

1. A Fact at the Origin of a New Life

by Julián Carrón*

The goal constantly pursued by God throughout history has been that of generating a person who loves Him freely. “To that liberty, [...] I have sacrificed everything, God says, to that taste I have for being loved by free men, freely.”¹ This was the promise of the “New Covenant” announced by the prophets.

So then, here is the question. Did God’s effort succeed? In Jesus, did God succeed in generating this love, this freedom, this adhesion? Has He managed to evoke a free “I,” capable of acknowledging Him? In other words, has God justified Himself in front of the reason and the heart of the human person? If we can respond affirmatively, if He has succeeded in His effort, then there is hope that this outcome can happen in us, too. We will not be condemned to remain prey to ourselves, to the precariousness of our whims and our powerlessness.

“The greatest thing that God has made known to us in our history in the past twenty years is the *yes* of Saint Peter,”² Fr. Giussani said in 1995. In fact, his pages about the *yes* of Peter are among the most original and spectacular ones he left us, and at the same time, among the least understood because they are so shocking, so beyond our ken. We need to let ourselves be taken up in his testimony, his accent, in order to experience the meaning on the gut level, to be able to understand, because only an experience, not detached reflections, enables us to understand.

Fr. Giussani starts surprising us with the first sentence. “The twenty-first chapter of John’s Gospel is a fascinating documentation of the historical birth of the new ethic. The particular story narrated there is the keystone of the Christian conception of man, of his morality, in his relationship with God, with life, and with the world.”³

Let’s try to grasp the full revolutionary import of this introduction: that the keystone of the Christian conception of the human person, that is, of a conception that is more comprehensive and corresponds better to the human person, to morality, to our relationship with God, is a fact in history. To put it another way, the keystone of a gaze upon ourselves and others that is finally adequate, is not a lesson in Christian anthropology, but a particular history, without which I would not understand the anthropology either. Following the common mind-set, the thing we consider almost irrelevant, because it is not replicable by our own efforts—a par- »

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© 2016 Fraternità di Comunione e Liberazione for the texts by J. Carrón “I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have had pity on your nothingness”.

» ticular history cannot be translated into a “model” and thus cannot be repeated according to the scientific method—and because we deem it too fragile to be a weapon against the ideologies that reduce the human person, and thus we are tempted to eliminate from consideration, for Fr. Giussani is the keystone of everything. As Jesus says of Himself, “the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”⁴

If we want to understand these things thoroughly, we must necessarily return to how this new intelligence and new morality entered into the world. In this sense, Fr. Giussani’s appreciation of the value of the gospel stories as method never ceases to amaze. He allows himself to be taught by them constantly and never stops learning. Instead, the second time we read them we think we already know them! If we want to avoid repeating our mistake, let’s try to follow Fr. Giussani as he immerses himself in the gospel story. Let’s not treat what we hear as something “we already know,” but let’s be open to being struck by each detail, as if we were hearing it for the first time.

¹ Charles Péguy, *The Mystery of the Holy Innocents, and Other Poems*, Harvill Press, Glasgow, 1956, p. 121.

² Notes from a meeting of the Diaconia of CL in Spain with Fr. Giussani, Milan, May 15, 1995, conserved in the General Secretariat of CL, Milan.

³ Luigi Giussani, Stefano Alberto, and Javier Prades, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal, 2010, p. 59.

⁴ *Mk* 12:10.