

SEE, I AM DOING SOMETHING NEW: DO YOU NOT PERCEIVE IT? (Isaiah)

Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation Rimini, April 27, 2018

Notes from the Introduction by Julián Carrón

“See, I am doing something new: do you not perceive it?”¹ The capacity to perceive things belongs to the nature of the human being, and is part of our greatness, unmatched by any other creature. Unfortunately, we often tend to take things for granted and live superficially. Yet who among us, looking at the faces in Caravaggio’s painting and listening to the *Fac ut ardeat cor meum* in the *Stabat Mater* by Dvorak, did not desire to be seized like those people, who were overwhelmed by a knowledge of Christ that penetrated their hearts? But we wonder how we can ever know Him this way, fragile as we are. This is why Jesus offers us a great consolation: “You need the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will lead you to the full truth.”² Let us then ask the Holy Spirit to lead us to a knowledge of Christ present in reality and history that makes our heart burn within us.

Come Holy Spirit

I will begin by reading the greeting that the Holy Father has sent us: “On the occasion of the annual Spiritual Exercises for the members of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation held in Rimini, entitled, ‘See, I am doing something new: do you not perceive it?’, His Holiness Pope Francis sends his cordial and well-wishing thoughts. He invites you to have a living experience of Christ present in the Church and in the vicissitudes of history, changing your life so that you may be able to renew the world with the power of the Gospel. The contemplation of the face of Jesus dead and risen restores our humanity, even when it has been fragmented by the toil of life or is marked by sin. The Holy Father hopes that all those who follow the charism of the late Monsignor Luigi Giussani may bear witness to the concrete and powerful love of God, who truly works in history and determines its final destiny. As he asks you to pray in support of his Petrine ministry, he invokes the celestial protection of the Virgin Mary and gladly imparts to you and all the participants the apostolic blessing you requested, extending it to those who are following by satellite and to the entire Fraternity. From the Vatican, April 27, 2018, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of His Holiness.”

1. The consequence of a shift

A quote from Fr. Giussani that we used at the Beginning Day has remained with me like a goad or spur: “At the beginning we built, we tried to build on something that was happening [...] and that had bowled us over. No matter how naive and shamelessly out of proportion it may have been, this was a pure position. This is why, because we have in a sense abandoned it, since we have settled on a position that was first and foremost, I want to say, a ‘cultural translation’ rather than the enthusiasm for a Presence, we do not know—in the Biblical sense of the term—Christ, we do not know the mystery of God, because He is not familiar to us.”³

¹ *Is* 43:19.

² Cf. *John* 16:13.

³ L. Giussani, *The Work of the Movement. The Fraternity of Communion and Liberation*, Società Cooperativa Editoriale Nuovo Mondo, Milan, 2005, p. 102-103.

The consequence of the shift from the enthusiasm for a Presence to a cultural translation is that we have not grown to know Christ. You can see that we do not know Christ by the fact that He is not familiar to us.

It seems to me that there is no greater challenge than the one contained in this provocation: if along the road Christ has not become more familiar, our interest in Him will grow increasingly feeble, and then everything we do will be a consequence that is increasingly detached from its origin, like a dry branch, that will leave us more and more disappointed, with a bitter taste in our mouth.

The work done at the Beginning Day gave each of us the opportunity to take stock of the journey we have made in these months. How can we understand whether we have grown to know Christ better? What signs help us to understand?

Fr. Giussani gave us a criterion of verification for recognizing whether Christ has truly entered and is entering more and more into our life, whether He is becoming more familiar day by day. To understand it, all you have to do is refer to an elementary experience each of us has: we see that a presence, a person, has entered into our life to the point of becoming familiar when this determines our way of facing everything and of staying in front of things and circumstances. Just think of your children. On the contrary, when this familiarity is not there, or is not there sufficiently, the point of departure remains the same as before: a certain impression of things, the frameworks we bring with us. We can all see it.

