

Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón
Milan, February 23, 2011

Reference text: The Religious Sense by Luigi Giussani (McGill-Queen's), pages 3-11.

Song: "Liberazione no. 2"

Song: "You"

Let's start our journey. I want to go back to the text "Have a Good Journey" that all of you saw on the website. It is the greeting that Father Giussani sent years ago, in 1998, to the CLU students at Catholic University in Milan, who were starting their work on *The Religious Sense*: "I don't want to force anyone to be persuaded, but I don't want anyone to deny what I say unless he has at least read my reasons." Then he goes on, offering us some observations on the method that are decisive for our journey, remarks that we should always keep in mind along the entire path. "No one can understand unless he verifies the ideas and the values in his own individual experience." That is, we don't understand by reflecting and thinking, but by verifying the ideas and the values in our own personal experience; otherwise we speak and just repeat what we heard: ideology expands, and this doesn't help us to understand, even if we're repeating something that is true. "This experience may consist even in a shock or in a particular feeling that one discovers in oneself, or in the history of a people or of the world. Experience expresses things that prove its truth [this is why, without experience, truth doesn't become apparent, because reality becomes manifest in experience, truth becomes evident in experience]... For me it is experience [Again! This is the fourth time he uses the word experience] that teaches the whole value of ideas and things, lasting in time either as persuasion or as doubt." So, all Father Giussani cares about, when a CLU group starts this work, is to emphasize one thing: experience. Why? Because it is experience that reveals the truth of things. Reality becomes manifest in experience. This is why this method is crucial. Since this is the central point of the first chapter, we can't help but get back to it again and again: "On this occasion that you have given me I wish you a sincerity [Once a person has the experience, what is important is this sincerity, that is, submitting reason to experience, submitting what one initially thought to the experience he has had – otherwise, he doesn't learn anything], a frankness in everything and a love for the truth that is shared. My life has known happiness [This is the promise that interests us!] on these conditions." The promise is gladness, the joy of life. Therefore, if we insist upon our analyses, besides wasting time, we lose the gladness. We said to each other that the work proposed to us was summarized by two questions: When did you have an experience, and when did you happen to discover this liberation in a judgment (because judging is the first step in becoming free)? I am going to start out by reading the witness of someone who wrote to me, telling me about the experience he used to have with Father Giussani: "I belong to a generation that lived more the pressure of judging than the link between judgment and liberation, that is, a sort of insistence on applying Catholic doctrine. Judging meant breaking the ideas we had developed about Christianity into pieces, in order to cast them upon reality. It was really distressing: so much anxiety, because things didn't work out [We are not immune from the same risk]... This was not the judgment I had learned from Father Giussani in the classrooms of Catholic University, where nothing was forced: it was reality imposing itself. Father Giussani moved me in the way that he followed the questions, the issues that came up, the objections; with a striking freedom, he was eager to have things show themselves for what they are, for how they are tied to me. There I met

