

Communication from Davide Prospero,
president of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation,
to the Movement of Communion and Liberation
In video conference from Milan, January, 19, 2022

Veni Sancte Spiritus

1. Next steps and the reasons behind them

Good evening to everyone. It is good to be together, even if we are still forced by Covid to keep a screen between us, hopefully for not much longer.

I want to thank you all for having taken the time to participate in this call, in which I would like to share the reasons for the steps that we will be facing in the coming weeks. I think that this can be a time to ask ourselves seriously if we want to learn something, meaning, if we want to play this game seeking to prove something or if we want to play seeking to learn something that, perhaps, we still need to understand or go deeper into, even about the charism that has been entrusted to us.

It has been said that we are in an *interim* period. What does this word—*interim*—truly mean for us? The answer balances on a razor's edge, because *interim* can mean a perception of the density of the instant or else an excuse to be unavailable. And it is not so much an unavailability towards the current leader, while waiting for the changes of the policy, but an unavailability towards God. Just the fact of perceiving the present time in this way means that one is placing limits on the action of God in his life and in history. Because God can change history in an instant! The instant could be this one. And in that case, am I ready? Therefore, the problem is being present. The problem for us is being present, being present to present things, or, as Fr. Giussani said, “fix[ing] as presence the present things” (L. Giussani, Beginning Day 2011, *Traces*, n. 9, 2011).

Our current juridical situation

I'll dive right in, then, to the communication that I would like to give to you all. Please forgive my somewhat “technical” approach, but I want, by doing this, to anticipate, before any other consideration, the exposition of certain facts, as a sign of seriousness towards you all and of transparency. In the course of what I will say, I will also go deeper into more fundamental matters.

According to precise instructions that we received from Cardinal Kevin Farrell, in the month of February we are to hold elections for certain regional Leaders which have finished their mandate. This has always taken place once one or another Regional Leader reached the end of their mandate, applying the procedures provided by the Statutes of our Fraternity. After the enactment of the Decree from the Holy See, we sent certain specific questions to the Dicastery for the Lay, the Family and Life, concerning the renewal of these roles in the two years of transition foreseen by the Decree itself. The Dicastery responded to us, officially, at the end of December. Now, we can—rather, we must—comply with the directives that were sent to us.

I will say right away that these elections do not regard all, but only Italy, Spain, North America and Switzerland (where, in reality, people has already voted), according to the modalities that I will explain in detail shortly. But familiarizing ourselves with the method of these elections in themselves and, above all, beginning to become aware of the underlying motivation for the proposal that the Church is making to us, on the other hand, regards all of us; it interests the entire Fraternity. Firstly, because it is asked of us by the Church; and, secondly, because it gives us the occasion to begin to reflect on a topic that has disoriented and worried (comprehensibly) many of us, which is the question about what step of maturity is being asked of us by the Decree, enacted by the Dicastery, which regulates the exercise of governance of international associations of the faithful. This has to do with all of the Movement, not only with members of the Fraternity, in as much as the leader of the

Fraternity is always the ultimate responsible of the Movement. And so, we will speak about this topic this evening.

I will immediately underline a second thing. As required by the Decree, what I will say has to do only with the election of central bodies of governance: President, Vice President, Central Diaconia and Regional Leaders (in as much as they are members of the Central Diaconia), that, to be clear, in Italy, are those who visit communities within the regions of the Fraternity. In addition to these, there are the diocesan Leaders. Therefore, we are not speaking about electing just any Leaders of certain communities, priors or priests of reference for groups of Fraternity. The Decree, in fact, applies only to central governing bodies.

The reasons behind the directives that the Dicastery has given us

With the premise of these factual and juridical elements, let's ask ourselves what are the reasons (this is—I believe—the most interesting point for us in this moment and can be of interest to all) for the directives that have been made for us by the Holy See.

As the prologue of the Decree states, the goal of the directives of the Dicastery is to help lay movements to make sure that “government within the associations of the faithful be exercised in coherence with their ecclesial mission, as a service ordered to realizing their own purposes and to the good of their members.” As we know, the changes that the Decree has set into motion for the life of our Movement are significant and it is, therefore, just and understandable that all of us feel the need to understand what such a step of maturity will mean and what are the *practical* and *doctrinal* problems that regard the governance of the Fraternity of CL and that we are asked to face.