This is no different from what happens with Christ. If in fact the event of Christ has no impact on my way of living and staying in front of reality, in front of situations and daily challenges, if *the event of Christ* present does not determine the form with which we live circumstances, this means that we face them like everyone else, starting from the *impression* that they evoke in us, and like everyone else, we end up suffocating in a life that “cuts your legs out from under you.”⁴ The result is evident: a life dominated by our “impressions”—just think of how you wake up certain mornings—does not increase our enthusiasm for Christ, but rather, makes faith increasingly irrelevant for living, because you do not see how Christ is pertinent to the needs of life.

But if the enthusiasm for Christ does not grow more and more, where can we seek our fullness? You can look at your own life and note what has the upper hand in it. Since our heart cannot stop desiring, inevitably we seek fulfilment in what we do, in our “efforts at associative, operative, charity, cultural, social and political activity”⁵ or our profession. In this way, faith becomes just a “premise” that we leave behind. For this reason Fr. Giussani used to tell us that “the fundamental mistake we can make [...] is to take faith for granted. In other words, given faith, with faith as our premise, now we can do cultural activities.”⁶ He does not cut us any slack on this point: “If everything we are waiting for cannot be totally satisfied within what was given to us, in the fact that it was given,” or in other words, in the Fact of Christ, then all our activities, all that we do “becomes awaiting *our* kingdom.”⁷

So then, the inevitable question is whether these activities can fulfill us. The wake-up call is that sense of unease we feel when all our “doing” does not really satisfy us.

But, if we are still poor of heart, the lack of satisfaction we feel when we expect fulfillment from the things we do can become an opportunity to sense this pressing need to return to the beginning, to that enthusiasm for Christ that won us over.

I received a letter from a young physician that confirms the fact that “the urgent need to return to the beginning,” to the enthusiasm for Christ, concerns each of us, no matter our age or life story (you may have encountered the Movement a month ago and not even have reached the age of thirty):

⁴ C. Pavese, *Dialoghi con Leucò [Dialogues with Leucò]*, Einaudi, Turin 1947, p. 16.

⁵ L. Giussani, *The Work of the Movement. The Fraternity of Communion and Liberation*, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

⁶ L. Giussani, *Dall'utopia alla presenza (1975-1978) [From Utopia to Presence]*, Bur, Milan 2006, p. 173.

⁷ L. Giussani in A. Savorana, *Life of Fr. Giussani*, McGill-Queen's University Press 2018, p. 397.

“Dear Julián, in these months I’ve begun to understand what you’ve told us many times: if I do not verify the pertinence of faith to the needs of life, it cannot last, and the first sign is a skepticism—not explicit—I would say almost a doubt, a ‘who knows,’ a lack of belief that certain things, certain difficulties in life, can be embraced and changed by Christ. This happened for me with my work. I am doing my residency in a ward where the pace of work is intense, competition and complaining are constant, and most colleagues have no life outside their job. In these two years, in the effort to do my work well, I have gotten very absorbed in it. Two big professional disappointments made me realize that in terms of satisfaction, my work—at least the way I had been doing it—cannot give me back even a small part of what I dedicate to it: an absolutely negative balance. This led me to think of work as something that takes away time from my wife and friends, and my complaining has gotten worse! As long as you are unwilling to change your point of view, and just want a solution to the problem at hand, your efforts at reading School of Community, going to Mass, or talking with friends will be failures and will leave you increasingly skeptical that Christ can change anything in your relationship with work. But then something happened. For about two months now, I’ve been going to Mass before work. There’s a little group of people in the Movement who go every morning and afterwards have a quick coffee at the café in front of the church. For them, it’s no big deal, just a daily fact. The first morning I joined them, I was happy, and I rode my motorcycle to work—which is usually a time when I get worried about all the things I’ll have to do and all the commitments I have to fit together—with the lightness of someone who’s just seen something beautiful. While I usually spend my breaks at work thinking about the next thing I have to do, they spent those ten minutes there truly present and attentive. I was also struck by their attention to me, someone they didn’t know, but also to a few homeless people who wander around in front of the church. I observed a series of things that made me wonder if maybe I, too, could be happy at work. It was a little thing that opened a breach in my complaining, and prompted a question that pushes me to make a journey. Later, during a meeting with you and some young workers, I saw the same dynamic as the one at the café. I was amazed by your freedom in front of us, your having nothing to defend and your curiosity about what could emerge from us. The judgements you gave blew me away, and unmasked our reduced outlook on reality. I understand that such a free gaze cannot be produced by a more perfect and attentive understanding of Fr. Giussani’s writings, or by participation in a greater number of gestures and assemblies, but only by familiarity with the Mystery. So I watched you with curiosity and envy, and continually wondered why you responded to the various provocations differently than I would have. I was really trying to identify, to understand how you look at things. It was beautiful because for me, in the beginning, following was exactly this way: an almost spontaneous identification that came from the amazement at a different humanity.”