a way of judging that was rooted in reality. Judgment meant the impact with things, an impact that was bringing freedom to my 'I.' Then I betrayed it; I betrayed this method, and judging became my way of defending myself from reality: it was a dogged, nervous, detached defense. It was reality itself that became the noose around my neck, to the point of causing me pain. A new path in direct development of the origin has opened up for me, and now you are insisting on this connection between judgment and liberation. This is a challenge that interests me, because I perceive that, whereas what was at stake before was my having to be aligned with an idea, today I am the one who is at stake, my humanity, this begging for Him that consumes me." This is why we are starting out from a question that someone asked me in an email: "I am interested in understanding a little more what it means to enter reality as someone who is risking a judgment, and judging what happens by starting from the hypothesis of faith, not by being clever or by having the correct answer to things [as the previous email said], but by growing and not missing anything, so that judgment may become the surprise and the possibility of knowing Him. Only recognizing Him at work frees me." This friend introduces an issue that now should be easier to judge. Why should it be easier to judge, to arrive to this judgment and experience liberation? Because the more the "I" has been reawakened, the easier it is to make a comparison with what is in front of me. And if what I encounter is Him, Christ's presence, it is even easier because, being more exceptional, it is easier to recognize Him! Then, rereading this chapter from inside the faith, it should be even easier to judge for both reasons. Each of us can see to what degree, during the past two weeks, he has had this experience of judging more easily due to the journey of the last years; in fact, the more the "I" has been reawakened in front of His imposing presence, the easier it should be, due to how uniquely exceptional He is. To begin an answer, I am going to read an email in which someone describes this experience: "I am trying to answer the questions you asked at the last School of Community with a fact, and by telling you what I learned that is new. A few weeks ago I was uncomfortable, that kind of being uncomfortable that stems from the discovery of being a poor wretch. I often get discouraged when I trip over one of my recognized limitations and I tell myself, "There again – I never learn." At times I have the gall to think that if I didn't have that weakness everything would be easier in the end, my yes would be more quick, and I find myself asking, like Saint Paul, "Please take this thorn away from my side, because if I didn't have it I would be more yours." There's nothing that is more biased. In my discomfort, I went to confession. After I told my sins to the priest, he looked at me and said, "In any case, the greatest sign of Christ's presence is that you continue to desire what is good. Without Him you would become cynical, but with Him you can get up again and desire again and again what you don't yet possess. What makes Christians different from others is not a greater moral capacity, but the constant tension toward what is good, since this is possible only because He exists." This judgment freed me, not only because it psychologically lifted me from the sadness over my shortcoming, but because it forced me to consider some factors of my experience that I, in the fog, didn't know and didn't want to see. The most interesting thing, though, came afterwards. Immersed again in the daily struggle, I found myself back in a situation similar to the one I just described: you fall, and you end up saying, 'I will never change.' However, precisely in this situation, that judgment and the way that I had been looked at the previous week surfaced in my memory. There I found myself facing two options: either decide to let myself be dominated by my reaction and disappointment in the face of my wretchedness, or put myself back again in front of what had happened; and I felt in that moment, through the sign of that priest. [This is entering reality with the hypothesis of the experience he had.] So, the question of Saint Anselm surfaced, a question that I often repeat to myself and that for a while

now has become mine: 'Lord, do what my heart can't; You who bring me to ask, grant it.' The attention of my gaze shifted from myself to Another, and in the midst of the struggle, of the disappointment, of the sadness, I found myself with an inkling of gladness. Now I think I understood two things. First, what generates liberation in experience is a fact that happens from outside of you, something objective, unforeseeable, unexpected, that introduces a true way of looking at yourself and reality, according to your own nature. [The fact that the opposite is against nature is shown by the discomfort and the bitterness it leaves behind, that is, by the fact that it doesn't free me.] Second, this event of liberation may leave an ever deeper mark in the center of my 'I,' in the way I perceive and deal with reality, to the extent that my adherence moves from being motivated by tradition to being motivated by conviction. It is not enough to say, 'Beautiful, true,' in front of what happens. For me, the judgment of that priest happened to become mine when I used it in the circumstances I was dealing with and tested if it was able to respond to the discomfort I was feeling. Here I had the experience that judging is the beginning of liberation, of that *ascesis* that Giussani mentions in the first premise." This is an example of how everyone can enter reality and have the experience of liberation that happens at the same time. The judgment, the gaze of Jesus for Zacchaeus (or of this priest for our friend), is a judgment that opens the door to a liberation, so much so that Zacchaeus welcomed it with full gladness. It is not necessary to do who knows what: it was a judgment that so corresponded to his need that he experienced liberation. The more exceptional the presence which is looking at me, the easier this judgment that frees me becomes. It is not necessary to make special Herculean efforts. It is simply a recognition, which is like the apex of this judgment, that has to become the daily way of relating to everything, because then everything is useful.

So, when have we discovered ourselves with this experience of a judgment that frees us? Let's go.

