

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

Reference text: The Religious Sense by Luigi Giussani (McGill-Queen's), pages 12-22.

Song: "Errore di prospettiva"

Song: "Lela"

Glory Be

We assigned ourselves two questions for our work over the past two weeks: (1) When did we recognize ourselves using reason in its truth (as an awareness of reality according to all its factors), and (2) when did we perceive the reasonableness of our actions? These two questions were meant to invite each of us to discover when this happens in our experience, following the method Father Giussani taught us from the very first chapter: the starting point for making the journey is called experience.

I wanted to say something specifically about this method, because I decided to do the School of Community these past two weeks by answering these questions, even before trying to have a clear understanding of the content. What happened? Within the first two days I already had them answered, because I said, "Never" – meaning that I had a hard time with the question. This pushed me to consider the content as well. By looking at the content and especially by reading all the examples he gives on reasonableness, I realized that I had never understood that reasonableness is a need, and so I was making the mistake of interpreting your question as "When have I been good at using reason?" And I was stuck, because the obvious answer is never. But reasonableness is a need! So everything changed, because after this I started looking for when I caught myself feeling a need for the totality of the factors. In that moment I really started to answer the question, because for the first time I finally perceived reasonableness not as a need, but as a requirement. I discovered that the knowledge of something really happens through an encounter, because first I had to accept the fact that things were not completely clear to me, and then I could begin to answer the question.

I thank you, because this introduces us to the kind of work we are trying to learn how to do. As I am well aware, you did know the premise already, what reason is, what reasonableness is, but what pushed you to also reconsider the content of what the text says was the perception of a need. I was already struck last time by the fact that we often have the same difficulty in judging: we think of judging as something added on, pasted on to reality (and then, saying that it is necessary to judge is something that complicates people's lives). And if anyone leaves here with this basic conviction, even if he learns the "what it is" of judging, it's useless to him. If you have a friend or a loved one or your mother with the symptoms of a grave illness and she starts to undergo tests so that the nature of the illness can be understood, do you feel judgment as being urgent or not? Or do you think that this is something pasted on? That what matters is to get on with it, and to forget about judgment? When life presses upon us, judging is a need. It is an urgent need: I need to know if my mother has cancer or not! Judging is a need! If we don't understand this, if we don't sense this in our experience, even if we study all the passages of the first chapter perfectly, it will always remain just something for people who complicate their lives, and we will definitely not feel it necessary for having an experience of liberation. We can

apply this both to big issues and to small concerns: how many times in the past two weeks did you feel the need to judge them? Often we endure them; there they are, looming over us, making life heavy, and yet we don't face them, we don't judge them, and so we never experience liberation. We may have reread the entire chapter from *The Religious Sense*, but if this doesn't happen, we haven't learned the chapter. I thought of this as I was listening to her speaking, thinking back on some of the urgent needs you wrote to me about in your emails. I received more than two hundred emails. This means that when we are corrected, we do start working. For example, many are concerned that we are going too fast; it may be true, but what interests me in this regard is that we become aware of a mistake: taking more time to repeat the right definitions doesn't make us automatically use reason in a truer way. In fact, many of us do know the true concept of reason. I am sure that if I asked, "What is reason, according to Father Giussani?" everybody would answer, "Awareness of reality according to all its factors." Am I right? Everybody. But even with the right concept of reason, a person can continue to be a rationalist, that is, to use reason as a measure! This is the problem. This is why, in the presentation, we said that it is Christ present here and now who makes it possible for reason to become fully open, allowing a person to reach an understanding of reality never before known; every circumstance, every single thing, even the most banal, is exalted, and we grasp its full meaning. Who makes us able to use reason like this? Reading *The Religious Sense* again with more determination? Is a deeper study what makes us automatically experience Father Giussani's words?

The first thing I thought as soon as I read the question you asked two weeks ago was that it is impossible. To be aware of reality according to all its factors is a utopia. I was locked in on an image I had of reason as measure, that is, as the ability to analytically list all the factors that describe what is happening in front of me. In the end, what freed me from this image were two experiences where I discovered myself living reason not according my image, but according to the nature of the fact. I had the first experience on the weekend of the Assembly for the Responsibles of Italy held in Pacengo.