Mind you, to get back to the enthusiasm of the beginning, it is not enough to dwell on old memories, or get together with friends to recall past times. The memory of the way things were does not restore the beginning to us. Remembering the happy times when a couple was dating or engaged does not restore the enthusiasm that has been lost over the following years. Do you want to see a well-established proof of this? Look at the skepticism that worms its way into the life of many adults. What enflamed us in the beginning has to happen again now: this is the only possibility.

Regarding any other attempt of ours to recover the beginning, Fr. Giussani expressed himself categorically: “Let’s say that today some people [...] gather together and, with the impressive memory of an event that struck them and did them good, that even defined their lives, they want to renew it, overcoming a ‘discontinuity’ that was created over the years. [...] If, for example, they were to say, ‘Let’s get together and do a catechesis study group, or develop a new political initiative, or support a charitable activity, create a work, etc.,’ none of these responses would be adequate to bridge the discontinuity.” Nothing is clearer than this: “Continuity with the ‘then’ is re-established only through the re-happening of the same event, the same impact, now.”⁸ The

⁸ L. Giussani, “Something That Comes First: Notes by Luigi Giussani at the Assembly of Responsibles, January 1993” in *Traces*, n. 10, Nov. 2008, Page One.

beginning is always an event. To bridge the discontinuity with the beginning, what happened before has to happen again, now. The same event that moved us in the beginning has to happen.

This is what Pope Francis reminded us in Saint Peter's Square: "The charism is not preserved in a bottle of distilled water! [...] The legacy that Fr. Giussani left you cannot be reduced to a museum of memories [...]. Faithfulness to tradition, Mahler said, 'is not to worship the ashes but to pass on the flame'."⁹

Only the re-happening of His presence now can restore the beginning to us. Christ is a present event. The one hope for us is to know Christ more, if we do not want to lose the enthusiasm that won us over. This is why, ever since the Beginning Day, that line has remained a goad for me.

2. In becoming adults, a demoralization

In the first Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity, Fr. Giussani told us clearly that our enemy is "the absence of knowledge of Christ." But what kind of knowledge is this? Since we usually think of knowledge in a reduced sense, as notions and information, Giussani let us know that he was talking about knowledge in the biblical sense: "knowledge as familiarity, as concord, as assimilation, as presence in the heart." Therefore, further on he observed, "It is as if there were no longer [after the encounter] this familiarity with Christ that made itself felt [...]. There is an embarrassment that is His being distant, like a non-presence, a not being decisive for the heart. In actions, no, in these it can be decisive (let's go to church, let's build the Movement, let's say Compline, let's do School of Community, let's go and do some charitable work, let's go to organize groups here and there, and let's throw ourselves into politics. In activities, it's not lacking [...]) but what about the heart? In the heart no! Because the heart is how you look at your children, how you look at your wife or your husband, how you look at someone passing you on the street, how you look at the people in the community or your colleagues at work, and, above all, how you get up in the morning."¹⁰

And this is not all. This distancing of Christ from your heart "explains another distancing, which reveals itself in an ultimate embarrassment in our relationships, in the way we look at each other, because it is only our brother Christ who can make us really brothers,"¹¹ my friends! How often have we spoken about it and experienced it in life: the distancing of the heart from Christ becomes the distancing from each other, so that among us an ultimate, reciprocal extraneousness dominates.

