

“Is there someone who fascinates you? Would you follow him?”

“TRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE”

3. Authority

by Luigi Giussani*

Peter, the most representative person in the community, stands up and speaks, and he is heeded.¹

In our particular milieu some individuals have a greater sensitivity to the human experience; *in fact* they develop a deeper understanding of any given situation and of others; *in fact* they are more likely to influence the movement that builds a community. They live our experience more intensely and with a greater commitment. We all feel that they are more representative of us. With them we feel closer to, and stay more willingly in community with, others. To acknowledge this phenomenon is to be loyal to our own humanity, a duty spurred by wisdom.

When we discover ourselves helpless and alone, our humanity spurs us to come together.

If we meet someone who better feels and understands our experience, suffering, needs, and expectations, we naturally are led to follow that person and become his or her disciple.

In that sense, such persons naturally constitute *authority* for us even if they do not carry special rights or titles. Naturally, above all, it is one who most loyally lives or understands the human experience who becomes an authority.

Thus authority is born as a wealth of experience that imposes itself on others. It generates freshness, wonder, and respect. Inevitably, it is attractive; it is evocative. Not to value the presence of this *effective authority* that His Being places in every setting is to cling pettily to our own limits. The Jews said of Christ: “This is one who has authority” and they abandoned the schemes of the Pharisees to follow Him.

The encounter with this natural authority develops our sensitivity and our conscience; it helps us to discover better our nature and what we aspire to from the depths of our present poverty.

¹ Acts 1:15-22.

* Source: *The Journey to Truth Is an Experience*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal 2006, pp. 56-57.