Even if the knots to untangle are multiple, we already have an opportunity to shed light on a first important question, which is the meaning that the Church gives to the method of elections. This opportunity is given to us by the circumstance that I just finished illustrating. We are all in agreement that our faith does not depend on these juridical aspects; however, we must ask ourselves about the meaning that the Church sees in the gesture we are about to carry out. Only by understanding it, in fact, can we give it the weight it deserves.

a) Elections and the method of God

The first thing I want to clarify is that taking the election of Diocesan and Regional Leaders seriously does not mean giving in to a worldly logic, a democratic logic, as it were, in a political sense. As Julián Carrón pointed out shortly before his resignation, identifying ourselves with a merely democratic logic would mean doing away with the method of God: it is God Himself who elects. As Jesus says, “It is not you who have chosen me, but I who have chosen you” (Jn 15:16).

How, then, do the elections that the Church asks us to hold—and to go about in a way that is not purely formal—not contradict this method? I believe that we must help one another to respond to this question, and I will offer to you all my contribution. I do not pretend the way that I see this is exhaustive nor conclusive—we must continue to reflect together about these things—but I ask you to keep in mind the steps that I will outline, patiently trying to enter into a point of view that, at first glance, could seem unfamiliar.

To begin, it seems important to me to remind you that the Spirit acts not only in the leader, but *in every baptized person*, in other words, in each one of us. For this reason, the elective method has always existed in the Church, even in those realities born from great charisms, such as, for example, the monastic orders that have been around for many more centuries than us and that continue to bear fruit. But I am also thinking of the way in which the successor of Peter, who is the supreme authority of the Church, is chosen. The election of an authority in the life of the Church is an event of the Spirit, not a purely human fact. And it is an event of the Spirit because each member of a community is baptized and, as such, is a subject in which the Spirit of Christ lives and moves; furthermore, in the case of charismatic realities such as our own, each person is not only baptized but also given responsibility for the charism itself, as the Church is repeating to us and as Fr. Giussani himself taught us. On multiple occasions we have reminded each other of that section of the School of Community,

in *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, “Everyone bears responsibility for the charism he has encountered. Everyone is the cause of the decline or increase of the charism, is terrain upon which the charism is wasted or bears fruit. It is a very serious matter for each one to become aware of this responsibility, as urgency, as loyalty and faithfulness. To obscure or diminish this responsibility means to obscure and diminish the intensity of the effect that the history of our charism has on the Church of God and on society” (L. Giussani-S. Alberto-J. Prades, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal, 2010, p. 83).

If there is a central teaching of our charism, of the charism of Fr. Giussani, it is precisely the intuition of the greatness of Baptism, of the fact that in the life of the Church, every baptized person, priest or lay, consecrated or married, is called to be a *protagonist on the stage of the world*, each one in a different way, each one responding to Christ with dedication in adhering to his or her vocation and, nevertheless, doing so as a protagonist, acting as a “responsible,” in a certain sense. If there is one thing that has been transmitted by Fr. Giussani to us, to me, it is this: the awareness that if the most humble and unknown farmer, using a shovel in the middle of a field, does so aware that his work is for the human glory of Christ, then he can be a protagonist in the life of the Church no less than the Pope. In an interview from 1987 with Angelo Scola, Fr. Giussani said: “It is true: we have never felt the need to deal with the concept of ‘laity’ beyond a certain point as all our attention has been focused on the idea of ‘faithful’ and ‘baptized’ because this is an absolute newness which the Christian event actively introduces into the world. What is Christianity if not the creation of a new man who, because of his nature, becomes a new presence in the world? [...] Therefore, the question that matters in Christianity is not ‘to be a lay person or not’ but the coming about of a ‘new creature’ as St. Paul says” (Interview with Luigi Giussani by Angelo Scola. “Laity: i.e. Christians.” Quaderni, 14. Milan: Cooperativa Editoriale Nuovo Mondo, 1988, p. 5).

One who is in Christ is “a new man,” “a new creature,” Fr. Giussani says, quoting St. Paul. And, as a new man, the baptized are not only called, but also enabled to be protagonists in the world. Part of being a protagonist now means taking the event of the upcoming elections seriously, both those in the future for the new Diaconia and then for a new president, as well as, more immediately, the election of Regional Leaders, which will happen in February (as I will outline shortly). We must see in this directive of the Church a great esteem for each one of us. The Church tells us that, precisely in force of our Baptism, we can and we must take up, in a personal way, the responsibility for the good of the reality of the Movement to which we belong. She also tells us that, thanks to the education in the faith that we received in the Movement, we are enabled to make a judgment in the light of faith on the situation that we are currently facing, a judgment that should allow us to choose a few persons among us to whom a particular responsibility will be entrusted. The Church takes a risk on each baptized person and invites us to take a risk as well, with faith and without fear.

