia, we arrived at the Ukrainian border. From our position, we could only see a jumbled mess of waiting cars. It was an endless hemorrhage, an unusual Via Crucis. The analyses of the situation that I had made in the preceding days were able, at least in part, to numb a pain that exploded in me in front of those tired faces. Just over the border, some volunteers had set up a table to provide initial support to those who had arrived. Among them were two young Slovaks, Stefania and Jan. They had asked for time off from work, and every day they would spend numerous hours driving to offer their help. They start working early each morning: he helps people with their baggage as they arrive, she offers food and takes care of everyone as best as she can. Stefania and Jan were a beacon of light: in their faces, you could see the explosion of life of those who find their joy in putting themselves at the service of another, whoever that might be. They are the real news, the only bulwark against the destructive logic of power. What they were doing, which seemed so apparently simple, was full of a profound understanding of the value of the human. These unknown volunteers represent a political manifesto that everyone can get behind at any time. Their gestures aspire to maximum success, not through subjugation, but through encounter. They do not profess a common good actually driven by interests that sooner or later must be resolved through conflict. Rather, they recall the organic nature of society that lives as one body, in which the gain of each member increases the gain of all. After a few hours of waiting, we were able to meet up again with our friends and to return home. I came home less anxious about finding the answers I am looking for in newspapers or daily bulletins. The sharpest analysis or the most complete assessment will not crush this war, nor will they offer a horizon of meaning in this grave moment for the history of the world. What will do this is the multiplication of people who, with their lives, document the positivity of each person's existence: this is a game in which everyone is a protagonist. Thank you, Stefania, thank you, Jan, and thanks to the whole army of good who in these days are silently doing all they can so that the world might not lose its human face. Your magnanimity communicates true power. Thank you: you are the reason for, and therefore the power behind, our hope.

**Guglielmo**, Milan (Italy)

# Journey into the whirlwind

Within the conflict, where there is no refuge from pain. Facts, memory, encounters, and the need for forgiveness that enables man to recover “the right to call himself a human being.”



Giovanna Parravicini

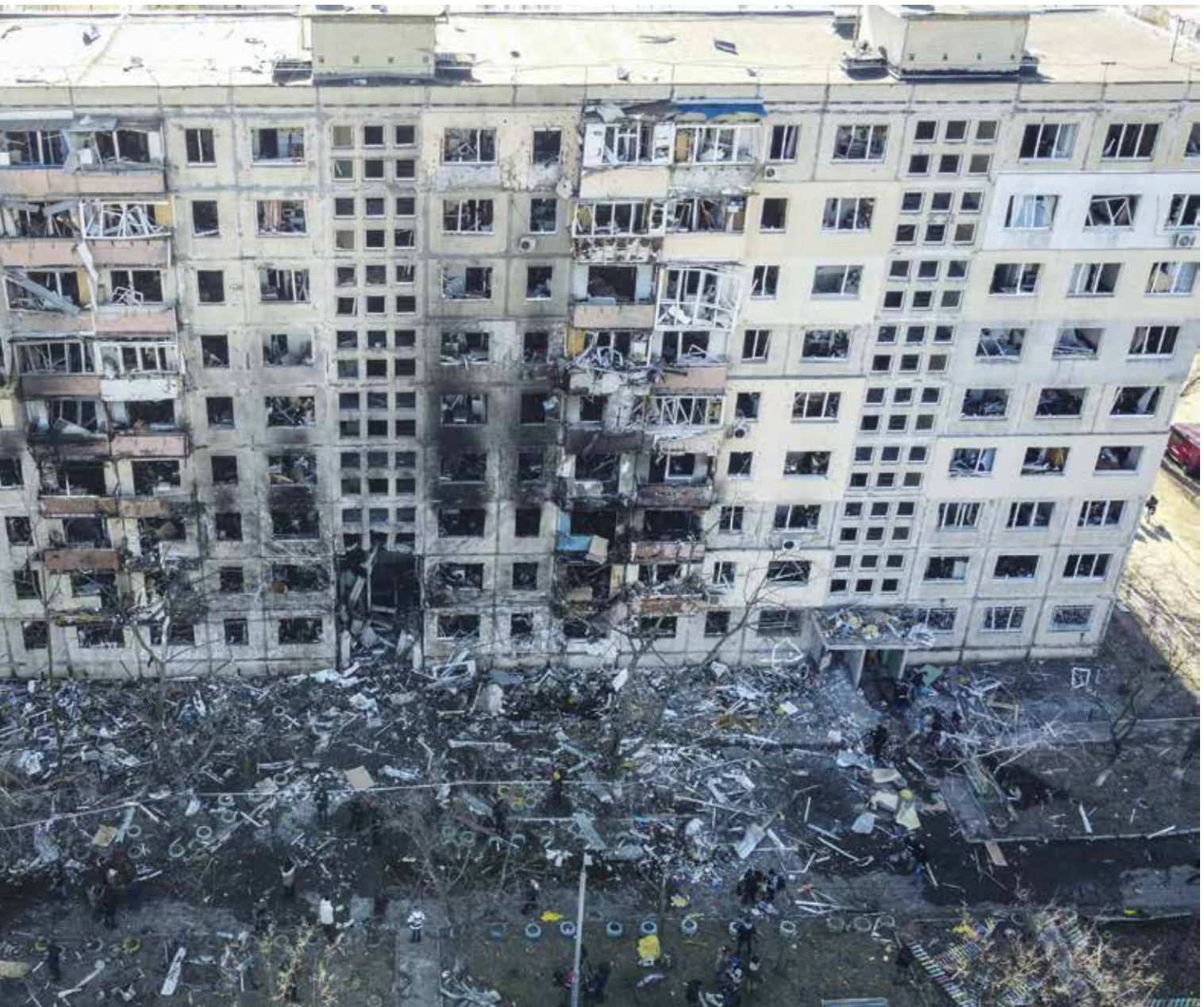
“**C**hrist did not choose: Christ died because the just are persecuted and because sinners go to perdition,” said Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh in August 1968 to the faithful, who watched, stunned, during the invasion of Czechoslovakia as Russian tanks entered Prague to suffocate the “spring” that had aroused so many hopes, even inside the USSR.