Last time, when you left us with this provocation, that is, of verifying when we had an experience of liberation in a judgment, my memory immediately returned to concrete facts of when this happened to me. I will give one example out of many. A few weeks ago, a friend wrote me a text message saying that she was worried about a mutual friend who was in great distress because he was feeling lonely. He had been deeply affected by a dramatic personal situation, and the need to face the myriad of family demands, coupled with a demanding job, deprived him of opportunities for getting together with his friends. My friend's concern immediately affected me as well, but a sequence of practical things – distance, taking care of the children of my friend, along with feeling like I had to lift his spirits – made me feel powerless and discouraged, with no initiative – in short, caged in. Then, this same friend, talking at School of Community, spoke about when a friend of his called his attention to the fact that his eldest daughter was looking at him with adoration, and that, two days later, while he was helping her with her homework, she had told him, "Dad, I really love you." I was moved as I listened to him, as if that little girl had said it to me; but it was Jesus who was repeating it to me, and the memory of the tenderness I received immediately melted my heart. I understood, or maybe it would be better to say that I remembered, that my friend, who still had his concrete need, was already preferred and loved, just like me; so the only chance I have to really keep him company has its origin in a superabundance of gratitude for the tenderness that he and I received. As this new judgment surfaced, I felt free.

Thank you.

I read in the book that one of the most important things is man's desire for happiness. Since the greatest desire I have is that my wife would be happy, and my religious sense is "limited" to thanking God every day for letting me meet her, giving me the gift of everything my heart desires, and so answering my human need, my question is, for you, Father Carrón, who knows about God better than I do? Is this also okay? Because if it isn't, I either have to invent another need for myself, or I have to pretend that this is not my true need. Thank you.

The need is only one: it is the need that the Mystery puts inside us. The problem is finding something that corresponds to it.

I wanted to tell about an event and then ask a question. At Christmas I discovered that an ex-coworker from the company where I used to work had been laid off. I called him to wish him Merry Christmas and ask him if he needed some help, specifying that I didn't have any job opportunity to offer him, because, basically, we have no production (and he is a production manager). I offered to get together with him anyhow. I immediately asked him how his family was and he told me that six months after I left the company, his son, who seemed to have completely recovered from a serious illness, fell ill with the same disease and died. At the same time, his wife also became ill and barely survived. He told me that those had been terrible times, months spent going in and out of the hospital. This situation really changed his life and it was probably also the origin of the relationship problems that ultimately got him fired. In short, I was prepared to talk about work, but not to face a situation like this. Honestly, I was speechless for a full minute, not knowing what to say. In that moment I experienced a deep sense of injustice, and so of the sense of being unfulfilled in front of what he had told me, and I was not able to judge that circumstance.

Why did you experience a sense of injustice? Explain it.

A sense of injustice, because for me what happened to him as a circumstance that was too contradictory. And I couldn't say anything truer than telling him about myself, about what had happened in the recent past. At the end of the conversation, I invited him to come and work with us for a while, to give us a hand while he was looking for a new job. Today he is still with me and he is very happy. I don't know if he will stay, because in the end the situation is what it is. This is my question: I experienced liberation first as I was telling him about myself, and then, especially, in inviting him to walk part way back with me, not in trying to judge what had happened to him with the death of his son, because I was literally incapable of doing it. The same thing happened to me other times, facing very contradictory circumstances. So, my question is, isn't this, ultimately, a way of avoiding the judgment of how reality applies, because of how it happens to me?

Actually, what I don't understand is what kind of experience of judgment and liberation you had. We have to tell facts in which we have an experience of judgment and liberation at the same time. Do you see how difficult it is for us? First chapter of *The Religious Sense*....

*I have a question regarding this difficulty. It happened that, following the invitation that you extended to us, among many things, there were many discussions on what is happening in Italy, the political situation of our country, partly provoked by the editorial in *Traces*, and the attempt to take that situation seriously as well. There were different reactions, and many more critical or less critical stances. I was struck, seeing different groups of opinions forming among the various friends taking part in the discussion. I took a position too, and every time we discussed things, I was trying to understand better why one position was more correct than the other. As I read this*

chapter, I was struck by the insistence on avoiding the risk of being alienated, together with the importance of a personal work starting from our own needs, what he says about asceticism. Because I have seen this risk....

Either you tell me a fact, or you sit down, clear?

But my question was on a difficulty.

Then explain what the difficulty is.

The difficulty is the risk of always staying at the same point.