What attitude must we have, then, to live out this personal risk of faith? I will answer, delving into two words we often hear.

b) To choose or to recognize?

In light of what I have just said, I would like to be more precise about a point that I see as important. On different occasions and through different voices, the Church has reminded us that, in reality, there is no contradiction between the *elective* method and the method of *recognition*, to use the phrase of Fr. Giussani that we heard at Beginning Day: “You do not choose a teacher: you recognize him!” (J. Carrón and L. Giussani “You are not Lacking in Any Spiritual Gift” (Saint Paul), *Traces*, n. 9/2021, p. 13). In fact, those who are called to vote must not (or, at least, should not) *choose* based on their own personal taste. As Fr. Giussani explains, “Choosing your own teacher means following the violence of your own thoughts and torturous reasoning,” and, to illustrate this point, quotes from the Second Letter to Timothy: “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2Tim 4:3-4).

But, then, if it is not through a “personal choice,” in the negative sense, which becomes the imposition of one’s own taste, sensibility, or arrogance towards others, then on what basis can one recognize and individuate an authority? If it is not through the arbitrary choice of an individual or group, it cannot but be through the action of the Grace of God, according to the suggestion of the Spirit. But that it is suggested by God means that He calls into play our reason and our freedom: we could not follow a suggestion and, what’s more, we could not even hear it if we are full of our own images. Therefore, we must put ourselves in a position of listening, of humility, and of docility to the voice of Another, all of which is opposed to a democratic ideology. It’s true that each person, in their freedom, can do what they want. This is always true. But it is not the method in itself that is worldly. Worldliness will win the day, in an event such as these elections, if it has already won in our hearts, or, in other words, if the criterion that we use when exercising our power of choice is not dictated by our love for Christ and by the good of the community, but by other criteria, which I will not go into here and which condition us to some extent, as we all know.

Therefore, we do not need to be scandalized by a method that the Church has used for centuries and that Fr. Giussani himself took up and integrated into the Statutes that regulate the life of the Fraternity (remember that, in February, for the election of Diocesan and Regional Leaders, we will vote applying the articles of the Statutes wanted by Fr. Giussani, since the new statutes do not yet exist). The action of the Spirit does not exclude the free collaboration of man. On the contrary, it calls it into play. It calls man into play with all of his freedom and his reason. It does not call him to “do politics” in the negative sense of the word, but to open Himself to His suggestion using all of the energy of responsibility and comprehension which he has been given and relying on the human means (which are always limited and imperfect) that he has available. Do we not say that the choice of the Pope comes about through the assistance of the Holy Spirit? And yet, we know that it is the cardinals who elect him! We must not see contradictions where there are none, because God became man and bound Himself to the human reality of the Church. It is, therefore, a problem of morality, as we learn in the third premise of the *Religious Sense*, because only if one’s reason is free of prejudice can the person truly recognize the path indicated by God. Only by loving the truth more than ourselves will we have our hearts in the right position to collaborate in the work of God, in the work of Another.

For this reason, it seems to me that the first and fundamental way to prepare ourselves to live the approaching gesture in an authentically responsible way is praying, begging for the Spirit: we must ask the Spirit to orient our intelligence, to enable us to elect persons who can be of help to the work of God, to the design that God has, and not to our projects and our projections.

To complete this point, I would like to make a *nota bene* (which goes both for the immediate elections which I was speaking about today, as well as for those which will take place eventually with the new Statutes), which is necessary for giving the right weight to what I have said up to this point. Through the method of the elections, we will be called to choose certain Leaders of the Movement. They will carry out an objective service by leading, each one at their own level. Engaging cordially with them, following their indications, adhering to the proposal they will make, etc., all of this will be the concrete path to affirming the unity of the Movement and to following its educational proposal.

