

“The great teaching Fr. Giussani gives us is to bring God back into daily life”

Interview with Davide Prospero, president of the Fraternity of CL, on the Centenary of the Founder’s birth. From the magazine omnesmag.com

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October 15 of this year marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Fr. Luigi Giussani, founder of Communion and Liberation. The movement, born in the 1960s in Italy, is present in about ninety countries on five continents.

After Giussani’s death in 2005, Fr. Julián Carrón took the helm for CL, a role he held until November 27, 2021. After Carrón’s resignation, Davide Prospero became president of the Fraternity of CL. The 50-year-old chemist from Milan is married with four children, a tenured professor of Biochemistry and director of the Center for Nanomedicine at Bicocca University in Milan. He had served as vice president of the Fraternity of CL since 2011.

Communion and Liberation, which defines itself as “a proposal of a way of life, for life,” is living this centenary as “a looking forward, because Fr. Giussani’s life has generated a stream of history that continues and always bears new fruit,” says Prospero, who does not hide the difficulties or “pruning” that members of the Fraternity may experience along the way.

How is the CL family looking at this Centenary?

As an occasion given by God to thank Him for the great gift of the person of Fr. Giussani and for all the graces in terms of intelligence and heart that he received. It is not a looking backward, but a looking forward, because Fr. Giussani’s life has generated a stream of history that continues and always bears new fruit. Certainly, like every tree, even those grown in the soil of the Church are pruned by the Spirit so that they can continually be rejuvenated and open up to new seasons of history. This year will be an occasion to go deeper into the teachings of Fr. Giussani and the method of life that he taught and brought into the world through the way he himself lived.

Anniversaries like this one are, for institutions in the Church, a moment to “return to the origin” and bring the foundations of the charism into the present. In this sense, what are the key points of Fr. Luigi Giussani’s charism that the movement hopes to promote in this celebration?

First of all, the original way of conceiving of faith that he communicated to us. Faith as man’s response to the event of Christ’s grace, which reaches us and transforms our lives from within. It reaches us through other men and women who strike us and fascinate us by their luminous lives, full of promise.

Secondly, this year will be an occasion to look again at the many written works that flowed from Fr. Giussani’s heart, all of them in service to men and women, all of them relevant for our present life, because they contain a promise of life that does not end and that unites us to others, who are our brothers and sisters journeying towards God.

Involvement in culture, education, and a dialogue with society are all part of the essence of CL, in a world that seems to oppose the Christian vision of the world. How does CL put this task into practice?

Christ is always alive, because He is risen, and He is always, in every moment, reaching out to man's heart through other men and women, so that the hearts and minds of our brothers and sisters may discover the promise of life and happiness that the Incarnation of the Son of God brought to earth. Whether this happens through personal relationships, through involvement in community life or through a connection to cultural, charitable or missionary initiatives, all of it is part of Christian life and part of the gift that Fr. Giussani bestowed on us. In this sense, what has been communicated to us is a passion for Christ that immediately becomes a passion for man, not just "humanity" in general, but for every single human person. This is the source of the passion to educate, the heart of the Christian proposal that won us over through the encounter with Fr. Giussani and with the movement generated by his life, and that has become a true vocation for each of us.

How would you describe the task of CL members today, and what are the related challenges and opportunities?

We all need to help each other to bring God back onto the screens of our lives. A life without God is a life without a future, without prospects, but also without the profundity of today. A life without God means a life without any possibility of transcending our circumstances by accepting them, while at the same time finding in them a call to a path of growth. Bringing God back into daily life, this is the great teaching Fr. Giussani gives us. To discover that God is not our enemy or our adversary, but rather the origin of our existence, of the promise of something good that is buried, for some more hidden than for others, in our hearts, and that brings our human personality to its true fulfilment.

Secondly, we need to demonstrate that Christian life is not the life of an individual in relationship with God, but rather the life of a community present in history, which offers itself as a light on a mountaintop, or as salt in the earth, to illuminate and enliven every aspect of existence. The rebirth of the self, the "I," and the rebirth of communal experience are the two poles of Christian life, and they feed off of one another. Without an "I" that is authentic and self-aware, community life would be merely a social phenomenon without roots. Without a social expression, the life of one's "I" would find no opportunities for expression and nourishment.

After these years during which the pandemic wiped out well-established events such as the Rimini Meeting, or in Spain, *Encuentro Madrid*... though they are gradually recovering, how has this spirit of dialogue and personal encounter been kept alive despite having everything "against" it?

The pandemic and the ongoing war can make us close us in on ourselves, make us succumb to fear and the impression that life has no future, that relationships fail, and that promises are illusory. Alternatively, if we are helped by our brothers and sisters, by the life of the Church, the teaching of the movement and by the witness of Fr. Giussani, they can open us up to become the first witnesses of a hope that knows how to break through the circumstances of the present, that knows how to overcome evil, that knows how to participate in the victory of Christ; that knows how to show our brothers and sisters the roads of goodness and of truth.

This centenary comes at a new moment for CL. The updated norms regulating the governance of Associations of the Faithful which came out last June led to the resignation of Fr. Julián Carrón and your becoming president. How are looking at this process?

We have to take steps forward, recognizing all the good that has been written in these seventy years of the movement's history, grateful to Carrón for having been able to take

up the baton of such a great and impressive work for the history of the Church and of mankind, and at the same time knowing how to create new forms of responsibility and of presence in society. I am absolutely confident that this path forward will be possible in obedience to the Pope and to the Church's shepherds, who are asking us to walk this road demonstrating the reasons for Fr. Giussani's hope of having generated, by work of the Holy Spirit, an event that will continue in time.

How do you see CL's future?

The future is in God's hands. Our job is simply to be joyful, passionate listeners of the voice that, through Fr. Giussani, reaches us, and to create forms of life capable of embracing the cries of men and women.