

Czestochowa Pilgrimage August 2015

Message from Julián Carrón

“The greatest joy of a person’s life is feeling Jesus Christ alive and vibrant in the flesh of one’s own thought and one’s own heart” (Fr. Giussani). Nothing turns our world upside down like seeing Christ vibrate in the core of our being, not as a devout remembrance, but as a Presence that plows into our life.

Dear friends, as you go to Czestochowa, ask Our Lady that Christ may be the center of your life.

Pope Francis reminds us that “the pilgrimage is a symbol of life; it makes us reflect that life is journeying, is a journey.” And with this boundless gesture of charity, he warns us, “If a person does not walk, but remains still, it doesn’t do any good, it doesn’t help at all. Think of water: when water is not in the river, it does not go forward but is still and becomes stagnant. A soul that does not journey in life doing good, doing many things that must be done for society to help others, and also that does not walk through life seeking God and for the Holy Spirit to move you from within, is a soul that ends up in mediocrity and in spiritual wretchedness. Please, do not stop in life!”. What a gift to be able to walk supported by such a trustworthy companion!

Thus, you will have something truly crucial to ask for: that your life never stay still, because you are entirely taken by the Risen Christ: “The culmination and the apex of the intensity of our Christian self-awareness is in the mystery of the Resurrection, therefore of the new self-awareness of myself, of the way I look at all people and all things” (Fr. Giussani), beginning with myself.

May His presence in our gaze, cherished in our memory, become ever more familiar in us, so that we may look at everything with that Presence, even our failings. “All of us have fallen in life, made mistakes, but if you have made a mistake, get up right away and keep on walking. ‘Sing and walk,’ said Saint Augustine to his faithful; walk with joy and also walk when your heart is sad, but always walk. And if you need to stop, let it be to rest a bit or to catch your breath in order to keep going forward later. Sing and walk! Always, sing and walk! You do this pilgrimage ‘caressed by mercy.’ The mercy of Jesus forgives everything, always awaits you, always loves you so much” (Pope Francis). Ask Our Lady for this familiarity with Christ, to testify in any environment in which you find yourself living—university or the world of work—the newness that He has introduced into our life.

But since we are fragile, and you could get discouraged or distracted during the pilgrimage, the Pope invites us not to be shocked by this, supported by the light of these words: “Christian morality is not the titanic, voluntaristic effort of those who decide to be coherent and who succeed, a sort of solitary challenge in front of the world. No. This is not Christian morality; it is another thing. Christian morality is the response, the moved response to the surprising, unexpected mercy, even “unjust” according to human criteria, of One who knows me, knows my betrayals and loves me anyway, esteems me, embraces me, calls me again, hopes in me, expects of me. Christian morality does not mean never falling, but always rising, thanks to His hand that pulls us up.”

Who could continue walking without this certainty? Who could look at their own life with its burdens and the load of their own mistakes without this certainty? Immersed in this great Mystery, walking together truly can be a grace for everyone. And yet so often we would like to have everything clear before we begin, and this blocks us. Imagine a young man who falls in love with a young woman, if he said, “Should I throw myself in or not throw myself in? Before doing it I have to clarify my ideas, I have to be certain...”. How could he hope to reach certainty about that relationship without risking? He has to begin taking some steps. Already in the initial moment he has the light necessary for taking the first step, because that girl has kindled his interest. With others, he does not have the desire to see them again, but with her, he does. So then he sees her again, and thinks that it is really beautiful to spend time with her, and so he takes another step, and then another, and still another. And over time things become clear. But we forget that life is like a seed

that develops over time: John and Andrew did not know where Jesus would lead them, but they could not resist the desire to go seek Him the next day. In that first encounter they perceived something exceptional that made it reasonable to follow Jesus; adhering to what they had seen, walking with Him, over time, everything became clear.

At every step toward the Black Madonna, on the sixtieth anniversary of the beginning of the Movement and ten years from the birth to Heaven of Fr. Giussani, ask for yourselves, for me and for all our friends throughout the world, that we may live our charism according to what Pope Francis has asked of us: as the way Christ invites us to follow Him today, acknowledging that He is the center. Praying for the Pope, ask to be so simple that you may follow him affectively and effectively.

Together with you on the journey,

Julián Carrón