Once again, it seems that violence and terror are triumphing in history. Today as well, we are bewildered, confused, and anguished in front of a conflict of enormous proportions, concerning which we often seek refuge in false justifications and assurances, entrusting our hopes to geopolitical analyses, or we curse and seek revenge as what seems to be the only possible response when, in the words of Metropolitan Anthony in 1968, “the chalice of ire, the chalice of pain, the chalice of suffering fills to the brim and overflows.”

Instead, Anthony pointed to another way, one he did not hesitate to describe as “tremendous and demanding”—that of the mystery of the cross of Christ, holding up to the world “He who wanted to be united with both those who are right and those who are guilty, Who

embraced everyone with one love, the love of the sufferings endured on the cross.” He continued: “And I invite all of you who see what is happening in the world to consider once again what our position as Christians must be, where our place is in this laceration of the flesh, from which blood, tears, and horror flow, and to understand that our place is on the cross, and not simply at the foot of the cross.”





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I do not believe I have ever plumbed the profundity of certain of Fr. Giusani's thoughts on mercy so deeply as in this moment. We would prefer to eliminate mercy from our human vocabulary, while in reality it marks the supreme judgment on history and the authentic human stature, attainable only when one has first experienced being the object of divine mercy. I have seen its truth and surprising concreteness, first of all in the figure of Pope Francis, in his heartfelt, vehement imploring, in his gestures eschewing labels and protocols, as in his visit to the Russian Federation delegation to the Holy See, and above all in the March 16<sup>th</sup> conversation with the Russian Orthodox patriarch Kirill, who a few days earlier had scandalized world public opinion with his words supporting the "special military operation" of the Russian troops, presented as a sort of crusade against the moral

Kyiv, March 14, 2022.

Irpin, West Kyiv, March 7, 2022.

corruption of the West. It would have seemed impossible for the two leaders to dialogue given the positions they had taken, but instead it happened, and it was a real encounter. Without minimizing the needs of truth and justice, Francis testified that it is always possible, and in fact necessary, to reopen a dialogue that restores the interlocutor's original dignity, trusting him again according to a justice that is not judgment, but opens out onto the mystery of mercy.

**Today we realize that only this experience** of forgiveness and of welcoming the other can open a glimmer of hope, can trace a road of reconciliation in the chasm of separation and hatred that has opened between the two peoples whose centuries-long destinies are so closely interwoven, offering a glimmer of hope even in the face of the frightening spectacle of the people packing the stadium in Moscow on March 18<sup>th</sup>, celebrating the war with Putin. On that day, apparently planned in advance, many Russian friends posted on Facebook Péguy's words on hope: "What surprises me, says God, is hope. And I can't get over it. This little hope who seems like nothing at all. This little girl hope. Immortal. And yet it's this little girl who will endure worlds... She alone will guide the Virtues and the Worlds. One flame will pierce the eternal shadows." One understands well that the most realistic gesture was the consecration of Russia and Ukraine to the Virgin, which the pope celebrated on March 25<sup>th</sup> because, as Archbishop Paolo Pezzi, Catholic archbishop of Moscow, stressed, this gesture "means expressing that faith, hope, and love are the normal, real conditions for true shared living among peoples. It means expressing that mercy and forgiveness are a gift of God."

Also in the Russian Orthodox world, courageous voices were raised urging peace and fraternity, first among them on the very day of the initial attack, that of Metropolitan Onuphry, primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (in the jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Moscow). "The Ukrainian and Russian peoples came out of the Dnieper baptismal font, and the war between these peoples is a repetition of the sin of Cain, who killed his own brother out of envy. Such a war has no justification either from God or from people." In Russia some priests promoted an appeal that to date has collected 286 signatures. And we know very well how much it costs today to

openly give one's first and last name, given the approximately 15,000 arrests in response to anti-war protests and demonstrations.

The requests for forgiveness that we see multiplying on social media in Russia, transformed into a new *samizdat*, eschewing ideology and propaganda, transmit a fundamental message: the Russian people cannot be identified with its regime. We are all prisoners of the same violence. Forgive us if we are unable to stop it and help us to live a more human life. For example, the Orthodox priest Sergej Kruglov writes, "Every situation of catastrophe transmits a new impulse to the Church, reminds her that what the incarnate Son of God, crucified and risen, has revealed and done is a current, living truth, the only one that can lead Christians to act in this life... that war begins in the terrain of pride in the human heart, that the first step to eliminate war is a step of repentance, personal metanoia and conversion to Christ, and maturation in one's own Christianity."

The conflict coincided with the beginning of Lent in the Russian Orthodox world, and with the "Sunday of Forgiveness" that precedes it. Svetlana Panič, a philologist at the Solzhenitsyn Institute, writes, "In past years it was easy to list one's own small, or not so small, misdeeds, and begin the Lenten journey with the sensation of having done one's duty... But I have something for which I must ask forgiveness. In brief, for having done too little in the 'years of well-being' to prevent today's madness from arriving.... For not knowing how to live compassion truly and share at least the crumbs of hope that arrive like an unexpected gift."

**This mea culpa echoed many times** in the pages of the Soviet era *samizdat*, and paradoxically, in the memoirs of the regime's victims. As Eugenia Ginzburg wrote in her memoirs: "I saw for myself how from the depths of moral savagery there suddenly arose the cry 'mea maxima culpa,' and how with this cry the patient recovered the right to call himself a human being. 'Mea culpa' knocks at everyone's heart and the only question is when a person will hear these words resounding deep within him. ...When you can't sleep, the knowledge that you did not directly take part in the murders and betrayals is no consolation. After all, the assassin is not only he who struck the blow, but whoever supported





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evil, no matter how: by thoughtless repetition of dangerous political theories, by silently raising his right hand, by faint-heartedly writing half-truths. Mea culpa....”

**Ginzburg wrote these words** after a long “journey into the whirlwind” (the title of her memoirs), not only in the Stalin-era prisons, but also in her own conscience. Her request for forgiveness began with her encounter with Anton Walter, a Catholic doctor she met in prison and who later became her husband, a man who amazed her from the start because he had experienced all the horrors of the prison, done the hardest work in the mines, and lost his sight in one eye, and yet had maintained an indomitable gladness. He was animated by an “active, practical goodness that

moves every word, every action,” and that often “proves itself stronger than the death that reigns within these walls. It will overcome the hunger, consumption, and lack of medicine.”