Now, our heart can be so distant from Jesus that He becomes a stranger to us: "If Jesus came here in silence—softly—and sat on a chair over there, near her, and at a certain point we realized it, I wonder if in many of us the amazement, gratitude, joy ... I wonder if in many of us the affection would be truly spontaneous. [...] I wonder if we all would be covered with a blanket of shame, if we realized in that moment that we had never said 'You,' that we had been together, that everything had been beautiful, but nobody felt the need to say His name, [...] if we tried to live seriously the not total shipwreck of our collective 'I' of His personal 'I.'"¹² How many of us today have said "You" to Christ with the familiarity with which we treat the presences that are truly dear to us?

Let's be clear: it is not that Christ is unknown to us. "Paradoxically—I insist—[Fr. Giussani pressed the point] Christ is the motive for which we live a form of life that we would never have lived—and yet He is far from our heart!" Growing up, becoming adults, even as we do many things for the Movement or in the name of the Movement, our heart has remained far from Christ, and He may not yet have penetrated our heart. Fr. Giussani continued, "I don't believe that it is a

⁹ Francis, *Address to the Communion and Liberation Movement*, March 7, 2015.

¹⁰ L. Giussani, *Familiarity With Christ*, Page One, *Traces*, n. 2, Feb. 2007.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² L. Giussani, *L'attrattiva Gesù [The Attraction of Jesus]*, Bur, Milan 1999, p. 151.

characteristic, a statistically normal characteristic, that growing up has made us more familiar with Christ, has made that ‘great absence’ more of a presence [...]. I don’t think so.”¹³

What happens if growing up does not make us more familiar with Christ? A kind of demoralization sets in, “not in the banal sense of the word, but as regards that familiarity with God that constitutes man’s life.”¹⁴ Therefore, “if morality is tending to something greater than us, then demoralization means the absence of this tension. I repeat that in theory and even in works—not falsely, but truthfully—this tension reawakens, but it is not ultimately *in the heart*, because what is ultimately in the heart is not blocked or suspended by times or conditions [...]. Just as the ‘I’ cannot suspend its life, so too, when the heart is moral, when it is not demoralized, that tension towards the ‘More,’ towards something more, seems never to fail.” There is no let up, friends, because here the issue is the heart, not works. “So the problem is really the problem of our heart.”¹⁵

How can we counter this demoralization? At this point, Fr. Giussani renewed his stress on importance of the friendship among us, our companionship, our Fraternity, clarifying the task: “Our companionship must first of all make us fight against this demoralization.”¹⁶

But how can it help us in this fight, so that Christ may penetrate into our heart? We see it clearly when it happens.

