

Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón
Milan, February 9, 2011

Reference text: Presentation of the book The Religious Sense by Luigi Giussani (McGill-Queen's), Palasharp, Milan, January 26, 2011.

Song: "Mare nostre"

Song: "Negra Sombra"

Glory Be

Let's start our work following the provocation of the last School of Community, where we tried to present the purpose and the method of our work: the religious sense, verification of the faith.

For me it was very helpful to listen to a GS girl who spoke about the Palasharp meeting last Thursday. The fact that, to tell us what had struck her, she started from how she had gotten up on Wednesday morning, made me curious from the very beginning. She said that she was sad and not eager to start the day because a few days earlier her Italian teacher, whom she is very attached to, had left on maternity leave – a teacher, she said, who provoked her even in the way she called the students' names. On that morning, while she was looking for an excuse to stay home and not go to school, she noticed that, unusually, her dad had gotten up very early. She asked him why he had gotten up so early, and her father answered that he it was because he wanted to have a head start, since he had to help her mother. She immediately realized the difference: "How different it is to get up in the morning if somebody loves you. If you feel loved, your action always starts from something positive, so much so that you get up early." Right away her thoughts went back to her teacher and her way of calling students by name that reminded her every day that she was loved. So, she said, "But what I have encountered with my teacher is still present. It is true. So now that she is not with us, I am still the student being called by name." So that morning she got a box of chocolates, went to school, and started to give them to her schoolmates. The first girl reminded her that in the evening they were going together to the meeting. The second girl asked her, "Listen, how do you think it's possible not to feel crushed when things don't go the way you want?" So in the evening she came to the Palasharp with this question, all out of breath, partly due to the public transportation strike and partly because she had to argue with her parents who didn't want her to go. At one point, she asked herself, "Why am I here now?" And she answered, "When I heard these words, 'Reality, which presents itself originally to our reason as sign, is reduced to its perceptively immediate aspect, deprived of its meaning, of its profundity. For this reason, we often suffocate in the circumstances... When reality is reduced to appearance, it becomes a cage,' I was taken aback, and in that moment I understood first of all that I was in front of someone who was responding to me, and not leaving out anything that is me – someone who was reading my experience and answering the questions I had come in with, and so answering my friend's question."

What you said answers many letters and reactions to the meeting of January 26. I am going to read this letter as a representative of some of the reactions: "Dear Julián, I decided to write you because the presentation on the other evening was really hard; I could not follow you. Furthermore, since I had invited some new friends, I kept putting myself in their shoes and this probably gave rise to all sorts of concerns that possibly prevented me from listening to you freely. At the end of the meeting, I