The courage to forgive arises from moved emotion in response to a love of which you are made a sign, in front of a virginity of the heart that opens it beyond what it would humanly be capable of. In these weeks I have many times seen Ukrainian women refugees crying, moved deeply by the solidarity and affection surrounding them, by the closeness experienced with perfect strangers. The perception that you are the object of an overflowing love that mysteriously comes to you even in the precariousness of the human instruments who convey it, even in the context of a tragedy like today’s,

makes you glimpse the merciful gaze of God and makes you, in turn, look upon others in this way.

A professor of medieval studies at one of the most prestigious Russian universities wrote me: “About thirty years ago I decided that my modest contribution would be to bring Russia back into Europe. ...Now no trace remains of my sand castle. I fear greatly for my university, but even its fate is a trifle compared to the nightmare we are witnessing in Ukraine, the cities bombed and millions of lives devastated. ...The sense of powerlessness tempts you to think there is no way out... No, instead, it is necessary to teach and do what must be done.”

In a world that seems increasingly precarious, one becomes aware of a task: to live up to one’s own humanity, making this the true work in one’s work. ■

## Letter from Moscow

# “Someone needs to come from outside”

**A**n impression of cosmic emptiness, as if reality no longer existed. I don't know how to describe the thoughts that assailed me the morning of February 24<sup>th</sup> when I learned that the Russian army had entered Ukraine.

What my Ukrainian friends had been shouting about for weeks, which for me was simply inconceivable from Russia where I live, had happened.

The country I have learned to love in these last thirty years of my life (“Love Russia, notwithstanding everything,” is the testimony that Fr. Romano Scalfi left us) had decided to take justice into its own hands with tanks, attacking its fellow Slavs.

I am overwhelmed by a sense of total powerlessness. And so how can I live?

Our friends of the community of Kazakhstan were of great help to me when in early January, in response to the revolts and violence in Almaty, they had testified that analysis of the situation leaves a sour taste in your mouth and does not allow you to begin building, to be an original presence in the world. This was an initial certainty. But it was not yet the answer to my question: How do I live now?

I remembered that this was not the first dramatic moment between our two peoples, nor the first instance of incomprehension for our communities. In 2014, after the Maidan Square protests, the annexation of Crimea by Russia, and the revolts in Donbass, the first gathering of all the CL communities in our region (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Lithuania) began with a widespread feeling of embarrassment. There were 120 of us in the same hotel, and we hardly looked at each other. A judgment was lacking, and we all thought that the judgment should be a condemnation of the

wrong. During the first assembly in the morning, nobody dared to touch the topic, but in the afternoon assembly a Russian friend lit the fuse right away. “How can we help each other so that this challenge we have been given to live can be a road that supports me within our history?”

The itinerary that Fr. Julián Carrón had us follow during that assembly enabled me to breathe again. He challenged us right away: “We can't think of peace as just coming to an agreement,” and continued: “We have to recognize our inability to make justice with our own hands. Someone has to come from outside. It is through *something other*, something that comes from outside, that people become themselves.” This awareness of powerlessness that, as Fr. Giussani says, “accompanies every serious experience of humanity,” is no longer a condemnation, but becomes “the resource for seeking Him, for imploring Him.” We began to do this right away, from the first day of the invasion, praying together in the evening.

The drama of the circumstances remains, but life takes a direction. It becomes supplication to the face you have encountered, and generation of community. A friend wrote me a few days ago, summarizing in some way my journey: “It is a great pain that in these hours has transformed into true and suffocating anguish at seeing a hint of extraneousness, if not hatred, deepen in old friends, caused by true reasons or perhaps suppositions by one side or the other. Burning wounds are opened, and it cannot be thought that they will be healed through someone's effort. What a gigantic responsibility our friendship has in helping us to be companions and in supporting the hope of people.”

**Signed letter**



# Staying human

■  
Elena, Maxim, and some girls from Emmaus in line at the border.

The exodus from Kharkiv and Irka's words:  
"What I feared most during the first days of the war is that you would say to me, 'Therefore, God does not exist.'" A conversation with Elena Mazzola and the young members of the NGO called Emmaus.



Luca Fiore

“**F**ather Aleksandr is the young pastor of a Christian Orthodox church in Cherson, the first city in Ukraine overtaken by the Russians. He is a friend of mine. In the last few weeks, we have been calling each other almost daily. Every morning he speaks live on Facebook about what he is going through, but when we talk in the evenings, he shares with me the pain and fear that he feels.” We met with Elena Mazzola, a *Memor Domini* who is also the president of Emmaus in Kharkiv, in Val Seriana, a valley near Bergamo that was one of the places hardest hit by the pandemic in 2020. She is taking shelter here as a refugee, together with coworkers and the orphans with special needs with whom she has worked for the past five years. They arrived in Italy after an odyssey that lasted over 50 hours. They reached the border with Slovakia, together with Maxim, Aleksandr, and Georgij, three adult men. However, these three were not allowed to cross the border. Aleksandr is married to Anastasia, the director of Emmaus, who is still breastfeeding her little son Matvei, who is just three months old. Georgij just turned 18 recently and according to the martial law in place, is of age to fight at the front.

“The other night, Father Aleksandr said, “Elena, I do a lot of things to try to help, but in my heart, I find it difficult to pray. What kind of a priest am I? I spent the entire morning going all over the city to buy packs of toilet paper and pads... When what is actually missing here is bread.” I replied, “Father, it is a question of dignity. We are fighting a war, but we are not beasts. Tomorrow, I will send you money so you can buy soap and body wash, the expensive brands!” He was quiet for a moment and then he exclaimed: “The lipstick of Father Giussani!” How strange to hear an Orthodox priest in present-day Ukraine recall the famous anecdote told by the founder of CL. When some teens were complaining that a poor woman spent the money given to her to buy lipstick, Giussani told them that they had not understood what sharing was, that they did not accept the real need of another person. At that moment, making herself look good may have been her real need, not the accomplishment of their moralistic plan.