Page One of the March issue of *Traces* is taken from this day, entitled, "The Evidence of Experience," which I encourage you to read.

There in front of me, an event happened that was so fascinating, so totalizing, so "for me," that the only thing I had to do was to become aware of that Presence that was happening, that is, to once again become aware that Christ is Memor mei [the One who is mindful of me] (in spite of all my wretchedness). As you said at the Palasharp, "In Christian faith, there is no longer a reason that explains, but a reason that opens itself – recognizing itself to be fulfilled in its operation at last – to the self-revelation of God Himself." And in front of the fact of Christ, this happened again with impressing evidence, especially when you say that reason is fulfilled in its operation. I lived this in my experience, because there, I was one with myself, as a desire to be happy, as a capacity to recognize that Christ is true, real, risen, not because we say it, but because I can recognize Him in reality. And there, in that experience, I recognized that I am made for this passivity in recognizing Him, because when it happens, you realize that reason is this openness to recognize Him when He bursts forth into your life. The second experience: I was having dinner Saturday evening with a group of college students, and one of them told me that about a year ago one of his friends died in a car accident and that a few months ago another friend, who was also about my age, committed suicide. What can you say to a drama like this? The shock was so great that at first I felt I wasn't able to say anything reasonable, anything deeply true. But even there I found myself recognizing once again that, first of all, there is an

irreducible factor in me, that I am relationship with the Mystery in this very moment because I am, because I exist, because in me there is a need for meaning that is bigger than anything that surrounds me. I am this infinite relationship right now, and this core of myself that I became aware of since I encountered Christ a year and a half ago cannot die, cannot be swept away, because it is not reducible to this world. This core that is present in me, that is me, is the truth of those two young men who died, who did not end up in nothingness. I am certain of this: not even death can break the connection that I have with the Mystery. For me, recognizing this connection that evening was using reason in a true way, that is, recognizing the totality of the fact that was placed in front of me. I really didn't have any place in their lives; I don't even know their names, but perceiving them as made and willed by Another meant recognizing reality in its totality. One last thing: for me, this is another sign of faith pertaining to the needs of life, that is, that my reason remains wide open without succumbing to grief, to shock in front of something like that, because, once again, it was broadened by what happened to me that weekend, that is, by the imposing presence of Christ in my life.

Thank you. If we look at these two experiences, what do they tell us? That reason is able to be its true self in front of a fact that captivates it completely (this is why Father Giussani keeps saying that John and Andrew are the example of what understanding is, of reason that opens up, that is fulfilled) or in front of death, where all of its urgency surfaces. It isn't the repetition of a concept of reason: it's seeing this concept of reason happen (which Father Giussani then defines). But where does Father Giussani get this definition of the concept of reason? And where can we get it? We can get it from the recognition of the experience we have. Then we understand the content of the text, and when we read it, we say, "Ah! That's it!" But for now, we haven't yet grasped the passage we described in the presentation (and since you all expected me to "explain" *The Religious Sense*, you were thrown off balance), because all that Father Giussani said to us is that we cannot reawaken our religious sense by ourselves; we cannot reawaken our reason, reawaken the need of our "I" and our whole freedom. For this to happen, Christ is necessary, because only He reawakens, educates, and saves the religious sense. This is why education to the religious sense happens constantly in the way we live life. The question is whether or not we are attentive to what is happening. Then we can start to understand what Giussani is saying, then we can return to the text and reread it, and then every word takes on a concrete, carnal aspect. This method is not different from the one we described in the Bible, quoting Saint Augustine: "In our hands the texts, in our eyes the facts." This is the work I propose to you and that Father Giussani proposes. If he says that we are not able to reawaken the whole of the religious sense, he says so because he has the awareness that made it possible for him to write *The Religious Sense*, because something happened to him that made him understand. So, "in our eyes the facts." And with the facts in our eyes we can go and reread the text, and then we will understand it and we will stop saying that the text is complicated, because it is complicated only for someone who changes the method. For something to happen that throws everything wide open and that leaves you speechless is not only difficult, it is impossible. But when it happens, it is very easy, even if we cannot generate it. Then a person understands that the true concept of reason is reason that opens up and understands that it has all the factors as never before – as happens when a person falls in love. It isn't the analysis of everything (the hair, or the face, or the height), but the capacity to grasp reality in all its factors so that, never as in that moment, you grasped, you understood what is in front of you; never before as in that moment, reason became reason. Never as in that moment, reason fulfills its nature as reason: awareness of reality according to all its factors. This is the exaltation that the Christian religious experience makes possible. I am going to read to you