found myself facing two groups of people; some shared my position completely and they were annoyed, too. They were asking, 'Why did he speak in such a difficult way in front of so many new people, in front of students who are so young?' However, I also faced many people who came out of the meeting surprised and who, confronted with your difficult words, started a true work; they let themselves be provoked, instead of stopping (like me) to judge and distance themselves. I couldn't stand and I still can't stand the people in this second group, but in the end I deeply long to share their position. So I am asking you: What needs to happen, or what did not happen in me to make me take the step that many others took, that is, letting myself be provoked by what you said and facing it, instead of letting my judgment, that changes nothing, win? I realize that I am sort of stuck. Most of all I desire this simplicity and openness in front of what I don't instinctively understand and agree with." I think that this letter sums up the difficulties we have in facing the fact that we have lived together. Even a difficulty that we experience, or being stuck, does not quench the desire of having this simplicity that we see in others. What does the fact that the kids – sixteen years old! We heard it – were able to grasp things immediately say of all our objections? It is as if they all were to crumble right in front of our eyes, because it is not a problem of intelligence, or of being capable, or of studying, or of being more educated in order to understand. I am answering this by reading two other letters. One person writes, "I am telling you about the repercussion I felt at the presentation. I realized that I wasn't at all concerned over not having understood everything from an intellectual point of view, or over the friend I had invited. On the contrary, almost paradoxically, precisely that lack of understanding made me desire more strongly to look at the unfathomable that was present in front of me. I also heard the disappointed reactions of some friends who were saying, 'Hard,' or 'Difficult to understand,' but in turn I reacted by pointing out how this claim, that in some instances I recognized as an expression of anxiety and deep fear, had been and was obliterating the event that was present in front of them, making it impossible to enter and follow the fascinating journey of true knowledge that provokes us at the exact moment that we encounter the Mystery. As always, it is a matter of method. In fact, I was struck by your reminder to 'focus on the consequence of refusing the mode God chose to respond to the person's need for total meaning, a need inherent in the religious sense. "Without acknowledgment of the Mystery present, night advances, confusion advances, and..." rebellion advances, or disappointment so fills up the measure that it is as if we no longer expected anything.' On the contrary, to stay in front of the Mystery is completely different: it opens the horizon of knowledge up wide, and so it makes you glad, and bolder in front of reality. Looking at my experience as well, the inherent danger in the presumption of understanding is that of obtaining a pre-made recipe for living. This is an illusion that quickly and miserably fades in the impact with reality, precisely because it prevents you from getting started and blocks that journey of knowledge that you proposed to us, beginning with the encounter. Going back to my personal repercussion on that evening, I repeat that I was totally enthusiastic at the prospect of the journey that was being proposed. I was full of desire and eager to discover what might be revealed during the journey, and certain of a personal advantage that you were witnessing to us in that moment. The moving force of the witness is exceptional, as long as we look at it with simplicity." This is not small thing: look at what Father Giussani says in describing John and Andrew: "They did not understand [he doesn't say that they understood; they didn't understand!]; they were simply captivated." What does it mean to understand? When did you understand your girlfriend better: when they gave you more information about her before you knew her, or when you felt captivated by her presence in the flesh? And to be captivated, something more than instructions is necessary; it is necessary to have that simplicity that lets itself be attracted by something that is in front of it. This is critical: otherwise we will only be

able to understand what we have already decided to understand. John and Andrew were two fishermen, says Father Giussani: many Publicans and Pharisees, likely better educated, were with them, but only two persons were captivated. This is the difference. For years we have repeated some sentences or the logic of a thought (and maybe we did it consciously, with true awareness), but how many times were we captivated? The kids may have a simplicity that often eludes us. In fact, another letter says, "I wanted to tell you of my immediate reaction after the meeting at the Palasharp. Since I am a teacher, I had invited some students who didn't end up coming. 'What luck!' I thought, 'If they had come here, how could I have invited them to the Easter Triduum or to the vacation? They wouldn't have believed me anymore.'" In fact, I thought it was a difficult lesson to follow, even for me, and I think I know *The Religious Sense*. Then I asked the GS kids what they thought, certain that I would get nothing but silence from them, and so I was preparing myself to give another lesson, possibly simpler than yours. But what happened instead? First of all, nobody said that it was difficult. After giving the definition of the religious sense, a boy said, 'If I didn't misunderstand, it means considering all those questions we have inside us and finding out where they can be answered.' The questions started coming, with each of them referring to his or her own experience. The most frequently asked question was, 'How does one learn?' There they were, eager to start a journey. As this was happening, I felt ridiculous. In the end I was truly grateful and eager to go home to go back over the entire lesson with the same gaze that my students had. They were definitely not concerned about understanding so that they could regurgitate it; they only wanted to see it happening. I reread the lesson with their faces in my mind, and everything felt new. [This is what is necessary to get in: it is necessary to be there with their faces in our eyes, because then everything is new. We've said so many times, but with empty words: "In our hands the texts; in our eyes the facts."] I started to intuit the novelty you introduced: the religious sense as verification of the faith. Faith is recognizing a Presence now, through Christ here and now. His presence here and now was given to me by the presence of the kids [the kids: the Lord has pity on our nothingness, on how incapable we are, and He answers us, not with another lesson (as she wanted to do), but by making something happen, giving us a witness, someone who has been captivated], by the simplicity with which they stayed in front of the fact. [This is what we need in order to face everything: we need an event to happen again and to reawaken our humanity, because she, who had not understood, after seeing her students, now starts to understand. Did she suddenly become intelligent when before she was stupid?] I did not want to miss any opportunity to verify the certainty of the victory of faith over any circumstance, and I started to go to school looking at what He was making happen, and taking responsibility in front of everything without fear of making mistakes. [No, we are not stupid: the problem is that in order to enter this knowledge, His presence here and now is necessary, and not expressed as a formula or logic, but as a fact that happens through the carnality of the kids. It happened in the same way at the beginning of Christianity, as Father Giussani said.] This made it possible for me to face, with great freedom, a young kid who is going through a difficult family situation (I provoked him so that he could express his truest question), or to stay in front of my friend who has been sick with cancer for years without feeling the weight of that situation, or (worse still) of the injustice. With the encounter, we were given the gift of certainty that it is only He Who fulfills life; and this lasts (we cannot continue to question it, because we are adults), but without His presence here and now it does not change us! This is a grace that we need to ask for, and it happens (in spite of us) when we least expect it." This is why it is important that the lesson at the Palasharp (I don't want to justify how I decided to do it) be the opportunity to identify where the difficulties are and to be able to see what happens, what it means to understand. Because it is not