“Dearest Fr. Julián, I went to the *Way of the Cross* in Caravaggio last night, after years of total forgetfulness of Good Friday. I’ve always had the excuse of work, and so I blithely skipped this gesture without any second thoughts. I just didn’t feel the need for it. This year, who knows why, I found the time, and I understood that the key question is where my heart is grounded. It was like returning to the origin of everything. When I was in my twenties, at the times of the Easter Triduum of the university students with Fr. Giussani in Caravaggio, the Way of the Cross was one of the things that left me thunderstruck. Yesterday it “floored” me again, but with a piercing pain, as I listened to the choir sing *Cristo al morir tendea* and Mary’s suffering-filled question: ‘Will you leave Him for another love?’. I was struck because she did not say ‘because of sin or evil,’ but ‘for another love.’ This morning I asked myself questions I haven’t posed for decades, or maybe never asked at all. I asked why the Church proposes Holy Week every year. How often we let this time pass by as a gesture that changes nothing in us, in our life, because after all, we “already know it” and there’s nothing in us to be corrected! We wait impatiently for it to be over so we can get back to concrete things like work, payday, husband and children, the house, car, birthday celebrations, and Fraternity group meetings (but in what way are we brothers and sisters, then?), the vacations of the Movement or going to the beach with friends. Instead, the Church breaks time, literally breaks it, to open again the wound that is my humanity. Because you, friend, husband, wife, child and every movement of my heart, you, who are everything for me, will not live forever, and you will betray me and I will betray you and I betray myself; you, who I love so deeply, are incapable of keeping the promise you awakened in me. So then, where should I place the hope that the heart endlessly seeks? This is what the Church proposes every year: that we discover the wounds of each day, and starting Ash Wednesday, that we acknowledge we need everything, and return to the truest position, which is begging. The answer is not given to us, but asserts itself in the heart of a beggar who runs on the dawn of the third day.”

This is the task of our companionship. For less than this, it would not be worthwhile to remain. “This companionship of ours,” Fr. Giussani insisted, “must go deeper, it must touch ourselves, our heart.”¹⁷ As it says in *School of Community*, our companionship must introduce us and move us to “a highly personal relationship with Him,”¹⁸ with Christ.

¹³ L. Giussani, *Familiarity With Christ*, op. cit..

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ L. Giussani, *Why The Church*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal 2001, p. 186.

But, Giussani clarified, having reached this level, the level of my acknowledgement of You, O Christ, the level of the heart, you cannot delegate to others an answer that only you can give: “This is a responsibility [as shown in the letter I’ve just read] that we cannot unload onto the companionship. The heart is the only thing in which we are not partners [...]. If you are on a team in which each one has a role, then if each one plays his part things go well. It’s like that in the Movement, in the Movement’s activities, but not for the person! Here no! So our companionship must be rather strange. It’s a companionship upon which you cannot unload anything.”¹⁹

3. Christ, hope for fulfillment

Why did Giussani insist so much on the need for Christ to penetrate the heart? The reason is simple: without Christ, the heart remains unsatisfied. Experience shows us that the heart cannot cheat, because it is objective and infallible. As the first chapter of *The Religious Sense* reminds us, the heart as a criterion of judgement is objective. The original needs are within us and we cannot manipulate them: they are given to us with life itself. This is why the heart is infallible as a criterion: the elementary needs are infallible, and they constantly unmask our reductions and images of what should respond to the heart’s thirst. A clear sign is our lack of satisfaction not only in front of personal or family chaos, but also in front of professional success.

Giussani’s insistence on this point demonstrates all his esteem and passion for each of us. He is the incarnation of a true companionship that never gives up calling us to the one thing that can satisfy the heart. “The absence of Christ,” in fact, “destroys and causes depression, turns human depression into a stable form. The smaller the possibility of Your presence, oh, Christ, the less humanity for my heart and yours; the less humanity in a man’s relationship with his wife, in a woman’s relationship with her children, with [the consequent] slow and invading replacement of true affection, real love, charity and the gratuitousness of self-giving by a “claiming” attitude. [...] The smaller the possibility of Your Presence, oh Christ, the smaller the possibility of humanity for [...] all the people that crowd around you.”²⁰ and for us.