how this then becomes a tension toward entering into everything, for example, into work: “Dear Father Carrón, first I wanted to tell you that I find the questions you gave us to guide us in this work extremely helpful. I leave home in the morning, carrying these questions inside, with a tension toward seeing how the Mystery is going to reveal Himself in my experience. I discovered that it is really the attraction of Christ that makes this openness easy, an openness which would be impossible without Him. I am starting to experience what you reminded us of at the presentation of *The Religious Sense*, that is, that the presence of Christ here and now allows reason its full openness, enabling it to reach an understanding of reality previously unknown. All things, all circumstances, even the most banal, are exalted, become a sign, ‘speak,’ are interesting to live. There are many small instances when I recognized this position of openness in myself toward work, family, and friends. For example, the other day I received a call from a client who needed help with something that is not my responsibility. I was telling him that I was going to connect him with my coworker who deals with such things, when he interrupted me, saying that he had been calling for the past twenty minutes, getting this same answer every time. I realized that this was one of those troublesome calls that nobody wants to deal with, and so this tossing back and forth between coworkers starts. In that moment, the experience that one of my friends had came to mind. She told me that she was learning various aspects of the company she works for from each coworker, and that this was possible precisely because of her position of openness that let her grasp every aspect with a previously unknown attentiveness and understanding. I realized in a split second that I was dealing with a little piece of reality that I had to look at, that I had to get to know, and not dismiss just because it was annoying. Only if one starts doing this can he have the experience that life is not primarily something to be endured, but that there exists the possibility of getting something, something interesting for the self.” This can happen with work, or it can happen when you study.

To answer the two questions (When have we recognized ourselves using reason in its true sense, and when have we perceived the reasonableness of our actions?), I want to tell you about an event. I graduated two months ago from a three-year program with a thesis on Russia in the work of Clemente Rebora. The purpose of my work was to try to understand what might have drawn the poet toward Russian culture, and what fascinated him about this culture. It’s a fairly common belief, based on the few writings related to this interest of his, that Rebora got close to Russia thanks to his relationship with a Russian pianist. However, to me it seemed like an insufficient explanation that didn’t exhaust all the questions I had about why he was so engaged with this culture and why he preferred some authors over others. As I read Rebora’s letters, I started forming hypotheses and having intuitions that were slowly becoming sharper; however, I was always reluctant to say what I was thinking, and I was waiting to find confirmation for my hypotheses in the work of some critic who was certainly more expert than I and who knew more on the topic. I kept thinking, “If this critic who knows more than I doesn’t say it, who am I to say it?” Even when I was faced with some clear data, it was as if I was afraid to state my opinion, unless some expert had confirmed it. So, I went to see a professor at my university who has written many books on this topic, and I told him my thoughts, hoping for his support. However, he told me that I was going in the wrong direction, that it was better to do a work that was more technical and that the only true reason Rebora had for getting close to Russia was the woman he had fallen in love with. I left there, convinced by his words, and I started working again, trying to show the facts that linked Rebora to Russia. These ties kept growing, but my question about the reason for his involvement, to understand what he found so interesting, would not go away.