The experience of being in the Movement gave rise to

Emmaus, which began as charitable work in an orphanage and over time developed into a nonprofit organization that provides a home for orphans and people with special needs, whose only option for their future in this post-Soviet nation after turning 18 would be to live in institutions. Elena, who, prior to arriving in Ukraine, worked at the Academy of Science in Moscow with Tatjana Kasatkina, is certain that her vocation to virginity is tied to these kids. “I realized this when Irka decided to tell me her story for the first time. She said that when the two nurses saw her deformed body immediately after her birth, they made an agreement with the doctor to declare her dead, to hide her from her mother. That is why she now has her own death certificate. Years later she was able to find her mother, but shortly afterward the mother fell ill and passed away, and they forgot to let Irka know. After hearing all of this, I said, ‘Irka, has no one ever told you that you have always been wanted and loved and that you are a gift?’ From her reaction, I could tell that she had never heard anyone say something like that to her. It was then that I understood that we have something that others do not. ‘I am You who makes me.’ We have a level of self-awareness, the certainty that we are wanted and loved, that allows us to see this also reflected in others.”

**Even that is not something that we** “know from birth.” Elena had to experience solitude in order to discover this for herself. A few years after the *Memores* house opened in Kharkiv, she was living there by herself. “I felt miserable. I would ask myself what I was still doing there. I had to understand what was keeping me going. Was it a perfect community or an orderly house? Around that time, I heard Carrón say, ‘We are in the Father’s arms. We verify this. What else would we need to live if this is the truth about our lives?’ I felt this even when institutions were in a precarious state or absent, even in the middle of the pandemic.”

However, Irka and the other girls have such a deeply rooted belief that everyone will betray them and are convinced that nothing lasts forever. Each of them is suffering unimaginable pain. “They have already lived through another kind of war. They have already experienced

great violence firsthand,” continued Elena. For instance, when Emmaus began in January to look for a safe place for Irka and her friends, Irka said, “I know that you will go back to Italy and leave us here.” But that did not happen. Elena and her colleagues did everything in their power to protect these Ukrainian citizens, who are the most vulnerable among the defenseless. When Putin’s troops began to move into Ukraine (and Kharkiv was one of the first objectives), most of the young people involved at Emmaus were no longer in the city. Some had already made it to Italy and the rest were with Elena in Lviv.

A few days after they had left Ukraine, Irka said to Elena, “What I feared most during the first days of the war is that you would say to me, ‘Therefore, God does not exist.’” “At that moment,” said Elena, “I understood she had come to a certainty about being loved that did not come from me. In the midst of war, she was scared that we would lose our faith.”

Elena is often reminded that during the period of utter uncertainty before the war began it was the loving gaze born from faith that allowed her and her friends and collaborators in Emmaus to take initiative in a timely way to bring the kids to safety. “Prudence and realism were our guiding stars. These are what helps someone interpret the factors that make up reality in a more intuitive way. Even when the Russian invasion seemed to us the worst-case scenario or unlikely to happen.”

Lately, Elena has been receiving many messages from people she knows in Ukraine asking for help. One of the first was her cleaning lady, Anastasia, who has now joined her in Italy. In her free time when she is not feeding her baby, she is constantly on the computer organizing buses to get people to the border.

**Elena also receives** phone calls and messages from those who want to host refugees. “In Italy people still have not fully grasped the gravity of the situation and the trauma experienced by the people of Ukraine, so I am blown away by people’s willingness to help in a truly Christian form of hospitality. However, sometimes we risk having an abstract way of looking at relationships; meanwhile, the people that are arriving are deeply traumatized, even though it may not appear that way on the surface. We need to pay attention to the real concrete individual in front of us, to listen and look at them. As the pope would say, we need to step outside of ourselves and not be afraid to feel their pain and cry with them. For me, it is worth it.” Your reward is “to love selflessly, the only thing that fulfills us. We must learn to love as Christ does. It makes you understand better; it makes you more intuitive and more human.” More human in what way? “For me, during these days, it has been important not to pretend that everything is fine. I have seen beautiful things with my own eyes. The people who have welcomed us and who stay with us are a miracle

in the most concrete sense of the word. The three young women who just left the orphanage last October and are now here with us had never before set foot outside of the orphanage; they saw Kharkiv for the first time with us... They knew nothing about the outside world. And I see them being loved, the fact that they are a gift to us and to the world, and I ask myself, Why them? They are truly preferred by God. But it is impossible for me to conceal that I am not well, for the violence perpetrated against us is unbearable. We were forced to escape without taking anything with us. Our homes were destroyed. Many of our friends and people we know are living in fear and are being bombed. Maxim, a friend of mine, whose parents and son are in Mariupol, went 10 days without knowing whether or not they were still alive. Rebellion and rage are churning inside of me. At the same time, this is also an opportunity to grow closer to Christ, the one who died on the cross for me. Through this pain, I want to learn to love as He does, to bear all this pain as He does, because this introduces something new into the world. Something both concrete and also in opposition to the power of war. I understand now that virginity is not ‘to love and to be selfless’ but comes from accepting the drama and solitude that I experience and that is experienced by those around me and by recognizing over and over again the One who responds to this drama. And I see that this widens my horizon.” ■



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## Poland

# *“Our lives belong to each other”*

They arrive at all hours, day and night, and someone is there waiting for them. What do those who welcome people fleeing war see? The voices of the Polish CL community, immersed, like the whole country, in the river of refugees.



Anna Leonardi



One of the many signs offering assistance and hospitality held by people waiting at European train stations for women and children fleeing war.

**K**rakow's central station has become an enormous human river. The trains arriving from Ukraine unload women, children, and old people on the platform at every hour of the day and night. Since the beginning of the conflict, over two million refugees have crossed the Polish border and moved on to the big cities of Warsaw, Lublin, Czestochowa, Wroclaw, and others. The Polish government passed in record time a special law to facilitate their integration. Not only does it provide ten euros a day to each family who hosts them, but it also simplifies the procedures for school enrollment for minors, rent contracts, and hiring, while ensuring cost-free movement throughout the nation. This law sought to support the extraordinary actions of the many Polish people who right from the beginning opened their homes and offered meals, car transportation, and jobs to the refugees.