What is the opposite of the demoralization of the heart and the depression of the human that seem to characterize our becoming adults? “The opposite of demoralization,” the thing we all need, “is hope.” Our friend also testified to this. What Fr. Giussani told us is strikingly evident in anyone who has a true experience of humanity, anyone who is sincere with what happens in her life. But what hope? What kind of hope is this? It is hope in your own destiny, your own fulfillment. But how is it possible, with all the mistakes, failures, and contradictions that we repeat, that multiply and accumulate? “It’s only where God has spoken to man that this hope exists.” In fact, the content of this hope is “the one the angel Gabriel said to Our Lady: ‘Nothing is impossible for God.’ I think that says it all. The new man that Christ came into the world to arouse is the man for whom this affirmation is the heart of his life. ‘Nothing is impossible for God’—where God is not the ‘God’ of our thoughts, but the true God, the living God; in other words, the one who became man, that is, Christ.”²¹

The Bible reminds us: “I am the Lord, the God of all the living! Is anything too difficult for Me?”²² “‘Nothing is impossible for God’! So this phrase lies at the beginning of the true history of mankind, at the beginning of the great prophecy that was the people of Israel, at the beginning of the new people, the new world, the Angel’s declaration to Our Lady, at the beginning of the rise of the new man, at the beginning of the prospect and the move of the new man, [...]. On hearing Him say, “It’s easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the

¹⁹ L. Giussani, *Familiarity With Christ*, op. cit.

²⁰ L. Giussani, *You Can Live This Way*. Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, Rimini, April 28-30, 1995, p. 28.

²¹ L. Giussani, *Familiarity With Christ*, op. cit.

²² *Jer* 32:27.

Kingdom of Heaven,” the Apostles asked, “So who can enter the kingdom of heaven? Who can be saved?” They were poor people; they had left behind what little they had. Jesus replied, “For you it is impossible, but for God nothing is impossible.”²³

This is the foundation of hope. This is the basis of the possibility of being liberated from demoralization. This is what keeps alive the heart’s striving after that for which it is made. God became man, Christ. “A new man has come into the world, and with him a new road”:²⁴ the impossible has become possible. This is movingly expressed in the Easter poster: “Ever since the day Peter and John ran to the empty tomb and saw Him risen and alive in their midst, everything can change. From then on, and forever, a person can change, can live, can live anew. The presence of Jesus of Nazareth is like the sap that from within—mysteriously but certainly—refreshes our dryness and makes the impossible possible. What for us is impossible is not impossible for God. So that the slightest hint of a new humanity, to someone who looks with a sincere eye and heart, becomes visible through the company of those who recognize that He is present: God-with-us. The slightest hint of a new humanity, like dry and bitter nature becoming fresh and green once more.”²⁵

So, friends, we must ask the Holy Spirit for the simplicity to acknowledge Christ, to “raise our eyes up from ourselves to that Presence”²⁶ who came out to meet us, and to let our hearts be penetrated, like the dawn of a new day.

All that is needed is simplicity. “Everything boils down to having a childlike heart.” What does this mean? It “means lifting your eyes up from your own problems, from your own plans, from your defects, from other people’s defects, to look at the risen Christ. ‘Lift up your eyes from yourself to that Presence.’ It is as if we need a wind to come and take away everything we are, so that our heart become free or, rather, become free again—keep living in the flesh, going wrong like before [...], but it is as if something else has come into the world. A new man has come into the world, and with Him a new road. ‘See, a road has opened in the desert, don’t you see it?’ In the desert of the world a road opens up, the possibility of works, but first of *one work*. “Works” are the expression of humanity; work is a new humanity, a new human companionship.”²⁷

There is no other way to rediscover the enthusiasm of the beginning that we may have lost in living. “Without this simplicity, without this poverty, if we are unable to raise our eyes up from ourselves to that Presence, then a companionship that can rid itself of that ultimate embarrassment, that makes it a true journey, is impossible. [...] I have to lift my eyes up from myself to that Presence, to the Presence of the risen Christ.”²⁸ Lifting up our eyes from ourselves to His Presence is the only way to live our own life, earning it, and to save the companionship, overcoming the ultimate embarrassment among us that Fr. Giussani described.

Only Christ is able to respond to the expectancy that brought us here, as one of you wrote: “I’m waiting for the Spiritual Exercises with an expectancy I’ve never had before!” to quote just one of the many messages that have arrived, full of this expectancy.