a problem of understanding: the lesson was easy. Look, if the Event does not happen again, the “I” is not reawakened and we don’t understand anything. It is simple. Do you understand? Simple, because it is what Father Giussani says when answering Scola in the piece I quoted: ‘The heart of our proposal is rather the announcement of an event that happened, that surprises people in the same way that the angel’s announcement two thousand years ago in Bethlehem surprised the poor shepherds – an event that happens, before any consideration of how religious or non-religious the person may be [whatever his level of education]. It is the perception of this event that resurrects or empowers... the complex of original ‘evidences’ that we call ‘the religious sense.’” It is simple. Without this, Christianity is not reasonable, because it is not able to reawaken life. Why should I be a Christian, then? Instead, when it happens, it is simple, as we can see. In this way it is simple.

I saw everything you just mentioned happening in the relationship with a coworker who was transferred to the location where I work six months ago. Since the moment he was transferred, he never left us alone. He doesn’t leave us alone; he is always there, asking with his eyes wide open, “Can we go out to eat together? Can we do this? Can we do that?” A week before the presentation of The Religious Sense he told me, “I have to tell you something. You know, yesterday I went home, and I have two children and when we have dinner I always ask them, ‘What beautiful things did you do today?’ and the children told me the beautiful things they did. Then it is their turn to ask me, ‘Daddy, what did you do today?’” Happily, he answered, “I went to lunch with a coworker, a woman from my office.” His wife stiffened and asked, “It was just the two of you?” He said, “Yes, our other friends couldn’t join us. It was just the two of us.” After dinner, his wife saw him playing with the kids and, amazed by it, told him, “Given the way you are playing with the children, you should have lunch with your coworker every day!” I was struck, and I told him, “You have to invite her to the meeting at the Palasharp!” He answered (he is shy), “Look, I will try, but I don’t know.” In short, his wife accepted. The next day he told me, “Do you know what happened yesterday? While I was going to the meeting with my wife – we were driving – she started to say, ‘We never go out by ourselves, never, and the one time we can go out you have to take me to see your CL friends! And why are we going there?’ ‘You tell me why we are going there,’ I said. She answered, ‘Because you are not yourself anymore.’ Then we got closer to the Palasharp, and she exclaimed, ‘The Palasharp! Last time I was here it was two years ago at the Unità (Democratic Party) festival.’ We got in and she, who is a teacher, saw all this silence and asked me, ‘Why all this silence?’ I answered, ‘Look, they asked us at the entrance to be silent and so we are going to be silent.’ When Carrón started to talk about John and Andrew, she elbowed me, saying, ‘This is you, because you are still you, but you are more yourself.’” That is to say, the same unmistakable traits of the past (which is what we need) happen again today – today!