We can always run risks, but we don't overcome the difficulty you are talking about if you don't have a positive experience of what judgment is and why it frees you. How does it help you if I explain all the risks? You already know them very well. We need to help each other – young and not so young – to witness how much what he is saying here, namely, that judgment brings liberation, has happened. Is there anybody who has something to say about this? I am talking to everybody, because it is impossible that you have lived for two weeks without judging anything. If we haven't judged anything, it means we really are at the end of our rope.

One evening I was with my wife and I made a mistake. We argued; she was right. I spent the whole next day thinking of my mistake, and I was deeply feeling the difficulty and the sorrow; I could see that I was unable to get beyond it, I was not able to overcome this mistake on my own. Also, I could see how she was not doing well, and this was hurting me. Then my wife came to see me during her lunch break. We spoke for a while, she tried to explain the problem to me, and in the evening we met again for dinner. She told me, "We were praying to the Lord to not let us take our marriage for granted, that is, that we don't take for granted that you and I are here, that we may understand how important the fact that we are together is for our lives. I feel that this episode that I would have never wanted is in fact helping us to get to the bottom of our relationship." I was the object of a gaze that looked precisely at what I had done, judged it, but then put it aside and said, "I want to stay with you." That is, it gave me back to myself. I could only receive this gaze. I couldn't do anything to get it, and yet it was given to me. This gesture, this gaze, this embrace, was a liberation, because I regained my value. Now, I don't want to use words that are too big, but it is as if it restored my mistake to its proper place; it is as if it restored everything that I want, that is, to love myself, to love her, to want my wife to be happy. When I look at this, I know that something like this comes neither from me nor from her nor from the sum of our abilities, but is the fruit of the sacrament of matrimony, in which one is a sign for the other of something greater that comes and sets one free. The gaze that brought liberation was really visible.

Then, succinctly, what experience did you have? The experience of a gaze, her gaze, that carried a judgment because it corresponded to what you were waiting for, that your heart desired, which is called liberation.

Yes.

The mistake is the opposite of this, do you understand? It is a judgment, because in one instance you had an experience of non-correspondence, while in the other you experienced correspondence. That is, you had an experience and you judged this in both circumstances.

Thank you.

This past weekend I went back to my hometown for the first time in many years, and I happened to be in front of the high school where I used to go before I encountered the movement. I have to tell you that I hadn't been thinking at all about that phase of my life, but it still troubled me

inside. But there I was, looking at my high school, and I remembered the images I had back then. Suddenly, reality (as it is now) took the place of my images, and I had this judgment: for many years I had been clinging to my own image of what reality should be like here. For many years I was stuck to this image, and I wasn't able to look at reality; I didn't realize that the Lord was with me here and now, and that He was coming to me in the circumstances that He was providing. Now, it's like this image has gone away, and I realize what reality is like. I found myself again, who I was. The only thing I can say to explain why this has happened is, "You, You led me; You took me, you led me here, and now You become present again, and You touch me; You show me reality." I can't say this in a different way, but it's an experience of liberation, in which I also understood that judgment is an event; it is not just a word. Rather, it is a word that describes the fact that is happening.