Over a hundred thousand volunteers have gone to the borders or train stations to help Ukrainian families find lodging or continue their journeys. They can be recognized as they move among the train platforms and tents by their yellow vests with the word "help" in Cyrillic written on them. They are common people, of all ages and with no special skills, but with a desire to throw themselves into this uninterrupted flow of lives arriving from Ukraine.

Among them is Anna, a 58-year-old woman, who by profession is an icon painter. The first time she went to the Krakow station was to accompany her 20-year-old daughter, Maria. "OK, I'll come with you for two hours," she had said one evening, only to remain there the whole night. It was the first of many. "You can't help but return the next day. The need is too great," Anna recounts. At night everything is more complicated, both logistically and emotionally: it is difficult to find car rides or lodging, and the people's souls experience dark moments.

One night Anna welcomed an elderly woman who was all alone. She accompanied her to a table in the cafeteria while she waited for someone from the Facebook page activated to manage requests to find a bed for her. Anna held her hand and reassured her, trying to use words common to Polish and Ukrainian. "Then, just before they came to bring her to a hotel, she said to me, 'Anna, don't leave me, you are the only friend I have in this foreign land.' In those few minutes a total trust was born." This happened to a Ukrainian woman who asked help buying a ticket for Paris. Unable to make heads or tails of the railway website, she handed Anna her credit card. "You do it," she said. "And then she discovered that, as happens to many, her bank accounts were empty because of the devaluation of the Ukrainian currency. The volunteers, when possible, pay for the tickets to other countries," Anna explains.

**The foreign TV services** are very interested in recounting what is happening among the Polish volunteers and Ukrainian refugees, in part because the history of these two peoples has been marked by clashes that still burn in the memory of the older people. Anna's family comes from the area of Lviv, which until 80 years ago was Polish territory. Her father, at that time a child, fled in the nick of time from the slaughter wrought by the Ukrainians. A journalist asked her, "Why are you helping these people?" and she replied, "Because I don't want anybody else in the world to suffer what my father suffered."

Today Krakow is full. Everything that could be converted into shelter for refugees has been converted: malls, gyms, parishes, and old hospitals are full to overflowing, and they have begun filling the hotels far from the city. Now the Ukrainians are being sent to hotels on the Baltic Sea coast and the bed and breakfasts in the mountains. The city of Wroclaw is the furthest from the Ukrainian

A Ukrainian lady at the sports center in Chelm, Poland where refugees are welcomed.



© Gabriel Piętko

border, but many refugees have found a place there. Jacek and his wife Ola have offered a room in their apartment for Olena, who fled with her daughter Emilia. He cannot call them refugees because for him they are friends. “We are one family. Emilia attends the nursery school of our son and we are looking for a steady job for Olena,” Jacek recounts. Every evening they call Olena’s husband, Slava, who remained in Lviv. He in turn has given hospitality to some people from Kiev. “In the evening during the video call they join in too: we look each other in the eyes and see this pain, but feel that there is more than this. Mysteriously our lives have crossed and now they belong to each other. We are signs for each other. This becomes a source of hope, and hope gives us courage.”

**In the small CL community** in Wrocław, other families have done the same. On Sundays, when they meet with their Fraternity group, they invite their guests as well. “We sang our songs, beginning with ‘Povera voce’ and ‘Only Our Rivers Run Free’ because it seemed like the most direct way to communicate with them. Then we read the CL note on the war, and concluded with lunch together.” Returning home, Jacek’s wife Ola asked Olena if she was tired. “No, it was beautiful. I feel loved, even if my life now is so fragile.”

The day the Russian tanks invaded Ukraine, Joanna went to her school in Krakow and asked her classmates and teacher, “Why do we study, if we don’t know whether it’ll be useful? If we don’t know whether there will be a future?” None of the answers calmed her fear. In the following days she participated in the rosaries prayed during the break, and went with her CL friends to the Krakow stadium to lend a hand with the clothing collection. But nothing changed in her until she met Tatiana and her 13-year-old niece Ruslan, two Ukrainians whom Joanna’s parents decided to host in their home. In the beginning she felt very uncomfortable with them, but then one afternoon when she returned home, she found Tatiana intent on preparing dinner for

the whole family. “Welcome home, Joanna, we missed you today!” she said to her. “All of a sudden, I felt loved for no reason, because I had given them nothing.” Then she became aware of Ruslan’s desire to return to the classroom. “I stopped complaining every morning and grouching about tests.” One evening Joanna decided to go to the train station to help. She had been vacillating for weeks. But having Tatiana and Ruslan in their home gave her the courage to jump in. She was set to work distributing food. “I held out the bags and just said ‘here you are’ in Ukrainian. I’ve never heard ‘thank you’ said so many times,” she recounts. “And I’ll never forget the faces of the people I accompanied to the room with cots. Children simply happy to be able to go to sleep. I re-



turned home tired but happy. Papa told me I'd done what my heart wanted from the very beginning."

**Dagmara lives in a village** near Wrocław. Married and the mother of two children, she is the beating heart of the CL community in Poland, taking care of the secretariat and communications. Since the war began, she has received many phone requests for help. As the days passed, total strangers became names and faces to seek out, to find rides and beds for. "In Poland it's something we are all doing. I'm very proud of my people, but I realize, watching TV, that there's a lot of sensationalism around this. I feel the need to go to the heart of these gestures of charity." She recounts that a few days before the invasion, a priest friend had asked her to prepare a testimony for a course for engaged couples. "I had jotted down a few notes, but then the war started and it seemed like the testimony had become the lowest priority thing to do." She was tempted to call the priest and tell him she wanted to drop it, but then, reflecting on the story of her marriage, she became aware of God's faithfulness. "Every wearisome effort, every step was sustained by the continual reoccurrence of His presence. Here is my hope today. In the evening, when I pray with the children, I ask for this hope for the whole world." ■

## *"I, too, have a suitcase full of my nothingness"*

AVSI has been working in Ukraine since 2014, and as soon as the conflict started, intervened in Ukraine and in the border zones in Poland, Romania, and Moldova. Donato Di Giglio recounts his experience.