It is simple.

For a long time I asked myself, “What is this religious sense? What does it mean for me?” But I never wanted to make the effort to understand it no matter what it took. Now I want to tell you what I am experiencing, so that I can understand if I am close to it, or if I am still light years away from it. I have been in the Movement for almost fifteen years, but it is as if I had met it only three and a half years ago. About this, I am going back to something you read from Father Giussani: this surprise of the poor shepherds is my surprise, and it brings me back to my encounter. I often heard that one remembers the day and the hour of the encounter, and I have

always gotten upset, because if they had asked me when I had the encounter, I would not have been able to say it. I was making an effort, but nothing came to mind. Now, instead, I can tell the moment when I finally recognized Christ at work: on September 29, 2007, at Beginning Day, which was the turning point. I heard your words as if they were addressed directly to me, no longer to this or that person (because often, when I would hear those things I would say, "I wonder if so-and-so heard this, because it was meant for him."). Instead, in that moment, it was me in front of the Mystery: I perceived that I had to leave my small fraternity group that felt a bit constrictive to me, and I realized that there was only one Fraternity; the rest was only to help. This decision opened me up to the world. It was as if before, for more than ten years, I had a cataract, and then, with a simple procedure – the encounter I had – I had become able to see everything with clarity, incredibly beautiful. I discovered that Christ, whom for years I wanted to see at all costs, making the effort to understand, was there like when as a child I used to feel Him present in my family. The difference was that now I was recognizing Him as a living presence and not as a moralistic feeling. At last I am experiencing, like Andrew, the signs of the reawakening of my humanity, and thinking about it, I can't help being moved. It had never happened to me to do the washing, to iron, to cook, to clean the house, etc., not as a duty (because you have to keep the house clean for your husband and for your children), but for myself, because I discovered that it is beautiful to think, in what I am doing, of the relationship of my dependence with Another Who makes me. The total dependence on Him makes me understand that it is not I who am doing things, but Another Who is at work through me, Who is using me: me, so full of limitations. How moving! This dependence was made clear thanks to a dear friend who, when we were facing the big decision of answering the proposal of adopting a child with Down Syndrome, told me that God's design already existed, and if that child was meant to come to us, he would come. At the beginning, after answering yes, I was almost demanding the result, thinking that if I had said yes to such a big thing, for sure the result would come. On the contrary, as more and more days went by, I became more aware of growing more dependent instead of demanding. So when we were told that the child had been assigned to another family, I wasn't disappointed. Afterwards, though, I almost thought that having said my yes to God, without the responsibility of following that child for my whole life, was making me say, "Beautiful: I gained points without even trying." So now after two months, God is calling again, and we received a request from the Association of Families for Hospitality almost identical to the previous one, another child with Down Syndrome who needs to be adopted. We confirmed our yes, but with a greater certainty, that I am not doing anything: it cannot be my work; I would not be able at all. Why would I ever do something like this? Also, this is a consequence of the change that has happened in me, generated by the relationship with Christ present. As Saint Paul says, if one is in Christ he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; new things have come. I feel almost unworthy, but grateful for having been chosen to become a new creature.

Thank you. This is the newness born of the encounter: it takes away the cataract, because it is a presence so full of life that reawakens the "I." We can see it in every fact you told us, from cleaning to ironing, to cooking, even to the welcoming of a son with Down Syndrome.