Someone wrote to me, "While rereading the notes of the last School of Community, as often happens to me, I started to get very confused. I felt like I couldn't understand anything anymore, even after many years of experience in the movement. It was like I'd only understood intellectually, without understanding either the meaning or the consequences that those words had in my life. I read the words, 'With the encounter, we were given the certainty that only He can fulfill our life, and this remains... but He can only change us by being with us here and now.' So I wondered, 'How can I stay aware of this "here and now"?' I still hadn't read the following sentence: 'And this is a grace that needs to be asked for, and that happens in spite of us, even when we least expect it.' It was in that exact moment that I received a text message telling me that two old friends of the movement from my original community were seriously ill, and we were being asked to pray for them. I immediately understood that, once again, Christ was happening in my life. It was an incredible coincidence. A little while later, I picked up my phone and I called. I trembled as I did so, thinking, 'How can I, who am healthy, talk to someone who is so seriously ill?' I was amazed again, because my friend, showing me extraordinary serenity, told me, 'Don't worry! If the Lord's decided that He wants me by His side, then from up there I'll be able to laugh at all of you who are still here suffering over your problems. Everything that the Lord decides is always the right, because He's never wrong.' At the end of the phone call, I almost cried, because just when I was confused and wanted to understand better [understand existentially, not intellectually], I was taken in by Christ, who was present through a circumstance, and obviously not a glad circumstance. And I was certain that it was Christ, because of those unmistakable, indescribable traits that only your heart knows how to decipher. So, I experienced what you said right after that – that if the Event doesn't happen again, the 'I' is not reawakened, and you can't understand a thing [that is to say, liberation does not happen]." If this can happen in a circumstance like this, then the question is, "How does this happen over and over again in life?" We can plainly see that we have a very hard time with this. I think that what is happening this evening is an example of the hard time we have with having an experience. It's the first chapter of *The Religious Sense*. Do you understand? After the journey we took last year, we can either do this work that Father Giussani invites us to do (the ascesis needed to achieve liberation), or it's impossible. Liberation does not happen only when I meet Christ, but also in the way I face everything. When one is worried about having a disease, and does all the tests to verify it, the judgment that one doesn't have it is a liberation; judgment is a liberation, whereas before one is worried. Giussani says exactly this: that only when one does not judge is he worried. It is when one judges that he is liberated. The problem is that many times we are agitated, forever on quicksand, because if we don't judge for ourselves, if we are not used to

judging, we are always confused. Or (and this is the second temptation) we are always waiting for someone, outside of our experience, to confirm for us or tell us something that we have not found as a confirmed in experience. So we can't grow as adults, because we are always in need of some additional certainty that we can't find in experience! John and Andrew did not need to ask someone else outside of their experience to give them any additional certainty that they did not have. Certainty is within the experience of judgment; this is why it is a judgment that liberates us. Dear friends, if we don't take this journey, we will always be uncertain, like being in a swamp. And it's difficult to build life this way. Rather, experience must always be a building block, even when we make a mistake; because when one makes a mistake, if he recognizes it, if he judges it, even this becomes a step toward truth: this is not what corresponds, but there is something else that does. We don't always get the right answer, but it doesn't matter. For me it was crucial that, when I started to do this work, everything that was happening to me, even when I would make mistakes, was a journey to truth: the journey to truth is an experience. How many times has it happened to us that, when learning math, a mistake became the critical factor for us not to forget something anymore? This was part of our journey to certainty about math, because we learned something forever. The point is that when I judge and I realize something, even when I make a mistake, it's a step forward. This is why it's impossible for each of us, if we live as men, not to bring fifteen experiences of this here today... This means that there is still a lot of work to do.

I am going to try to tell about a very simple experience. I think that today you talked about daily experience as something to be distinguished from one's experience of the encounter with Christ. What I meant is that it doesn't only happen when I have an experience of correspondence with Christ, but that, in any circumstance, I can judge. As a matter of fact, we are often stuck in life, because we don't judge normal, daily things.

This is a rather banal fact, I would say, but it has become significant for me, because of what I heard at a meeting with university students. At that meeting I heard you talk about reality in a way that impressed me very much, and opened up my mind in the sense that – please forgive me if I somewhat reduce what you said in that meeting – I think that you had found a weak point in us, that shows itself when we believe that concrete things are the ones that determine consequences, while in fact, by really looking at our experience, what is truly concrete is what moves us and thus enables us to get to the consequences. In any way, this is the fact. In the last few weeks I have been busy working at the implementation of the recent university reform, the one that caused so much confusion and uproar in the fall, and this is something I don't like to do. For twenty years I had been serving the university honorably while avoiding all administrative jobs, but this time my situation did not allow me to say no. My instinctive dislike for this type of work was confirmed after the first meeting: this is a really burdensome plan with rather inconclusive meetings of five or six hours every Monday afternoon for months. However, more than anything, the bad thing is that this big ongoing apparent revolution (at least, so it was depicted by the press) will probably fizzle out, because everyone has the impression that the tendency is to maintain the status quo. So one afternoon I asked one of our very good scholars, someone who is an expert in these things, to help. We met with some students to talk and try to understand something about this complex situation. What was most significant in that meeting, in that moment, in that afternoon, and then in the days that followed, because our work is still going on, is that there was a clarity of judgment about the challenges ahead, which is the beginning of an interesting, and, I dare say, sometimes sweet productivity. This is something

