

8. A *yes* is all that is needed to change your life

by Julián Carrón*

At this point, an objection could arise. Fr. Giussani loves Jesus, but unfortunately I do not love Jesus the way he loves Him, as some have said. “*It is obvious that Giussani loves Jesus and I, instead, do not love Him this way.*” Fr. Giussani responded, sweeping away all their excuses “Why do you object? What objection can you make? Why do you object, talking about what you may not have and what I may have? Why, what do you think I have? I have this *yes*, that’s all. It would not cost you an iota more than it costs me. Your objection misses the mark, or better, shows that you are just looking for an excuse, a pretext. Your self-evident, publicly acknowledged defects and errors [...] are only a pretext for not saying *yes* to Jesus. Saying *yes* to Jesus. [...] There is nothing simpler. ‘I don’t know how it is; I don’t know what it’s like. I know that I have to say *yes*. There is no way around saying *yes*.’” I could say *no*. I could have said it when I was seven years old. At the age of seven you can be so proud as to refuse to say *yes*. (When you are seven you can refuse.) It is even worse when you are fifteen. When you are twenty, *comme ci comme ça*. But afterwards, that is enough. You are simply, openly, consciously an impostor, or you say *yes*.¹

We have all sorts of misleading images of this *yes*. But to say it, no particular courage or ability are needed: you just have to give your consent to that affection that is born of Him. The *yes* is born of the unmistakable experience of correspondence. It flows from the acknowledgement of a Presence connected to your destiny. You just need the sincerity to acknowledge the experienced correspondence, to yield to the evidence of a unique gaze on your life. This is how God justifies Himself to our heart.

Having traveled this journey, now let’s try to compare God’s method testified to in the *yes* of Peter, and the method we use more or less consciously with ourselves and others. What do we think is the source of change in ourselves and others? What method do we use? What method do we discover ourselves using when we act? God’s method? If this is not the case, if this method does not prevail, we succumb to a dualism in which Peter’s *yes*, however admirable we may find it, is reduced to piety, devotion, religious sentimentalism, even spiritual isolation, and instead we use something “else” to live, to face the situation, relationships, and social and cultural life.

Giussani warned us about these things long ago, in 1977!: “For many of us, saying that salvation is Jesus Christ and that the liberation of life and of humanity here and beyond is continually bound to the encounter with Him has become a ‘spiritual’ concept.” “The concrete reality would be something else.”² »

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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”.

» The dualism is seen in the change of method: we do without the particular history generated by Christ as method for transmitting the Christian conception of human beings, to kindle their adherence, their morality; and instead, we depend on something else. In other words, on the one hand we reduce the import of the encounter with Christ and on the other, we consequently entrust ourselves, with anxiety or presumption, to what we know, according to widely accepted ways of thinking.

In this way, it is as if the source of a new culture is our intelligent efforts at analysis and development, which can in no way be a particular history, or the *affectus* for a fact, for the event of Christ present. And when this happens, inevitably the criteria and the perspectives of judgment are altered by what the “supermarket” of the world offers us, even if we are not conscious of it. Having reduced the encounter to a spiritual inspiration or an emotion, we draw upon other sources for our gaze upon reality: this is how dualism works its way into our hearts.

Instead, “new knowledge and new morality,” insists Fr. Giussani, “have the same origin. For Simon, son of John, and for Paul, the origin of the new knowledge is identical to the origin of their new morality—a present Event.”³

The origin of a true culture and a new morality is an event, a particular point, a Presence full of attraction, and the attachment to it. To begin to realize this, just look with a minimum of sincerity at what has happened to each of us. It was not because of an effort we applied that we found ourselves acknowledging dimensions and depths of the human that we had not seen or we had rejected before. No effort of our own has made us capable of gestures we would not even have imagined before—it was because of an encounter, renewed over time, to which we have adhered.

The encounter with Christ through a certain human reality is what opened our eyes, expanded our reason, breaking through measures and prejudices, changing our way of treating everything. What has happened to us is the only way for those outside our companionship as well. Today we see clearly that insistence on Christian anthropology does not suffice to change our way of looking at people; simple repetition of the content of Christian morality does not suffice for changing our way of relating with reality. We had to wait for the Mystery to become flesh, for an encounter to happen in our life, because without His Presence, without the Presence of Christ here and now, Christian anthropology and Christian morality do not take root in us. Here it is decided whether we follow what Christ has shown us or not. Often, ignoring how Christ does things, we think we can reach others in another way. Instead, the same fact that happened to us, that happened to Peter, has to happen to them, and they have to recognize and embrace it, as we did at the beginning of the journey. It cannot be different at any point on the path. This is the starting point for the imitation of God.

¹Luigi Giussani, *L'attrattiva Gesù [The Attraction of Jesus]*, Bur, Milan 1999, pp. 203-05.

²L. Giussani, *Il rischio educativo [The Risk of Education]*, p. 61. (The Viterbo 1977 section was printed in the original Italian book, but not selected for the English translation.)

³Luigi Giussani, Stefano Alberto, and Javier Prades, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2010, p. 56.