On the contrary, as soon as I began a more in-depth study, it started to grow stronger than ever. So I decided to pay attention to it and to try to answer it seriously. A very interesting field of study opened up that made me get to the bottom of the question and really meet the poet. In the end, I was surprised by how, as I faced a committee of philologists who could have criticized many aspects of my work, nobody could say a thing against it; rather, I was able to add something to this topic. Even if I am not the greatest expert on Rebora, I can say that I really got to know him and to make him my own. As I was doing this work, I would sometimes ask myself what it meant to be a Christian while working on a thesis, and what Jesus had to do with all this. I often tried to stick a label on something, saying, "Jesus," but this didn't change anything, aside from a short-lived rush of feeling. What really became clear was that, on my own, I wasn't the one who gave myself this understanding of my topic (because I see that I'm usually just scratching the surface) and that it is not the fruit of a complete familiarity with Rebora (because, as I said, I am not an expert). Yet I found myself having a reason that was able to be aware of all the factors at play and that prevented me from dismissing the questions that surfaced in me when faced with what I was studying. I realized that the hundredfold here below that we talk about is not something abstract, but is this truer way of possessing something.

This is an example of how the fact that happened to us can make us use reason in a way that doesn't hold us to the "already known" of others, but continues to live this tension toward entering reality, acknowledging the desire to consider all the factors, even those which others have already rejected. And we can do this with any aspect of reality. Specifically on this point, I am again going to read what one of you wrote to me: "When have we recognized ourselves using reason in its true sense? I am thinking of all the times I fall prey to a sad melancholy. In those moments the gaze I have on the reality called 'I' has a tendency to be pessimistic, disappointed. In those moments, being reasonable means asking myself, 'Am I, then, what I can see right now? Am I only the mood that comes over me?' The answer is 'no.' No, because I am *desire*, proven by my very unease, I am a history that has many positive moments, I am relationships that I can look at, and I am destined for a good that I have already started to taste. Being reasonable means lifting my gaze up high, not to disillusion myself, but to see things that my mood obscures. Then I realize that in that moment I am also verifying the truth of faith, because not being afraid of my infinite desire is something that is continuously being taught and reawakened. The positivity of my history as a man comes entirely from the encounter that I have had. My journey in the movement, which is long by now, and many other examples bear witness to me of the certainty of a good destiny. So I can conclude that even moments of melancholy are a leg of my journey, and I am amazed to experience what would otherwise seem impossible to me: a glimmer of gladness. [We can begin to perceive this glimmer of gladness as an experience by using reason in this way: it's not that he had a who knows what kind of "rapture": he simply didn't get stuck in using reason as a measure.] And I find myself using this same reasonable way to look on others [we can imagine it in friendships; we can imagine it between husband and wife], which is more than the reaction I see them grappling with, than the problems they present, than the mistakes they make. This is not an attitude of being morally good. It is nothing but a judgment of reason. The same thing happens in looking at the reality around me. How often do I find myself seeing things that, apparently, others can't see: the sunset, or a lady having a hard time getting on the bus with a stroller? Here, too, it is not a matter of some sort of morality, but of reasonableness. So then everything begins to have a weight, an intensity, a capacity for depth that makes everything different." So how can we acquire this position more and more? What makes it possible? What makes it possible is the continuous reawakening of reason by an event that

educates us to use it in this way, until it becomes more and more mine, more and more ours. And the more a person feels this, the more he goes back to the book with this in mind, with this urgency to understand more. Why, then, do we read *The Religious Sense*? Because this is where we can find the description of what reason is, what reasonableness is, what certainty is, and then we can make a comparison. We can really understand the importance of what we read not just intellectually, precisely because it happens. So the question is not just a matter of giving ourselves more time, but living with this intensity, because it's there that we can learn, not in definitions that all of us would be able to repeat almost perfectly. You won't become less of a rationalist by criticizing reason (as Kant demonstrates). Who frees us from rationalism? Who educates us to live reason according to all the factors, to know reality? This is what Giussani used to tell us: "Look, this happens through an encounter, through a relationship," not by obstinately persisting or by just reading the book constantly – just as we wouldn't understand everything just by reading the Gospels. Why? Because only by looking at the facts in the present can we then read them [the Gospels] in all their depth. I think this is crucial for the journey we are following. Otherwise, we may lose what Giussani so insisted upon: that the starting point is the Event as a method, and that this Event (the encounter with Christ here and now) exalts the elementary evidence, exalts the use of reason, exalts the sense of reality, exalts freedom; it exalts and strengthens everything. And this is really crucial because otherwise, a second after January 26, we're already lost, expecting an answer only from a deeper, more intellectual understanding. No! Because if we realize that we're not using reason in a healthy way, it's not that we need to "learn" the content of the book better, but that, with simplicity, we have to live the Christian Event that enables us to use reason just as Father Giussani shows us.