Certainly, we hope that the person chosen, God willing, will be authoritative and personally gifted. But it goes without saying that the criterion to choose a local Leader cannot be, exclusively, their individual authoritativeness or the maturity of their comprehension of the charism of CL. The task of a Leader, in fact, is not just to be a teacher of the faith—for example, of sanctity—, but to serve, with dedication and farsightedness, the good of the community. There could be a person who appears to be the most authoritative and fascinating to us, because of the way in which he or she speaks of the faith and lives it out, but is not, at the moment, the person most suited to carrying out the task of responsible, whether for personal reasons, or due to the current circumstances of a local community. I invite, therefore, each one of us to exercise our own discernment, thinking of a person who, due to their human qualities, their capacity for friendship and their maturity of faith, can intelligently and generously serve the life of the community.

This does not take away the fact that each one of us can feel particularly helped by other persons in the community, by other witnesses. As I said before, the Spirit does not only act in the leader, but in every baptized person. The various forms of authoritativeness present in our companionship are a richness given by the Spirit, not something decided by elections. Let us think, for example, of the mature way in which certain friends of ours who are sick have lived and are living their conditions. Let us think of the example of those who are living out their familial vocation, welcoming even children who are not their own and educating them. Let us think of persons who have a particular ability to counsel, to comfort, to guide others in their personal lives. Let us think of those who are able to edify all with their interventions in School of Community, because they have been given a certain gift of identification with the heart of our experience, or the gift of being able to interpret, with particularly profundity and acuity, the experiences of others. Let us think of those who are able to propose Christianity to young people, communicating to them the fascination of seeing Christ present. These persons are among us as true lights, and it is right to learn and to imitate what is offered to us by God through their presence. Are these the persons in the best position to lead the community? Not necessarily! Some have the right gifts for the task, others do not.

In this case too, therefore, we must not set against one another the gifts that contribute to making our companionship beautiful, since they complete one another. But we must neither confound them. “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (*1Cor 12:7*) as St. Paul says.

To sum up, if a person wants to belong to CL because he recognizes in the Movement and in the charism of Fr. Giussani the road that God has given him to grow in the faith and to belong to the Church, then he cannot but look to the Leaders who will be chosen. But he will also have the freedom to nourish himself through whatever the Spirit will elicit in total freedom. Fr. Giussani often returned, as we know, to the importance, for the life of the Movement, of this interplay but also distinction between objective authority and authoritativeness. In 1993, for example, he said:

“Authority in the charism, to be very simple, is that which is recognized by the Church. The Church recognizes the responsibility of a charism. Personal authoritativeness comes from actively following the one who has authority. I can have authority in the charism that interests the Movement and there can be the person who is least among us who lives this charism which such vivacity, which such sincerity and with such humility that she speeds by me and I myself begin to look to her, seeking to learn from her the meaning of the charism for which I am responsible as leader. The meaning of this charism is revealed by those who, in the simplicity of their heart, live the gift of the Spirit and so are, as a matter of fact, authoritative. Authoritativeness is that which solicits and edifies. Authority is what ensures we are on the path. Authority shows us the right path, authority as it has been recognized by the Church. Authoritativeness gives us energy to walk, makes the path beautiful and persuasive, makes us more capable of sacrifice when it is required of us. Authoritativeness is sanctity, authority is a task” (L. Giussani, *Un avvenimento nella vita dell'uomo*, Bur, Milano 2020, p. 249, our translation).

c) The meaning of certain decisions of Fr. Giussani

I would like to return to the mention that I made earlier to the choice that Fr. Giussani made about the Statutes of the Fraternity. Speaking about elections, every now and then I hear someone say, “But Giussani did not want this!”; or, “He never said this!”; or even, “In this text or on this occasion, he said the opposite”, so on and so forth. I believe that we need some clarity here. To this end, I’ll want to point out three important points about which I would like you to reflect and, if you like, to dialogue.

First Point

Fr. Giussani wanted this method. He wanted the Fraternity to be recognized as “a universal association of the faithful”; if he had wanted it to be different, he certainly could have done so. He could have made it so that the Movement remained a reality of fact, without any regulation, without statutes, a spontaneous experience left to the pure freedom of those who participate in it. But he did not do this. Instead, he wanted CL to be officially recognized by the Pope, meaning that he asked the

authority of the Church to confirm what was born through him, so that each one of us could follow the Movement while being sure that we are also following the Church. First, he asked the Abbot of Montecassino and then the Holy See through the then Pontifical Council for the Laity. Fr. Giussani, therefore, wanted the Fraternity of CL to be an association of the faithful and, therefore, that it have statutes, which stipulate a certain type of structure of community life, including the fact that the local leaders and the ultimate leader are elected.