What you said at the presentation of The Religious Sense helped me understand an encounter I had. When I was in high school I met someone who was decisive for me, because of his humanity, his human vivacity, the things he helped me understand, the things he had me read. It was also decisive for me, for making me aware of Christ when I met Him. I encountered the

movement and followed it, and he didn't. I was so amazed when we met again after almost thirty years. I was kind of wounded by the fact that his humanity was no longer the same as then. He had become skeptical, and I was not. He was so impressed by this (just as much as I was) that at a certain point he said, "Because you have changed, you have remained the same. Whereas since I did not want to change, I am no longer the same." I was extremely moved by this encounter, because I realized as never before that the hundredfold deriving from my encounter with Christ is my humanity that remains faithful to itself. It is the possibility of not losing myself, it is my desire to live that I still feel at fifty years old, and that those who are my age have lost. I was very struck by this. I realize that Christ is with me here and now because it's through Him that my heart lives, and not because I become a better person. And on the other hand, I realize that I treat Christ as something I know, as something obvious (that is, Christ is no longer a presence with me here and now, but a topic I always talk about and that never happens), whenever I look for a verification of my faith in morality, that is, in what I do and not in what I am.

"Because you have changed, you have remained the same." If we are open to this change, we remain with the youth that Ada Negri speaks of: "You are another person, one more beautiful."

I wanted to ask you a question. You already started to answer it, but I still have some objections. If I don't clarify this with you, they will remain. I wanted you to explain the meaning of "an intelligent and affective sequel" of the movement. In my experience, I realize (also based on what has been said) how much the affective factor is important in my encounter with Christ, so that this relationship will not consist in simple intellectualism formed of many images, or an abstraction that cannot change anyone's life, but a real relationship that leads to an experience of fulfillment. I can think of many examples, but I want to be brief. The problem is that I feel that this affection happens as something that is not in my hands, that it does not depend on me. This affective attraction must happen, but I am not responsible for its happening: I can wake up in the morning and desire it, but that it happens in a certain reality so that it can change my existence every day, this does not depend on me. So I ask you: What does it mean when you say, "If we don't want to be accomplices with power, we need to follow the movement in an intelligent and affective way?" I would say that this affection does not depend on me. I would like ...

This affection does depend on you. Generating the fact does not depend on you, but recognizing and adhering to what you recognize, this does. Unexpectedly finding a girl at a party does not depend on you, but when you find her and you are there right next to her, you cannot get away from your wonder, being so attracted by her beauty. Giving in to this attraction, to this intelligent and affective *sequela* [following]: this is up to you. That she is there, no; that you adhere to that attraction that the Lord puts in front of you, yes. The issue is, then, that we are more and more educated to that religious sense that enables us to take in His presence. For example, this evening you heard many things. Now I ask you: What does an intelligent and affective *sequela* mean for you today, after what you have heard? Where have you recognized Him present, where have you recognized Him here and now, not just in words ("But look! What this person said is impossible without Him!"), so much so that you were moved? And what does this depend on? It does not depend on the fact that it doesn't happen, because all these things we have heard this evening are impossible, as you were saying: it's impossible. That it happens doesn't depend on you, but that one is open, or is aware of this, depends on the simplicity that we were talking about. More and more in my life, I feel that many things were happening in front of my eyes, and before, I was

not aware of them. Now they seem to jump out at me. What does this intelligence mean that can grasp His presence in small gestures, and that the people who talked this evening witnessed to us in many ways? It's what Father Giussani says about John and Andrew. For us, intelligence is something complicated. Many times, it's a reason that explains things. But Father Giussani says that the summit of reason is a reason that opens up, so that the problem of intelligence is all there in John and Andrew. This is an education to the religious sense. You can get educated in the religious sense by responding with all your intelligence and with all your affection to what happens in front of your eyes. And this is your responsibility: adhering, following, and giving in to attraction. You may cut it off: "Not now, because it complicates my life"; you may cut it off, or give in. That you feel attracted does not depend on you, but giving in does depend on you. It's easy, it's easy: you just need to give in, but this giving in is yours. This is your greatness; this is your dignity. This is your human greatness. The Mystery bends down to you; He doesn't want to overwhelm you. So we educate ourselves, not in order to "think" about the religious sense, but to have more and more simplicity in front of this happening, without any "buts," without any objections, without blocking our attraction, by constantly giving in to His presence.