I wanted you to look with me at the last thing that came out in our work on the School of Community, and also to finish with a personal question. The event that got this started was an encounter I had with a coworker who was telling me about the objectively serious problems he has with his son (in my opinion these problems were maybe made a little more serious by his position, and his wife's): "You see, we have consulted many specialists; many have given us definitions, and nobody will tell us what to do." Faced by his anguish, the first thing that I thought was, "Well, he's right." At the same time, while he was talking to me, I tried to open some files to find something to tell him; then, the only conclusion I got to is that what has made me able to bear the blows and drama of life time and time again was not having an instruction manual, but the journey that you incessantly propose to us again and again, namely, starting from my humanity just as it is and from reality as a possibility to know and verify the hope that I have encountered. Only through this totally personal work, where nobody can replace me, can I re-encounter the only point that holds and fulfills the need that my heart cries out for (both in moments when the drama rages and in the moments when you're overwhelmed by a deep joy that you know you are not giving yourself, and that you can't sustain, either). This is when a bunch of things started happening where I realized that in relationships, even in normal conversations that we have, we are often in danger of looking at reality deceitfully, as if we were expecting something from it that will solve our problems – as if, in the end, the fact that we are talking about is something that happens and fixes us – and so somehow, there is always a big disappointment. Even though it's true that we can truthfully say that reality is Christ – that we have experienced a correspondence that allows us say, "Where can we go, if far away from here?" – I know that this does not spare us from having to constantly re-walk the journey.

Not only are we not spared having to do it: this is the only thing that makes real life possible! Am I clear? Most of us don't do it because we're already stuck. We are not spared anything, as we can see; and without the reasonableness which comes from the Event, when faced with death, we stop. When faced with challenges, we're stuck; faced with circumstances, we stand still. What is the difference? Not that we are spared the work of reason, but that something has happened to us that makes us able, in spite of everything, to still make this journey. Because of our education and of what has happened to us, we can really live as men with all the needs of reason, with the whole journey of freedom; we can live the circumstances, not just submit to them. This is the verification of faith, because without Him, we can't even dream about this! It's not that, because we have encountered Christ, we are spared life; we are not spared anything, and we don't want anything to be spared us. But we can look reality in the face, we can use reason, we can make a comparison, we can enter reality, we can wait expectantly for Him to reveal Himself in front of our eyes. Without the Christian experience, as you can see all around you, it's unthinkable. If Christianity comes up short, then humanity comes up short! The use of reason comes up short, the use of freedom comes up short, comparisons come up short – everything comes up short. This exaltation and bursting forth of humanity is what we expect from this place. I have told you many times that I am grateful to Father Giussani first of all because he enabled me to walk a human journey. It's not that I didn't have faith, but a faith lived in this way, like the one he witnessed to us, is what reawakens all our human capacity, reason, affection, freedom, intelligence, everything.

So much so that I went back to read everything you said on January 26, and it had a whole new aspect.

This is the dialogue we need to have when we are talking with one another. Just as she went back to read it, and so to understand it a little more, so we can reread the chapter about reason after this meeting, or tomorrow we can reread the one about morality in knowing. This is a dialogue that never ends. It's not that by spending more time on a premise we can understand it more. We can understand it more because, by living and going back, living and going back, we can finally experience what we are talking about.

So my question is, this thing you say all the time, "I would like to never be spared anything," why does it always make me feel a little uncomfortable?

Why do we want to be spared things? Because we don't know how to face them. But when a person has the right tools, he wants to get right into things. Try and deny this...

I may not understand everything yet, but...