absolutely new and corresponding for me. I have the impression that this fact, this judgment that you gave about what is concrete and what is abstract, has a lot to do with the possibility of experiencing an interest in a job that seems to offer no satisfaction. Your judgment, "Look, what is concrete is not what starts from consequences, but what moves the 'I,'" first of all corrects my perception of reality. Many times I have a very poor, and ultimately deceptive perception of reality, that is to say, a way of looking at reality that resembles pragmatism. And pragmatism leads directly to skepticism, because it is a way of reducing reality to its appearances, and it can't help but disappoint in the long run. So for me, being aware of what is truly real, concrete, liberated me with a paradoxical effect, so that I can stay in those last few practical consequences with all the energy I can muster, without expectations that that thing cannot give me, with that tranquil and constructive position that you were mentioning, among other places, at the presentation at the Palasharp.

What is real? What is real is what moves all the power of the "I." This enables us to enter everything that we must then face. But if we reduce reality only to consequences, they will suffocate us.

Recently we met with a group of lawyers who deal with family law and two judges (and it's already obvious that it's not easy for lawyers and judges to work together...) to read a talk you had given about the family (Julián Carrón, "Handing On Faith in the Family," Valencia, July 4-7, 2006, found at Traces.com) or, to be precise, the reading that you had made public about the dynamic of the religious sense within an experience of love: how, if it is not correctly structured, it leads to failure of the love relationship, and, consequently, of the marriage. This work came from a need to think exactly about the origin of the intolerability which then results in separation, a very delicate issue. Nobody thinks about the origin of intolerability. So when we read that text that you wrote, which is so clear and intelligent, we were so struck because you say that the origin of the challenges of the couple derive from the fact that man has lost the sense of himself, that is to say, man no longer wonders about the fundamental question.

By not being aware of man's needs and elementary evidences, one cannot understand what the criterion of judgment is.

So in relational dynamics there are expectations because I think that you can satisfy my happiness, that is to say, what I am. It is evident that this cannot be by nature, because you are a limited being as much as me. It would be as if I were to claim that I can be your happiness, and it is foolish. But if in a couple relationship one loses the origin, which is the fundamental question about man, then there are expectations that remain disappointed. They are necessarily disappointed, and at a certain point they lead one to say, "You no longer correspond to me, so I will change who is next to me." And this starts the mechanism of the destruction of families.

Only for not having even tried to judge, because all is based on an apparent truth which time demonstrates was not true. Not having understood man's elementary need, I expect correspondence from the other. And this starts a series of claims which is the origin of all the violence. Why all this? Simply because we don't judge – because if we judged, we would understand immediately that I cannot expect from the other what the other cannot give me. And this would open up a possibility to try and find a solution that is suitable to the other's nature. Otherwise I "massacre" the other in the name of the fact that I love him. The lack of judgment leads, then, to all fatal consequences. This is an example among many others, taken from daily life, of how absence of truth leads us to many troubles and challenges we experience in life. We

are interested in this. Giussani says that one begins to be liberated from judgment (“The other cannot answer all my desire for happiness, so I cannot blame him for this”).

But look, it’s a real tragedy, because families as well as relationships are destroyed as a result of this, as we can see in our jobs.

It would be enough to judge according to what we talk about here. This seems to us abstract compared to the concrete problem, i.e., the other person, “The truth about my “I” is abstract; the person who awakens in me a feeling of goodness is concrete.” Rather, your “I” is the most concrete thing, whereas our claim and our absolutely impossible expectation to have the other fulfill you are not.