Donato Di Giglio is an assistance "professional." An Italian, he has been living in Warsaw for thirty years, working as an entrepreneur and AVSI director. With AVSI-Polska he has collaborated on many projects, but now in the face of the enormous disaster, he has brought all his abilities and skills to bear in dealing with it. "I started out charged with the desire to help, and also with a bit of presumption about being a professional in the field. Then, all it took was a supplier who failed to confirm the arrival of a truckload of food to make me fall apart." Donato spent an entire day stunned by his own inadequacy, but then he began to look at those by his side. "AVSI co-operators arrived from the most difficult places in the world—Haiti, Mozambique, Lebanon, Tunisia. They weren't crushed by frameworks or plans, but strove to learn from what was happening." This made Donato understand that the first person who needed to ask for help in that sea of need was himself. "I began to ask the Lord, 'Save me, bring peace to the war inside me,' because I can't think of remedying the consequences of the wars of others if the certainty of something good does not win in my own 'I.'" Today, the pressure of things to do has not diminished. AVSI is engaged not only in the immediate needs for medicine, food, and housing, but also in long-term projects to provide a dignified future for all the refugees who will remain in Poland. "In the midst of presentations to parliament, reports to UNHCR and UNICEF, and collaboration with Caritas, I want to leave space for that 'save me,' because I, too, am on a journey like all of these poor people. I, too, drag behind me a 'suitcase' full of my nothingness. I know that salvation doesn't depend on what I manage to do, but on what I come to realize as I do it." In these days Donato, like many in Poland, cannot keep up with all the requests for help that arrive from all over. He was told about three Ukrainian women who needed transportation to Pescara, Italy. He had no idea how to help them because everyone he knew already had full cars. Then an epiphany struck: a supplier was arriving in Warsaw to deliver materials. He had eight free places and Donato did not take long to fill them. He later heard that the driver stopped overnight in Austria and paid the hotel costs for all of his passengers. The next day, before returning home to Rome, he drove each of the passengers to his or her destination. "In front of these things, I'm full of wonder, and my prayer of entreaty is not placated, but explodes again." **A. L.**

# The desire that prevails

*A message to the community to donate medical supplies that resulted in a line of strangers in front of the house and an unexpected trip to the Ukraine. The story of what happened in a town of Italy.*



Marco Peronio

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It's easy to give examples of how nihilism pervades the culture of our time, as well as my own life. What I saw happening after the war broke out, however, definitely shifted my attention toward the simple fact that nihilism does not correspond to the human spirit, nor to the freedom we have been given, "whose law will therefore be love," as Fr. Giussani says in *To Give One's Life for the Work of Another*, adding, "The dynamism in which this love is lived can be nothing else but friendship."

For many years, an association has operated here in Friuli-AVSI Friuli-Venezia Giulia—through which we support AVSI projects. We recently won regional funding for a development project right in Ukraine, which unfortunately became impossible to implement because of the conflict.

As we were considering how we could adapt the project, I ran into Michele, a friend and emergency room doctor. He showed me a desperate letter from a friend of his who is a doctor in Ukraine: her hospital, which is outside of the war zone but receives many of wounded, is low on all kinds of supplies. Her letter was an urgent and heartfelt request for assistance. Michele asked for my help. I said to him, "Of course, let's see what we can do because your friendship with her is calling us..."

On Sunday night, I wrote a very simple announcement to the CL community: "For anyone willing and able, over the next three days you may drop off the medications listed below at my house after 5:00pm, then we will take care of transporting them quickly." But the message immediately went beyond the limits of our community, much beyond. The announcement spread and I found dozens and dozens of people lined up outside the door of my house, many

of them strangers. We cleaned out the garage to store the medicines, then the living room, then the stairs... Still there was not enough space. I was flooded with phone calls, many from people I do not know. In any case, I have an immense desire to give and to be present, a desire that halts the slide toward nothingness, and that prevails.

**Among the people who came was a woman** who, one evening, told me how worried she has become because her nine-year-old daughter, after watching the news on TV, asked her, "Mom, how do you become an atheist?" The woman replied, Why do you ask? "Because I see these things and it is clear that God isn't there." After trying to understand better, I proposed this to her: "Bring your daughter here so she can see. Not all of reality is evil," and she returned with her daughter.

We live on a little street a bit off the beaten path, and it's not a big house, so it's a big mess: the opposite of the efficiency and order needed to ensure that the collection is a serious endeavor. Yet the people, after verifying they got the right address and despite having seen our absolutely improvised logistics kept buying supplies and bringing them over. One of my daughters, whose deadline to submit her thesis is approaching quickly, has been working nonstop; my other daughter, who thought she had agreed to help with a simple little project, said to me, "It's too wonderful and beautiful! I'll call my friends from Padua to come help. We need it!" And they came, a witness to all of us of how their friendship is for something greater than themselves. As the days went by, we realized that we needed another van and another person available to drive. By Thursday, we



The collection of medical supplies in Udine.

had 70 tons of goods, much of it medicines and baby food, which we packed into five vans. We needed to leave for the border, but of the seven drivers—who were recruited by word of mouth—four did not have a passport. Then our initial plan, which was to make the transfer at the Hungarian border, turned out to be impossible: they were not able to come from the hospital to accept the supplies.

**For this reason, we had to figure out** how to get into Ukraine... and we managed, thanks to a chain of relationships, and in particular to a Ukrainian nurse who works in Italy and has a mandate to facilitate aid from our country. We received a kind of document of passage through the Ukrainian consulate in Hungary, written by hand by the consul, whom we met out on the sidewalk. With very tight security, crossing the border was of course still not easy, but with clear help from the hand of Providence, we made it into Ukraine, trusting that we would also be able to get out... We went as far as Uzhhorod, near Transcarpathia. We arrived at 3:30 in the morning to hand over everything to the organization where our new Ukrainian friends work. We received an unexpected welcome, especially considering their situation: a feast of typical foods, as you would prepare for very important guests. In the morning, we unloaded all the supplies. At that point, before letting us leave on our return trip, they wanted to show us around their city, especially the cathedral, which is important for their identity. It's a bit odd, you might say, to play tourists at such a time, but that was not what it felt like. As they told us about their history and took us around the city, I felt I was breathing in the atmosphere of Christianity... We are not shipping agents, and many other people know how to organize aid better than we do, but what we experienced in bringing them aid was friendship founded on something that makes it "for everyone," that makes it a living source of hope. They grasped this and wanted to reciprocate by showing us who they are, communicating to us that they cannot be reduced to "people in need." Then they entrusted us with three refugees to take with us to Italy, with the trust of people who knew they were leaving them with friends. Our return trip, too, was assisted by Providence, which is more powerful than any humanitarian corridors.