Do you think that a person who begins to study like that, as we heard our friend explaining before, would want to be spared things? No. These things are what awaken all of her desire to study more. If only she would have started to study like this from the beginning, just imagine! A festival, and certainly not a burdensome study! And so too with life, every day. This is the promise. But if we don't experience that faith has this purpose, why would we care about faith? If it's not because it reawakens all our capacities – reason, freedom, affection, everything, our whole "I" – and makes us able to enjoy our lives, I don't know how it is reasonable.

One thing that I understand is that, with a humanity like this, I don't care about anything else.

Exactly. So, when we have this humanity, not only do we want to be spared nothing, but we want to enter reality in this way.

I wanted to talk about the death of my father-in-law. It was the perfect evidence that it's impossible to keep the heart quiet and not to judge. My father-in-law had a very serious accident

two weeks ago. They resuscitated him, took him to the hospital, and attached him to several machines. When we got there, first of all, although we were in the midst of a tragedy, amazingly, we found that we were calm. We looked in each other's faces and we understood that how we were was the result of this work. It was impossible not to judge, not to let our hearts talk. There was a meeting with the whole family, and the physicians very demandingly said, "In an hour you have to decide whether to detach the machines or not." They gave us criteria, but in a very brutal way, with no humanity, so that the whole family felt resistance against this pressure. In that moment, it was clear that one has to enter reality and understand the reasons for what is happening. I was struck by this. It's a difficult family, and at the end of the meeting with the physicians there was a lot of confusion. My husband immediately asked for a room to meet with the family and talk. I looked at him and said, "What is he thinking? Doesn't he know what this family is like?" I was very impressed to see my husband so calm in that situation. He told me that without the awareness of the presence of Christ, without prayer and the visible unity between us, he couldn't have done this. When he told me these things I thought, "This is why: You are here; Your presence has entered through his freedom."

What did you learn from this?

"What do you say? What is your judgment? Why?": We went looking for the notes from the School of Community; we went back and read. We were asking one another...

You see? When life presses upon us, we really go back to everything we talk about together.

Exactly – we couldn't let go of it. I was very struck, because at the end of the funeral they had all the family members sprinkle the coffin. When it was my turn, it hurt when I looked at his photo on the coffin: "I'll never see you again." And that's when I started to understand the meaning of "either Christ or nothing," and I said, "Thank you, Christ, for doing this, for giving your life for him and for me, for saving me in this moment," because my heart can remain open in the face of death, even with this wound, but only if I know that He has done what my heart desires deep down. It came to me that keeping my need open in front of Christ was like having the sense that my heart is He Himself, and so I don't have to be afraid of anything. I was crying, but I was really glad. We went back home, and our work goes on.

Thank you. I connect what you are saying with a text by Father Giussani from 1989 about Our Lady that one of you suggested to me. In it, you can see in action what the use of reason means. The title is "Mary: Faith and Fidelity" and it is the Page One of the May 2007 issue of *Traces*: "I would like to immerse myself in that moment, when there was neither the Angel nor anything else, and Our Lady was there, as I said, a fifteen-year-old girl, alone, alone with the Event, which she didn't yet feel within her, couldn't feel within her, but that she understood; she understood that it had happened and would develop. She could think of her parents, she could think of Joseph, her betrothed, and of the people, of what they would say; alone, alone, there was nothing left to lean on. In that moment, she reached the apex of what is called 'faith': the faith. The greatest production of man's freedom before the Infinite is the capacity of faith, which is seeing the Infinite, seeing the Mystery within apparent things. To all appearances, there was no longer anything there, but she believed; she maintained her adherence to the evidence that had happened to her; she understood – and adhered to it – that within, behind that apparent silence of things, the great Mystery for whom humanity was made, Who up until then everyone, especially His people, was longing for in various ways, had happened. She understood and accepted this, notwithstanding appearances. In fact, faith is acknowledging the great presence of the Mystery, the Mystery of the Father and the Mystery of Christ, the Word made Flesh, the Mystery of God Who made Himself present, identifying Himself with the precariousness of matter. In her body,