I was very struck two weeks ago when you proposed that we reread The Religious Sense from a perspective of verification of faith. I was struck, because in many years of life in the movement during which I read The Religious Sense on various occasions, I had never considered this aspect, and I had never thought about it; I had not hit upon it. This question begets an impressive dynamism in life, because it provokes a verification of His presence in concrete life. That evening, I can say I had the same experience as John and Andrew in a mysteriously different way. Who, on that evening, could have talked to me in a way that so corresponded to me, in such a loving way, in such a deep way, as if Someone knew me even more than I ever thought I knew myself, if not His presence through the charisma, that is, through the space that you (I have to say I felt this) opened up that evening to His presence? And this begot a reawakening of my heart and my life in the past few days, a different way of looking at circumstances. For example, my coworkers: not all of them are nice, and we disagree; we argue. But finally I looked at them as family, because their consistency is the same as mine. And paradoxically, my distraction, which I have all day, and against which I constantly fight with little result, is affected by this fact. So I am starting to be able to look at reality in a true way, in a way that I, by myself, due to my limitations, would not be able to do.

The exact same experience: because if it were not so, Christianity would not continue. What John and Andrew had would be one thing, and what we do would be something else. We couldn't verify faith. We would be here verifying something else, not Christian faith as it revealed itself in history.

I am a computer consultant. A few months ago I went to an office and I saw piece of art that I found very impressive: two pieces of wood painted in two different ways, one light blue and the other green, one next to the other, forming a vertical line. These two shapes were connected with a shoe string that looked pretty worn out. So I asked who had made it, and then I went to meet the artist, an accountant who works for that same company. And he said that those were two different shapes, like the body and the soul, the sea and the land. That string was his attempt to stick a meaning on to them, to bind them together. So the first thing I thought about was Congdon. At a certain point Congdon started to paint his pictures with a line, but his line is horizontal, and divides heaven and earth, and that line, which divides them and unites them, is

Christ. Moved by this observation, I gave him the book about Herman the Cripple. I wanted to tell him that what makes the truth and beauty of life possible for me is Christ. After this event, I wanted to have a relationship with others in every circumstance without hiding my being Christian. This reminds me of the phrase by Alexis Carrel that is written in the first chapter of the book: "Few observations and much discussion are conducive to error: much observation and little discussion to truth." Observing is not simply seeing: my boss often tells me, "You are a nuisance, because when others go, there are no problems, and when you go, there are" – probably because I observe too much. So then the problem is, why does one observe too much? Why is one moved this way? Everything (I find it in accounting), for me it's as if it declared this beauty. The fact that something is wrong, that it goes bad, is in fact a lesser beauty. What I am realizing is that the only thing which enables me to keep this observation alive is prayer. However, I often feel contrasting feelings about prayer (and I see them in my friends too), that is to say, I feel fear, shame, and sometimes anger too: "Why do I have to pray to You?" But I understand that, without clinging to this with ones finger nails and teeth, one can't

How did the School of Community correct you this evening?

What corrected me?

You mean nothing happened throughout the course of this evening!?

The point is that ...

In what you are saying, are you referring back to the religious sense or to faith?

What do you mean?

Exactly. I'm going to ask you the question again: What did we say awakens the "I"? An encounter, that is to say, His presence: can you understand? And we need to ask to be able to recognize Him. What is the origin of prayer? That we are there, vigilant, with this desire, begging to recognize Him at work, just like John and Andrew. This is very important because otherwise, as you are saying, praying is detached from His presence now. Prayer is asking, begging for this; it's memory, that is to say, recognizing His presence that reawakens us now. For this reason, the way you are reawakened, that the cataract falls off, is by recognizing that historical presence which is the answer to our prayer, which is called Christ, in time and space with us, with us here and now. Christ makes you able to look at everything in a different way. Is this clear? Thank you.

