



FRATERNITÀ DI COMUNIONE E LIBERAZIONE

associazione di diritto pontificio civilmente riconosciuta

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Milan, February 7, 2018

Dear friends,

As you know, I had the joy of being received in a private audience with Pope Francis on Friday, February 2. My desire was to share with him, the guide of our Christian people, the steps we have taken since our momentous meeting with him on March 7, 2015, in St. Peter's Square.

1. First, I told him about the journey we are making in order to make the charism we received from Fr. Giussani increasingly *ours*. You will all remember how the Pope called us to “pass on the flame” of the charism by letting it enter more deeply into our persons.

2. I then thanked him once again for the letter on poverty that he sent us at the end of the Jubilee of Mercy, which served as the basis for our last Fraternity Exercises. Related to this, I mentioned a few of the many initiatives responding to people in need—low-income families, the elderly, immigrants, people with disabilities, and others—that have sprung up into our people as a fruit of the education in gratuity that we receive through Charitable Work.

3. In light of preparations for the upcoming Synod of Bishops on Young People, I gave the Pope a brief summary of our passionate commitment to educating them; a commitment shaped by our desire to respond to their need for a road that leads to fullness in life. They still aspire to this, though at times they may be confused or pursue false images and paths that cannot satisfy their hearts.

Our conversation confirmed for me how much Pope Francis cares about listening to young people, whether they believe or not, whether they are indifferent or seeking. This is the reason—he told me—that he decided to invite young people from all over the world to Rome for a meeting before Palm Sunday: so that he could get a first-hand sense of all the questions, interests, objections, and concerns that they have. You can imagine how happy I was to be able to share the path of education on which we are accompanying young people in our attempt to help them regain an authentic affection for themselves and discover how Christ is present now. He is present through an encounter—as the Pope said to us on March 7—with the phenomenon of a humanity that is different, inspiring wonder and a desire to belong. What a weight of responsibility I felt in responding to the task we've been given in history!

4. Lastly, I spoke to him about the many meetings and conversations with people who come from cultural or religious backgrounds that are different from ours (secularists, Jews, Orthodox, Protestants, Muslims, non-believers, etc.) which have taken place over the last few years in Italy and around the world. All this, in an attempt to follow his invitation to be “centered in Christ” in order to be a “Church going forth.”

To my final question of whether there was anything he wanted to tell me, since our one desire is to follow him, the Pope answered, “I would just like to thank all of you for what you do,” encouraging me to stay the course. I perceived this as an invitation for me and for each of you, that we might experience what Fr. Giussani describes, that in “living within the ecclesial community [...] [we might] attain that certainty and clarity of truth which we need in order to face life” (*Why the Church?*, McGill-Queens, Montreal 2001, p. 169).

As he said good-bye, while I stood at the door of his private library, he asked me to continue to pray for him. How can we help but sense all the longing in such a request? Let us ask the Spirit of the Risen Christ to help him to carry the weight of the entire Church! Let us respond with all the awareness and affection we have in us to this entreaty. Let us beg the Lord that the Pope never lack the grace needed to fulfill the task assigned to him, to be the Lord’s witness to all people, as the Pope shows us each day.

On a related note, I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to encourage you to consider the proposal Pope Francis made to all of us after the *Angelus* last Sunday: “Faced with the tragic protracted situations of conflict in different parts of the world, I invite all the faithful to take part in a special Day of Prayer and Fasting for Peace on February 23rd, the Friday of the First Week of Lent. Let us offer it in particular for the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo and of South Sudan. As on other similar occasions, I also invite non-Catholic and non-Christian brothers and sisters to join us in this initiative in whatever ways they deem most appropriate, but still together” (February 4, 2018).

With affection and gratitude for each of you and growing every day in wonder at the journey we are making together,

Yours truly,
Fr. Julián Carrón

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julián Carrón". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.