that of a young, a very young woman, God was there, and in that humble little house, full of darkness, God, the light of God, was there. Seeing God within, as perspective, within things, because all things – all the more those near to us, all the more those we love – are a sign, the introduction to truth, to true life, to truth and life, that is, to God, God made man, because He became flesh within her.” This is what faith is. Only in faith is it possible to overcome the appearance of things (that is, the use of reason reduced to a measure). May this use of reason become familiar among us, so that appearances may become a first invitation to enter into *being* and so to get to the You! Each of us can see how often over these past two weeks he’s used reason in this way, by looking at reality, not imagining it, but entering into it. This is what this work introduces us to. As you can see, it’s one thing to know the definition of reason, and another thing for it to become familiar in the way you live. This is where we are constantly supported and challenged by Christ’s being here and now, by Christ Who pulls us out of our distraction and helps us. And so we can see what Father Giussani used to say about John and Andrew: reason that finally becomes itself.

We will continue our work next time with the chapter on morality and knowledge. Of course, let’s not tuck anything we have said up to now away in an archive. In this chapter, that is, the third premise of Father Giussani’s introduction, knowledge comes into play. We already mentioned this at the last Fraternity Exercises: freedom is always at play in knowledge. This is why Father Giussani says that the core of the problem of human knowledge is not in a particular capacity for intelligence, but in the right attitude toward reality. This attitude is called morality, and it can be defined in this way: loving the truth about the object that I want to know more than my opinions about it. Or, more succinctly: loving the truth more than oneself. Father Giussani summarizes this on pages 31 and 32: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs’ (Matt. 5:3). But who are the poor? The poor are those who have nothing to defend, who are detached from those things that they seem to possess, so that their lives are not dedicated to affirming their own possession. The individual who is supremely poor in spirit is the one who, in the face of the truth, desires truth and nothing else...”

But since we live in history and are full of preconceptions, full of images, caked with crust, penetrating this crust takes work. I’m sorry, but it doesn’t happen all at once. I’ve always been struck by the final paragraph of the third premise: “But what can persuade us to engage in this *ascesis*, this labor and this training? Man, as a matter of fact, is moved solely by love and affection. It is the *love of ourselves as destiny*, the affection for our own *destiny* that can convince us to undertake this work to become habitually detached from our own opinions and our own imaginations (not to eliminate but to detach ourselves from them!), so that all of our cognitive energy will be focused upon a search for the truth of the object, no matter what it should be. This love is the ultimate inner movement, the supreme emotion that persuades us to seek true virtue.” Here we focus on love for our own destiny and love for ourselves.

Here are the questions I would suggest, since we need to start once again from experience: When have we been amazed at recognizing the impact of morality on knowledge? What do we learn from the challenges we face in using morality in this way?

The next School of Community will take place on Wednesday, **March 23**, at 9:30 p.m. on “The Third Premise: The Impact of Morality on the Dynamic of Knowing.”

Our Fraternity reminds us of the importance the Church has always attributed to liturgical seasons, because with its rhythms, liturgy stirs us to go to the depth of our Christian experience. This is why the Fraternity is proposing a Lent retreat.

The retreat consists of a message from a priest based on an outline that I have prepared for the occasion; there follows a time for silence (because staying in front of a Presence fills you with silence), an assembly, announcements, and Mass.

The Lent retreat, together with the Advent retreat and the Exercises, are the way our Fraternity accompanies not so much the group, but the person, each of us, with a gesture of communion, as we go deep into the truth about ourselves, and as we stay in front of the discovery of our own hearts, as they have been reawakened through the encounter with the charism. This is why I would like to remind you: the Lent retreat is a privileged opportunity to look face to face at everything we are living, especially Him.

Tomorrow, Thursday, March 10, the Pope's new book will come out, entitled *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*. The Cultural Center of Milan is organizing the first public presentation of the book next Tuesday, March 15, at 9 p.m., in the conference center on Corso S. Gottardo in Milan. Among the speakers are Rainer Riesner (Protestant exegete, representative of the School of Tübingen, and a friend of the Holy Father) and Father Pino. To participate in this meeting reservations must be made online or by phone with the Cultural Center of Milan (in order to guarantee a seat). Let's pray:

Veni, Sancte Spiritus: Veni per Mariam.