We have already begun to get a glimpse at the promise of the course that we are about to begin. Next time, we will start with the first premise, "Realism." With his three premises, Father Giussani helps us understand what the decisive factors of a true knowledge are, as we were just saying, of a true relationship with reality, so that we can know it, as someone was saying before: "I so long for this simplicity, this openness that can enable me to grasp reality." And what is the method that Father Giussani proposes to us? We can summarize it in these words: the journey to truth is an experience. The method he offers us is experience, and we need to be aware of this because usually, as Father Giussani says, most people, when burdened by worries, entrust themselves to what others say: Aristotle, Plato, Kant. And we can also add Father Giussani to the list. But this would be against the method proposed by Father Giussani himself, because Father Giussani said to his students on their first day of religion class, "I am not here so that you agree with the ideas that I am going to give you, but to teach you a true method to judge the things that I will tell you." This is the perspective, this is the method that he proposes to us: experience. Imagine what it would mean for sixteen-year-olds that a professor should give them the method to judge even what he would tell them! Nobody does this. What an exaltation of humanity, and

what certainty that what he would tell them would be true! They would be able to recognize it themselves. But they would be able to recognize it only by using this method, because this method is not just *a* method among others, but *the* method. It's because experience, as Father Giussani says, is reality rising to man's awareness; it's reality becoming transparent. For example, if we need to understand what love is, the Lord will not give us a lecture on love, but will give us a family or have us fall in love. To have us understand what the reawakening of the "I" is, He becomes flesh; He has us encounter Him, as we heard today, because otherwise we wouldn't have known what we are talking about.

That's why we need to be ferocious (and I swear I will be) about this method, because we have no interest at all in coming here to hear what other people think or what I think; what interests us is that each one of us comes here to tell his or her own experience. That's why, in order to have an experience, we need (as we'll be able to see) a criterion, which is the heart. The more one is aware of the original needs and evidences, the more he will be able to judge. This judging will be the beginning of liberation, of newness in life, because we'll begin to understand.

So I offer a clue for your work in the next two weeks – because you can no longer talk here without using the method of experience: When have you had an experience, when have you been surprised to experience this liberation in a judgment? Father Giussani says, in fact, that judging is the beginning of liberation.

School of Community: We will meet on February 23 at 9:30 p.m. on the first chapter, entitled, "The First Premise: Realism" (pages 3-11).

I remind you that taking part in this School of Community is totally up to you, as I have always said. If someone feels that there is another place that is more helpful, then he should go there. Second, this meeting does not take the place of the already existing groups doing the School of Community. I repeat: this is a free proposal, but everyone who would like to should be able to participate.

In these next few days, all over the world, Masses will be celebrated on the occasion of the **sixth anniversary** of the death of **Father Giussani** and the **29th anniversary** of the pontifical **recognition of the Fraternity**, a recognition encouraged and approved by John Paul II.

This year our gratitude to God is even bigger because of the beatification of John Paul II, as I wrote in my letter to the Fraternity, reminding you also of his deep relationship with Father Giussani. In my letter I wrote, among other things, that "we cannot find a more adequate way of showing this gratitude than by following his authoritative warning: 'Never allow the parasite of habit, of routine, of old age to lodge within your participation! Continually renew the discovery of the charism which has fascinated you, and it will more powerfully lead you to make yourself servants of that one power which is Christ the Lord!'"

On the CL website you will be able to find the list of the cities where Masses will be celebrated. In Milan, the Mass will be celebrated by the Archbishop on Monday, February 28, at 9 p.m. in the Cathedral.

About May 1 in Rome, we have no precise information yet about the schedule and the plans for the **beatification of John Paul II**. As soon as we have this information, we'll let you know.

Since many asked, we'd like to point out that the Exercises of the Fraternity will end in our conference center on Saturday night before supper. Our departure for Rome will then be decided

upon and organized separately by each group. This will also apply to the adults who won't be present in Rimini for the Exercises, for university and for GS high school students.

There is an important change also regarding the **Exercises for adults and young workers**. The new date for the Exercises is **May 6-8 in RIMINI**.

I would like to remind you that these exercises are first of all for people who are not enrolled in the Fraternity, and they can be an opportunity to invite new friends.

Let's pray.

Veni Sancte Spiritus