If certain expressions of Fr. Giussani appear to contrast with this point, it seems to me that we must help one another to go deeper into their meaning—certainly—and seek to do so with the utmost objectivity and serenity, wherever it is necessary.

The fact remains that the definitive will of Fr. Giussani was that the Fraternity of CL should have the statutes that it has, and we must abide by this will, taking the method of elections seriously and seeing that we have no right to consider it as a pure formality, as if it were a juridical imposition of the Church that betrays the true nature of our charism. If it were this way, I believe that Fr. Giussani would have prevented any type of regulation of this type, unless we believe that Fr. Giussani wanted to bypass the indications of the Church, something which I hope none of us retain credible. No, Fr. Giussani wanted the Fraternity to be that which it is.

Second Point

Electing the President does not contradict the fact that authority is *recognized* in a process that is “communional” as well; we can simply look to religious orders. As I anticipated before, if we admit that every single baptized person is gifted with a new intelligence that comes from faith, then he or she has all of the grace that he or she needs to recognize—even in virtue of a belonging to a common charism—what is good for the association at a certain historical moment and, therefore, who is most adequate the person to guide it.

The method of elections is not opposed to the emphasis of Fr. Giussani on the common recognition of authoritative persons. It is the instrument that we can use to express this recognition and this recognition is ultimately—pay attention here!—the common outcome of the personal engagement of each one’s responsibility. For this reason, it is not prohibited to talk to each other and discuss. The Church does not tell us that we cannot talk, discuss, help each other to judge and to understand. Let’s do these things, if we see them as opportune, as a help to open ourselves to the indications of the Holy Spirit. It is not to delegate our responsibility to others, but as a help to take it on ourselves.

Third Point

There is, finally, a third point: it is the Church that is asking of us what we are about to do, that is, to elect our Leaders with each person taking part in the responsibility of individuating them. And this asks—in great or small ways—all of us to change the way in which we have always looked at things, to enter into a broader point of view. The General Decree of last June and the specific requests made to our Movement by Cardinal Farrell are an objective fact from which we must, together, help each other to restart: the Church is asking us to elect our future President and to elect it for a determined period of time. We all want to live a cordial obedience to the Pope and, therefore, we must comprehend and include this instruction as well.

This concludes the first part of this evening’s intervention, and I hope that the things that I have said to you can help to give reasons for the changes in praxis of the identification of the governing organs that the Church is asking of us. In any event, if everything is not clear, do not worry, since we will go back to these things. It is a journey that we want to undertake together, with patience, so that all can understand the reasons and, therefore, freely adhere.

2. Nomination of Regional and Diocesan Leaders in expiration

I will now describe the steps we must take in the coming two months.

You all know that, at an international level, the Fraternity is organized according to pastoral regions (currently numbering 14) and, within these—whenever there is a minimum number of members—in diocesan communities, each one with its own Leader.

Italy is subdivided into 3 regions: first region (Lombardy, Piedmont, Liguria, Valle d’Aosta and Sardegna); second region (Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Trentino-Alto Adige, Toscana, and Marche); third region (all of the other Central and Southern regions). For these pastoral regions, before proceeding to renew Regional Leaders, it will be necessary, above all, to renew the 22 diocesan Leaders. We are going to publish the list in the “Notices” section of the website of the Fraternity.

In addition to these, the Leader of the pastoral region of the Diocese of Milan will also be renewed, a position which is actually covered by myself. It is a very particular situation, since the Diocese of Milan is a pastoral region in itself. Since the 1980’s, in fact, the Diaconia has retained it opportune that the diocesan responsible should coincide with the regional responsible and that, considering the high number of members in the Diocese (18,000, more than 30% of the total of Fraternity members), the Regional Leader should not be chosen by an assembly of the members, but should be named directly by the Central Diaconia. It is now my intention to add to this modality a form of consultation, which we are defining.

All of these elections will take place soon, in the months of February and March, so that we can then concentrate on the definition of the new Statutes and of new electoral procedures.