So this is what happens. We finish reading and a colleague of mine, a grown up woman, not a young girl, coming from a very difficult family situation (she is separated, with a little girl), all of a sudden says, “But this is a punch in my stomach, particularly for me, before I can even start using it for a judgment when I try to help my clients. What is written here is the reason why I have done everything wrong in my life.” Two days ago I met her by chance very briefly, just for about two minutes, and I said to her, “So, what did you think about that thing we read? I have been thinking about you so much for your reaction.” And she said, “You have no idea how many times I have read over and over again that article [and so, your judgment], because I had never heard about those things before.” And she said to me again, “This is the reason why I have done everything wrong in my life. You know my personality. I took that article and passed it around to all my friends, asking all of them to read it. And it was a mess, in the sense that they all started to call me and ask me, “But where did you find this? We have never read something like this.”

What did I do? Am I an expert about marriage? No, I have read *The Religious Sense*. Do you realize what Father Giussani put in our hands potentially? I have not taken a marriage class to prepare for this. I have simply judged based on the experience that he describes here. This is that intelligence of faith that becomes intelligence of reality. And one is amazed about this by finding it. We can give our contribution about everything by going on this path, because this becomes a cultural judgment, a way of staying in reality exactly from the point of view of a judged experience.

She said to me, “I went to the lake a couple of days ago with a friend. We set on a bench and read it, and I read it with her [this friend is an affirmed journalist, with a difficult background; she is separated with two children, but very smart]. I finished reading it and she was amazed. All of a sudden she too said, “I have never read something like this, but where did you find it?” Two days later I called her and said to her, “Look, I have read it over and over again, that passage about the sign. [Because you continue by explaining the true nature of a relationship which is the sign, and she caught that passage. This left me speechless.] We should put it on a leaflet and hand it out to people everywhere.” Then another friend called her, telling her about the same things. This is an example of an experience in action with a judgment that can be used to read reality. This is pertinent even in concrete circumstances. It’s not abstract at all.

That’s it. This is the promise. As Father Giussani said, “My life has known happiness on these conditions,” with this capacity to judge. This is for us. If we walk on this path, we too can enjoy this gladness.

For next time, I will ask the same question about reason. Let’s not think that we have solved the question of experience; let’s leave it open, because, as you can see, our test was not that great! I am saying this because if someone has an experience this week that can help us, anybody can share it next time. Now the second big chapter is reasonableness, and the question for us is,

When have we been amazed to see a true use of reason by us, i.e., as an awareness of reality according to all its factors, and when have we sensed the reasonableness of our actions? These two things are connected, but different at the same time. This is why I ask you to work intensely on the text. If we read this chapter with the urgency to discover in experience what Giussani witnesses to us, then it's different. If I had asked you what experience is, I believe that all of you would have given the right answer; witnessing about having one is something different, as we have seen.

The next School of Community will be on **March 9** at 9:30 pm, on the second chapter, "Reasonableness" (from page 12 to page 22).

The book of the month is a simple tool that we give ourselves to educate ourselves to read. It is another way to encounter, through rich expressivity, the witness of people who take their walk toward the destiny of their lives seriously. An example of this is the book of the month for **March** which is *Light of the World: A Conversation of Benedict XVI with Peter Seewald* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana). As Prades writes in the book presentation in this month's *Traces*, "Before any word is exchanged, what towers in this book is the very presence of the Pope and of his humanity." This book presents the witness of a man who is not afraid of anything and who doesn't need to defend anything. However, this man, from the point of view of faith, is interested in everything, and looks for truth in any issue.

Fraternity Exercises / Beatification of John Paul II

Many people call our office to find out more in detail about the beatification, and for this reason, they have not yet registered for the Fraternity Exercises. The fact that the beatification and the Exercises are on the same weekend cannot be a reason not to go to the Exercises, not at all. What would that mean, then?

The celebration will take place in Saint Peter's Square in Rome, beginning at 10:00 am. Participation does not require any admission ticket. There will be large screens specifically set up for the occasion in other points of the city. Information about these points, along with indications of parking areas for buses and cars will follow.

At the moment there are no other announcements.

So, don't wait to register for the Exercises until you receive more information, because we will have it much later than March 14, which is the deadline for registration for the Fraternity Exercises. So please don't let a lot of time go by before you make a decision.

Now let's pray.

- *Glory Be*