Returning home, we started to see that something had happened among us. For example, one of the drivers who didn't know any of us before and had been recruited in the spur of the moment by his parish priest, after expressing at various moments his (understandable) concerns about the details of the trip, repeatedly told us "I'm in" and was ready to do it all over again, eager to be called back to help.

What I have witnessed is the way human freedom finds a space to move; how, perhaps confusedly, our hearts rebel against the nothingness that seems to engulf us, returning to that thing for which we were made. The education that I receive in the Movement allows me to recognize this, and to desire that the friendships I have tried to describe here might grow: the long-standing ones in the rediscovery of their origin and the new ones between those who were strangers and suddenly were no longer so.

I do not know how the story will end. Many people have continued collecting supplies and calling me, asking about when a second trip will depart. One woman, whom I do not know and who told me she got my number from another person I do not know, asked me on the phone, "We have a full storeroom, when will you leave?" Pardon me, what storeroom? "The city's storage space, which was offered for the collection..." I did not dare ask how big the storage room was. There is always something greater out there. ■

Francis Collins

# God gave us two books

A scientific advisor to the White House, he led one of the most important and groundbreaking adventures in genetics. And he is among the leading figures in the fight against COVID-19. We met him at the New York Encounter, where he told us about his search for truth.

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Luca Fiore

**F**rancis Collins is a tall, thin gentleman with white hair and a mustache. His eyes are blue. We shook his hand, and thought about the fact that we were meeting one of the most important men in the US during the months of the pandemic. Indeed, until last November he was the head of the National Institutes of Health, America's medical research agency. He was chosen by Barack Obama and retained by both Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Just to be clear: Dr. Anthony Fauci was his subordinate. Last month, he was appointed scientific advisor to the White House. In addition to being a man of institutions, he is above all a man of science. He led one of the most important and groundbreaking adventures in genetics—the Human Genome Project, which involved the mapping of the human genome and which has contributed to much of the knowledge we have about how our body's DNA works.

We met him at the Metropolitan Pavilion where the New York Encounter was taking place. He had been invited to the NYE to dialogue with *New York Times* columnist David Brooks. An evangelical Christian, he missed no opportunity to talk about how, as a scientist, he embraces faith without rejecting the scientific method. He was an atheist in his 20s, but after his first few months at medical school and working on hospital wards, grappling with suffering and death, he realized he had never thought about the question of God. “After a couple of years of struggling and trying to understand whether I could actually accept the idea of God, and then ultimately deciding what kind of God, to my surprise I became a Christian.” By then, however, he was a physician and scientist. “People around me thought I would go crazy trying to reconcile faith and my profession. So far, that has not happened.”

### **Why do you think you have been able to reconcile faith and science?**

Science is the way we understand how nature works. It involves an incredibly powerful method. But there are questions that science cannot really help us with. What happened before the universe began? Why am I here? What happens after we die? Even though science is at the moment silent on all of these really interesting questions, I still want to ask them. As long as you are careful about which *kind* of question you are asking, there is no conflict between being a believer and a rigorous scientist. Francis Bacon gave us a wonderful metaphor: God gave us two books, that of the word of God, which is the Bible—which I read almost every day—and the book of God's works, which is nature, and which as a scientist I get to work on every day. They are both God's books, so if somehow we think there is a conflict, we may have misread one or both of them and we have to go back to figure out what we have not understood.

### **Not everyone thinks that way.**

So we do have a bit of a cultural clash. Right now, it is made infinitely worse by the way in which we have divided ourselves into separate tribes. In our country, for reasons that are utterly irrational, science seems to have been embraced more by the left and faith more by the right. Does that make sense? Politics has infected everything.

**Francis Collins** (born 1950) is a geneticist. He was the director of the U.S. National Institutes of Health and led the Human Genome Project. In 2009, Benedict XVI appointed him to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. Among his books, *The Language of God* (2006), and *The Language of Life* (2011).

**Even positions with respect to the pandemic?**

Experts thought that it would take years to produce a vaccine. It took us 11 months, and millions of lives have been saved as a result. But it is also really troubling that there are so many people who still reject it. In the US, this is about 50 million people. They have heard stories, conspiracies, and misinformation that makes them afraid there might be something wrong here.

**What does this mean?**

It is a terrible indictment of the really destructive nature of the kind of tribalism I was talking about earlier. There are people who are shamelessly distributing information that is demonstrably false. In the meantime, people are dying because they are not vaccinated.

**You are saying this as a scientist. But what about as a man of faith?**

I am sorry to say this, but people of faith have also gotten pulled into these lies that are demonizing science. The group that is most resistant to vaccines in the US are Christians, white, evangelical. And I am Christian, white, and evangelical. It is heartbreaking to see that it has come to that.

**Does this have to do with the use of reason?**

I was once naïve enough to think that if you put the objective facts in front of somebody, he or she would always make a rational decision—that reason would always rise to the top. David Hume says instead that reason is a slave to the passions. And our polarized society, with all of the ways that information has been weaponized, has inflamed everybody's passions, causing injury to our ability to use the tools of reason.

**How do you know this?**

People do not accept information that does not jibe with the current stance of their tribal group. This is called "cognitive bias."

**What does that mean?**

If you try to tell me something that is actually true, but does not fit within the framework that I am currently adhering to, I am going to say that it must not be right. I might bring on board something completely fraudulent if it happens to resonate with my current framework. And we get deeper and deeper into this dynamic.

**You were the head of the National Institutes of Health****for 12 years. What was the hardest moment for you?**

A lot of it was exhilarating. I had the opportunity to lead the largest medical research agency in the world. We started new programs on cancer immunotherapy, tried to figure out how the brain works, came up with solutions for rare diseases, and much more. The hardest challenge was COVID. We had to make sure we were bringing every possible kind of scientific resource together to address it without a single day being wasted. My job was to convince industry, academic institutions, and the government to all get together. It was amazing how successful that was, but it took longer than everybody wanted. We got to the point of what I thought was going to be an amazing success story, only to have a lot of people say, "I do not want the vaccine." That I was not expecting.