The modality of the elections of Regional Leaders and of Diocesan Leaders are described in our Statutes, particularly, in articles 20, 29, 30, with certain procedural modifications that will be communicated in time. On this point, I have nominated three delegates that will assist all of you in the procedures of preparation for all of these elections: Francesco Magni for the first region, Emmanuele Forlani for the second region, and Cesare Pozzoli for the third region. Their contact will be communicated shortly and you all will be able to reach out to them for any questions you have on the matter.

For the sake of completeness and transparency, I will say to you all that, beyond the Regional Leaders that we must now reelect, there are other members of the Diaconia who have surpassed the limits of their mandate. These are, however, in this case, co-opted members, that is, chosen directly by the Diaconia on the recommendation of the President. They are: Fr. Javier Prades, Marco Bersanelli, Fr. Stefano Alberto.

Last Saturday, January 15th, I proposed to the Diaconia to co-opt to their position three persons (because the co-opted members that I have just named could not be newly co-opted, having surpassed ten years, according to the Decree). I will list them quickly, explaining also the criteria on the basis of which they were chosen: Luigi Benatti, since he was and is a point of reference for an area in which there are many numerous communities (Bologna and Emilia-Romagna) and knows those situations well; Fr. Andrea D’Auria, expert in Canon Law, whose competencies will be needed by the Diaconia to examine and receive the proposals of the Commission for the Statutes; Cesare Pozzoli, who I proposed to the Diaconia to elect as new legal representative of the Fraternity for my *interim* period. As you perhaps know, in fact, Giuseppe Di Masi, who performed this task in recent years, in November asked me to leave the position.

I then proposed (per suggestion of the Statutes) to co-opt three other persons who could help the Diaconia to keep present the three significant domains of culture, charity and mission, which are also the sectors in which the initiatives of the Fraternity are articulated (all of the disbursements of funds are subdivided—as we all know from the report of the expenses of the Fraternity that is presented every year at the Spiritual Exercises—into these three sectors). They are: Letizia Bardazzi, for culture (Letizia leads the Italian Association of Cultural Centers and thereby can offer to the Diaconia a precious point of view); Monica Poletto, for the sector of charity (Monica has long been involved in the nonprofit sector for the Company of Works, and personally knows many of the works of charity born from the Movement not only in Italy, but in the entire world; she is a respected and competent person, who never withdrew from concretely serving the life and creativity of presence of the

Moment); Fr. Donato Contuzzi, for mission (Fr. Donato is a priest of the Fraternity of St. Charles, on mission in Taipei for many years; many of you know him thanks to the video interview that Fr. Carrón desired last year in order to document the flowering of our presence internationally).

Last Saturday, the Diaconia unanimously accepted my proposals. I will take advantage of this occasion, then, to thank these friends for the willingness that they have shown to serve our companionship in this way.

I also want to give my deep thanks to the persons who have ended their service in the Diaconia for the contribution that they have given (in certain cases for many years!) to the leadership of the Movement. I will not name them for reasons of brevity. Thank you!

As I said at the beginning, these elections regard only a part of the members of the Fraternity. I ask all those members of the Dioceses implicated in the upcoming elections to update your anagraphic information on the Fraternity website by the 30th of January, checking especially that your email address is correct. The Secretary of the Fraternity will send convocations by mail beginning in the first days of February. With the convocation, all of the technical instructions for participating in the assemblies and electoral operations will also be provided.

3. Commission for Statutes

There is a third point that regards the Commission for the Statutes. I will be extremely brief. I have received a few requests for an explanation of the composition of this Commission. Without going into detail, I will say only that, following the criteria that were suggested to me in dialogue with the Dicastery, I have favored a good representation in anagraphic terms (as you all can see, it goes from a university student all the way to an eighty year old) as well as geographic terms (because they represent almost all the continents). Naturally, our preference went—where possible—towards those who have technical-juridical competencies, but we were not limited to those because—as I told you all in the last communication—we also wanted to give space to knowledge of our history (with the presence of persons who had participated in making or nevertheless were knowledgeable about the origin of the first Statutes and of their various evolutions, etc.). Therefore, the composition follows these criteria; naturally, it had to be as “tight” as possible, because we want this process to come to a close within the time frame that the Dicastery has indicated.

I will take advantage of this occasion to thank you all because in the brief time that we have given, over 300 contributions have arrived, which at times were even the serious and intense fruit of the work of groups of persons, which obviously now will be taken into serious consideration and utilized for the work of the Commission. Therefore, I want to thank you. This work is becoming, as we desired it might be, something that involves all members of the Fraternity.