At the height of the 1968 protests, Giussani told Péguy Center friends: “It’s important to end one phase and start another: the definitive one, the decisive one, the one that can grasp the impact of time—no, the impact of all of history. Because the announcement that began by striking two people, John and Andrew (in the first chapter of Saint John), two thousand years ago, that announcement, that person is the phenomenon that attracted us here, and is the phenomenon that makes us stay in God’s Church.”²⁹

²³ L. Giussani, *Familiarity With Christ*, op. cit.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ L. Giussani, *Communion and Liberation*, Easter Poster 2018.

²⁶ L. Giussani, *Familiarity With Christ*, op. cit..

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ L. Giussani in A. Savorana, *Life of Fr. Giussani*, op. cit., p. 417.

Let us ask Christ to make our hearts throb with affection for Him in these days: this is the only chance to know Him truly, in a way that is not intellectual or just a matter of notions. Let us join with all our hearts in Fr. Giussani's prayer, inspired by a line from the *Stabat Mater* attributed to Jacopone da Todi. *Fac ut ardeat cor meum in amando Christum Deum ut sibi complaceam* (Make my heart burn with love for Christ God, so that I may be pleasing to Him). Commenting on Dvorak's setting of the piece, Giussani wrote: "Make everything in me burn! Everything up to the last hair of my head. Make everything in me burn, unworthy as I am, and yet made for singing: 'I adore you, Redeemer.' What freedom, what ardour of acknowledgement!"³⁰

As entered the hall, you will have seen that this year each entrance features a brief quote by Fr. Giussani about the music we are listening to, as an aid for immersing ourselves more fully in what is happening. As you know, the music is not chosen by chance. Over the years, Fr. Giussani introduced us to each of these works because of the powerful way they can facilitate silence. Those who looked at the Caravaggio images while listening to the *Fac ut ardeat* will have experienced this. Being distracted or using your cell phone is not the same thing as letting yourself be swept up in what is in front of you: we pay attention in order not to reduce the import of what is happening.

Let's take for example Fr. Giussani's words about Mozart's *Great Mass in C minor*, to which we have often listened during our gestures: "This beautiful song helps us to collect ourselves in grateful silence, so that in the heart, the flower of 'Yes' can germinate and come up, the 'Yes' by which man can act, can become a collaborator with the Creator, a lover of the Creator. Just as it was for Mary, [...]: a boundless relationship filled her heart and time. If the religious intensity of Mozart's music—a genius which is the gift of the Spirit—penetrated our heart, then our life, with all its restlessness, contradictions, and toil, would be beautiful like his music."³¹

I desire, together with you, to allow myself to be educated more and more by the charism to live silence, *this* silence, which is "our hearts and minds being filled with more important things," by the most crucial Presence for life. "Silence [...] coincides with what we call memory." In these days we share together, "memory will be enhanced by the music we will hear or by the paintings we will see [on the screens]; in this way we will open ourselves to look, to listen, to feel with the mind and heart what in some way the Lord will propose to us,"³² to allow ourselves to be swept up and seized by Him.

All the efforts we make—the choice of certain music, of the songs and images—are to learn to leave space for an Other, which is the one great reason that brought us here today.

Therefore, please pay particular attention to silence in these days, as you travel to and from the hotels and as you enter and exit the halls. The gesture we will live depends a great deal on the contribution each of us makes: I ask for me and for all of us that we not waste this opportunity.

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³⁰ L. Giussani, "The Feast of Faith" in the notes to CD number 6 of the *Spirito Gentil* series. Antonín Dvořák, *Stabat Mater/Leggende*, p. 14.

³¹ L. Giussani, "The Divine Incarnate," notes accompanying the CD in the *Spirito Gentil* series, Mozart's *Great Mass in C minor*, K 427, p. 12. Text available at scritti.luigigiussani.org.

³² L. Giussani, quoted in *A Presence Within the Gaze*, Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, 2015, pp. 18-19.