**You were also the villain in certain conspiracy theories. What helped you face these attacks?**

Prayer. If I receive criticism that I deserve, I figure out what I can do better. But if the accusation (as it was actually put forth) is that I work with Bill Gates to put chips into syringes, I feel bad for the people who are propagating this. They are obviously very mixed up and confused. I think that most people are good and well-intentioned and trying to figure out what to do at a scary time, but some conspiracies that have no basis are putting people's lives at risk.

**Is it possible to oppose polarization?**

There is a group here in the U.S. called Braver Angels working to bring together people from the opposing tribes, the so-called "reds" and "blues," the right and left, and for a couple of hours encourage them to actually talk to each other: no insults, no personal attacks, but explaining why they feel the way they do. And the other group has to listen and explain why they feel like they do. Every time at the end of these two hours, they ask people confidentially what they have learned from it. And almost everybody replies: "I found out we were not that different after all." That gives me hope because, underneath it all, people still care about basic things: faith, family, freedom, love, beauty, truth, goodness. Those pillars that we are building our foundations on, those are rock solid. So we pile on top of that all this other not-very-attractive architecture that gets in the way of recognizing how similar we really are. We need to get more of these encounters to happen. They obviously cannot be recreated on a large scale because these events happen really intimately. But that is what we need more of.

Collins in dialogue with David Brooks, columnist for the *New York Times*, at the most recent New York Encounter.



© New York Encounter

**You recently spoke of your friendship with the polemicist Christopher Hitchens, who often said that “religion poisons everything.” What did you learn from that friendship?**

The first time we met I asked him whether a strict atheist like him could claim any real importance for good and evil, or whether they should be regarded as artifacts of natural selection, of no real significance. He called the question “dumb” and did not answer. Yet, I had the impression that he was an interesting person. I think we are all enhanced by talking to people who are really saying things very differently. So gradually over a few more interactions we got to know each other and became friends. He then fell ill and I helped him find his way through some clinical trials, which I think gave him an extra six or twelve months to live. By the end, I felt he was somebody I had a very warm and loving relationship with, even though in the world’s view we were on opposite poles of this question of faith.

**But if friendship is not about agreeing, what is it about?**

It is to gain some kind of a personal revelation about yourself through another person, without being so defensive that you are hiding who you really are, and being enriched by that gift even if it involves a challenge to some of the things you hold dear. It was like that with Hitchens. When we were not talking about

faith, I listened to him speak about American history, or his favorite author, George Orwell. I learned a lot from him and I am grateful. I seek out these opportunities. I know another atheist: Richard Dawkins. We are often invited to public debates to represent opposing sides. It is always a pleasure to debate with him. I have known him for almost 20 years now and whenever I go to Oxford I always ask if he is around.

**Both faith and science are a longing for truth. What is the most powerful driver for you?**

This is difficult to answer. They are different questions, they hit different parts of who I am. I had two years of intensely searching whether a God existed and if so, asking if He cared about me. Then I discovered the person of Jesus, who I had assumed all along was a myth, but I then found out that there was more historical evidence for Jesus—and for his Resurrection—than I had imagined. I still have doubts about various aspects of my faith, particularly when a terrible crisis happens: How does a loving God allow suffering? We seek God’s answers in moments of struggle, of searching for truth.

The search for truth carried out in my laboratory is not far off from that. When a scientist discovers something for the first time—I have had that experience a few times—it is not just a scientific achievement, but it is also a glimpse into God’s mind. It is a moment of worship. Being in the laboratory is like being in a cathedral; they are both places where you can glimpse the Almighty. In a different way, but it is all really the same thing.

**Who is the person of Jesus for you?**

Jesus is both God and human. Jesus is the way in which I, with all my imperfections and all the bad things I do, can get closer to God. By His sacrifice, I am saved. When I was a kid, I did not have a clue what it meant when I heard Christians say that. Now it is the most incredible truth that I believe in. Jesus is that relationship that I have always longed for, without knowing it. When I come across the pain of someone I care about, I want to say to God, “Why are you letting this happen, do you not realize...?” Then I stop and think, “Yes, you do realize, you have suffered more than I will ever know.” ■

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# To Give One's Life for the Work of Another

LUIGI GIUSSANI

*Edited by Julián Carrón*

Some of Father Luigi Giussani's most poignant teachings, available in print for the first time.

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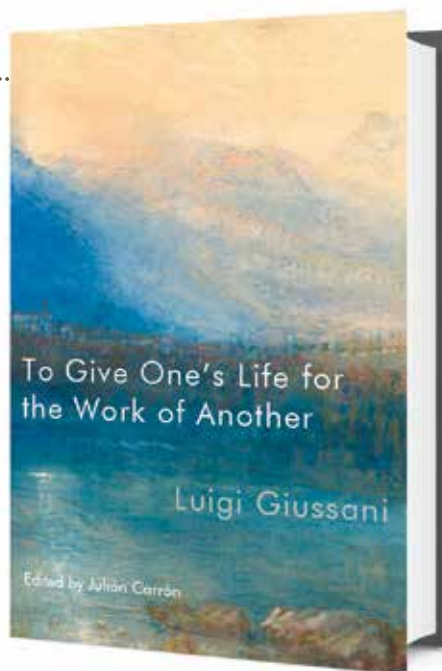
Father Luigi Giussani engaged tirelessly in educational initiatives throughout the course of his life. Much of his thought was communicated through the richness and rhythm of oral discourse, preserved as audio and video recordings in the archive of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation in Milan.

This volume presents the last three spiritual exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, drawing from the transcripts of these recordings. In these exercises Giussani investigates the rise of ethics and the decline of ontology that have accompanied modernity and the spread of rationalism. Bearing up against old age and illness, he resisted the urge to withdraw, instead finding new avenues of communication and the technological means to reach all corners of the movement. *To Give One's Life for the Work of Another* explores the nature of God, the powerful human experience of self-awareness, and the fundamental components of Christianity, in the unmistakable voice of a consummate teacher.

At a time when young people are abandoning the church and questioning the value of faith, Father Giussani's method of judging and verifying Christianity as an experience is a timeless intervention.

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