4. Introduction to the work of School of Community for the upcoming months

I now want to present to you all the decisions that I made together with the friends of the Council of Presidency regarding the School of Community. The text that we have chosen for the year that has begun is *Dare la vita per l'opera di un Altro* (BUR, 2021), which is a collection of the final talks given by Fr. Giussani during the Exercises of the Fraternity, from 1997 to 2004. The text is already available, in Spanish and in Dutch in addition to Italian, and it will be printed in English and in Brazilian in the upcoming days. Soon, it will also be available in other languages. For those languages in which the translation is not yet complete, if necessary, those parts of the texts on which we are working will be anticipatorily published on the CL website. This text will accompany us from February to the next Exercises of the Fraternity. I will take advantage of this occasion to tell you that they will be led by Fr. Mauro-Giuseppe Lepori, Abbot General of the Cistercian order. Just like last year, they will be open to all, not only to members of the Fraternity. This year too we have decided

to do the Exercises through video-conference, due to the persistence of an uncertain situation owing to the pandemic. I would like to give heartfelt thanks to Fr. Mauro for having accepted our invitation.

Many of you have asked me if I intend to continue the gesture of the School of Community in video connection for everyone, as Fr. Carrón has done in years past. I must say that I do not feel inclined to continue to utilize this modality of teaching, at least in the way that has become familiar to us in recent years. This modality belonged to his personality and sensibility. For the time that is given to me, I would like to make you all a more elementary proposal, that now I would live to show you, entering briefly in merit of the choice of content and in the method that we want to follow.

1. The text of School of Community

Above all, the content. Why did we choose this text (*To Give One's Life for the Work of Another*)? I will sketch two brief answers and then we will go—obviously—deeper into it as we do the work of School of Community:

- a) Because the interventions collected are a capstone, as it were, recapitulating the reflection of an entire life. The texts of the Exercises that we will take up are the last ones preached by Fr. Giussani; they represent, therefore, the most mature fruit of his reflection.
- b) Because they are truly prophetic texts. I believe that we will be newly struck, reading them, because they describe with surprising lucidity the trajectory of development of the society and the dominating mentality in which we are deeply immersed today.

2. A method for working on the School of Community

I would now like to give you all some suggested reading on the method that we want to use in order to enter into these rather dense texts. I will underline certain indications, which are taken from the notes that Fr. Giussani himself dictated. I would suggest each one of you to reread them, since they are very useful: these notes are available on our website (“Methods and Tips for School of Community”, 1992; “School of Community and Presence”, 1993; “A Presence that Moves”, 1997). To these texts I would like to add “Something that comes First”, from 1993—in L. Giussani, *Litterae Communionis-Traces*, 10 (2008): 1-6).

Assimilating a new mentality. Above all, the School of Community is a school. A school, Fr. Giussani says, is “a place in which, and a method by which, you learn” (1997) and adds: “Learning implies understanding the text and what it means” (1997). The first step of School of Community is to understand what is proposed by the text. “You must become a disciple of the text,” Giussani urges us, which means reading so as to “clarify the meaning of the words together” (1992), “discovering the ‘reason’ behind the words that are used” (1993, second factor).

This is the first step of the work that we want to do.

Towards this end, on Wednesday, the 9th of February, at 21:00, we propose an “Announcement” of the work of School of Community in a video conference, to introduce the content proposed by Fr. Giussani in the first part of the book. We will be helped in this by His Excellence, Msgr. Filippo Santoro, Archbishop of Taranto and Special Delegate of the Holy Father for the *Memoires Domini*. Not by chance, I really care that this as something that we are carrying forward together.

In the coming days, the secretary will share the announcement with indications on how to participate.

We do not, however, only want to work remotely. Therefore, the second indication that I would like to give you is to get together to work “in person.” As soon as possible, we should get together physically, to work on the text together. Meeting in person is important because the School of Community is, as the name states, a fact of *community*, meaning, of communion, of relationship. As I wrote in *Corriere della Sera* (January 8, 2022), in Christianity, interaction through “flesh and blood” is a serious thing. It has to do with the way we are made and the way through which we come to know: the event to which the School of Community wants to introduce us is ultimately a relationship

with Christ and communion with Him, which passes through the carnal fact of the presence of others in the community, wherever it is possible, in the possible modalities.

The service of the leader of the School of Community. Another point that I would like to underline regards the role of the leader of the School of Community. Regardless of the dimensions of the given group, Fr. Giussani often remarked that the leader of the School of Community has a decisive responsibility. This, in reality, goes for everyone, because we cannot truly share our experience without prior personal work on the text on the part of each one of us. The leader, however, has a special role, because he or she must, in the first place, testify to an experience of wonder and fascination with the event about which the School of Community speaks. Let us help each other and ask for help, if we find ourselves weary on this front.

Comparing oneself with the text As I said, the first condition for doing School of Community well is understanding the text, getting to its objective meaning. The second condition is what Fr. Giussani calls a “comparison with experience”: we are called to compare the content of the text with our personal life, with the life of our community and with the entire Movement. This comparison is a factor of our conversion, both individual and communal. And it is this tension towards conversion of our gaze and of our life that makes the Movement grow. “If School of Community is reduced to categories of “speech” it does not develop nor nurture the Movement. If it is a work and a point of reflection it becomes a fascinating event” (1992).

5. Conclusions

Before saying goodbye and giving a few more quick, conclusive announcements, allow me to return once more to one of the themes that I alluded to in my first communication of November 29th: our responsibility for the unity of the Movement. I know that there is still confusion among us about the meaning of what is happening. One of you wrote to me: “It is painful for me to see the divisions among us and the divisions in the Church. My intuition is that these same divisions are present in my own heart, as well. I feel, like never before, the need for unity (while I’m aware that this word has a depth that I do not understand). And I realize, like never before, how much it is being put to the test in the entire Church and in this Movement which is so dear to me.”

It is clear that unity is not something that we can achieve through our own efforts. It is something that God gives. Therefore, however, we can observe the fruits of our collaboration with His work through a very simple fact: what comes from God unites, because the truth that is welcomed unites, always unites; what comes from something other divides, even beyond all of our good intentions.

“Pray to Jesus,” Fr. Giussani said to the leaders of the Movement in April 2000, “and ask for and seek unity in all things. In all things!” (L. Giussani, «Unità, legge della conoscenza», *Tracce*, n. 4/2000, p. 5, our translation).

Announcements

Masses for the anniversary of Fr. Giussani and for the recognition of the Fraternity

As you all know, the Holy Masses celebrated by various communities mark the official beginning of the Centenary celebration of the birth of Fr. Giussani. Given the exceptional circumstance of the Centenary, besides involving the Bishop of your diocese in the celebration of the Mass, I would suggest inviting other civil and religious leaders from your area. Naturally, I ask all to promote and participate in these events with all due respect to the norms in place against Covid-19, using maximum prudence and reasonableness.

Shortly, an announcement will come from the secretary with all of the normal references for materials that will be sent. In the coming weeks, we will be giving updates on other initiatives that will mark the Centenary, notices which you will also find on the home page of the CL website.

Day of Medicine Collection

From February 8th to the 14th, there will be the Day of Collection of Pharmaceuticals of the Pharmaceutical Bank. In a time so full of poverty and need like our current one, we invite you all to be present, giving medicine in the participating pharmacies and giving your availability to work a shift as a volunteer. To give notice of your availability, please contact the responsible of the Pharmaceutical Bank in your own community, writing to info@bancofarmaceutico.org. Saturday, February 12 is the day in which volunteers will be needed the most.

Announcements for the Movement

I remind you all that the official channel of communication to receive central and regional announcements for the Movement in Italy is the “CL Announcements” platform, available both on the computer and on the phone, by downloading the eponymous app from the Apple or Google store. To gain access to the service, you must put in a request to the secretary of your community.

In the coming days, the text of this evening’s communication will be available on the CL website, and, eventually, it will be translated into other languages.

Let’s say a *Glory Be* now for our friends who, in this moment, are suffering physically and morally, and for those who are suffering on account of the Gospel. Let’s not forget that, while we are here speaking with each other, there are those who are suffering in their own lives, and for their families, in complete uncertainty and in persecution, due to the fact that they are Christians, especially in Kazakhstan and in the Middle East. And let’s also pray for our beloved dead, in particular for the father of one of our friends who went to heaven yesterday; she gave up saying the Rosary this evening to allow her friends to participate in this event. Let’s say a *Glory Be* together for all of these things.

Glory Be

Veni Sancte Spiritus

Goodnight.