



FRATERNITÀ DI COMUNIONE E LIBERAZIONE

associazione di diritto pontificio civilmente riconosciuta

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*1982, Pontifical Recognition of the Fraternity:
“What has happened (...) is certainly the greatest grace in the entire history of the movement”
(Fr. Giussani)*

*2002, 20th anniversary of pontifical recognition of the Fraternity:
“The letter which the Holy Father sent me (...) is the most momentous gesture of our history.”
(Fr. Giussani)*

2022, Audience with Pope Francis for the Centenary of the birth of Fr. Luigi Giussani

Milan, October 20, 2022

Dear friends,

What happened last Saturday at the Audience with Pope Francis exceeded all possible expectations. We had in fact decided to make this event coincide with our Beginning of the Year Day, but we experienced something that was incomparably more: *a true new beginning*.

One sentiment prevails over all else: gratitude. Gratitude to God for the gift of Fr. Giussani and his charism, and gratitude to Fr. Giussani, because once again he allowed our people to gather all together around the leadership of the Church. As many of you, I imagine, I am still deeply moved to see what the seed planted by Fr. Giussani was able to generate: a great flow of humanity, overflowing with affection and gratitude for the Grace received. I am therefore grateful also to all of you for having been, by your presence in St. Peter's Square, a sign of such Grace before the world.

And finally, my and our gratitude can only be addressed to Pope Francis. Firstly for the affectionate and profound words he dedicated to Fr. Giussani, “for all that he knew how to sow and spread everywhere for the good of the Church.” It filled our hearts with amazement and joy to hear the Holy Father say, on the very day of the Centenary of Fr. Gius's birth, that the Church has “the grateful memory of his presence [...] in the communion of saints, from where he intercedes for all his own,” and that he recognizes “his pedagogical and theological genius,” considering him “a true apostle” and “father and teacher” for everyone he met. This is a clear sign of the recognition of the value that the Servant of God Fr. Luigi Giussani and his teaching have for the life and history of the Church. In order to be faithful to the gift received, it falls to each of us to become even more aware that it was given to us first and foremost to serve the Church's mission in the world.

Secondly, we are truly and profoundly grateful to the Pope for having shown us not only the point towards which we must strive, but also the road we must travel to get there. In the coming weeks, therefore, we will all be committed—personally and in our communities—to carefully and seriously taking up the Holy Father's address.

In order not to lose the impact of the extraordinary event of which we have been participants, I would like—in communion with those who share the responsibility entrusted to me—to immediately focus on some essential points.

Crisis makes us grow – The Pope has reiterated several times, confirming them, to the reminders that have been raised by Church authority in the past months, particularly by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life. It is therefore a “time of crisis.” But as such, it is an opportunity for growth, for the maturation of our faith. The Pope spoke of “serious problems,” of “divisions,” of “an impoverishment of the presence”: the first way to take his paternal correction seriously is to recognize its truth, understanding the meaning and weight of these words. Pope Francis, as I pointed out above, has also indicated the steps to be taken: for us, these must be, “times of recapitulation,” in which we question ourselves about how we educate ourselves to live the dimensions of culture, charity and mission, “times of critical discernment



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of what has limited the fruitful potential of the charism,” and “times of missionary renewal and relaunching.”

Unity in following – It is heartening to have heard in the Holy Father’s words a confirmation of the path taken in recent months, from the Fraternity Exercises to the work on the International Assembly of Leaders: “Unity does not mean uniformity. Do not be afraid of diverse sensibilities and of confrontation in the progress of the movement.” But what assures unity? By following, that is, by “a unity with those who lead the movement, unity with the Pastors, unity in carefully following the indications of the Dicastery,” “and unity with the Pope.”

Humility in always rediscovering the charism – Pope Francis said that “it is not the charism that must change”: “it is the ways of living it that can constitute a hindrance or even a betrayal of the purpose for which the charism was inspired.” We are therefore asked to “recognize and correct misguided ways,” with a “humble attitude and under the wise guidance of the Church.” The charism given to Fr. Giussani has a “potential” still “largely to be discovered”: therefore, we should not assume that we have already fully assimilated and understood it. It must be discovered and rediscovered, deepened, actualized, within a logic of permanent reform.

Charism and authority – “Fr Giussani taught respect and filial love for the Church and, with great balance, knew how to keep together charism and authority, which are complementary, both necessary.” This is necessarily true within the movement as well: “some are entrusted with a task of authority and governance, to serve all the others and to indicate the right road,” but “alongside the service of authority it is fundamental, in all the members of the Fraternity, that the charism remain alive.” And it naturally holds true in the relationship between the movements (which help to “show the attractive and newness of Christianity”) and the authority of the Church (whose “responsibility it is to indicate wisely and prudently the road on which the movements must walk”). After emphasizing the relationship between authority and charism, Pope Francis also pointed to a task and a method, to which Fr. Giussani was—as the then Cardinal Ratzinger said at his funeral—a clear witness: “We are all called to this: to be mediators for others in the encounter with Christ, and then to leave them to take their own path, without binding them to us.” This helps us overcome any temptation to personalism.

These are just some starting points for the beginning of the work we will do together. The Pope’s address has a historical significance for us: it asks us for a true conversion, so that we may discover the Grace of the charism as ever new, enjoying the incomparable beauty of the companionship of Christ present with humble gratitude. Only thus will our hearts be able to burn with that “holy prophetic restlessness” for peace, for the presence of God in the poor and abandoned, for the proclamation of Christ throughout every nation and culture of the world, to which the Pope has exhorted us. Let us therefore prepare for a new missionary season!

After Saturday’s extraordinary event, our task has become more precise: the educational proposal of the coming years will aim to focus on the steps of the path traced by the Holy Father. The more we are willing to follow them, the more our companionship, in fidelity to the charism we have received, will be a place alive with light, unity and hope for the Church and for all humanity, and will be able to correspond more—albeit with all the limitations of our poor selves—to the expectation that Pope Francis expressed to us with paternal vigour: from you “the Church, and I myself, I hope for more, much more.” Well anchored to the rock of origin, we are eager to face the challenges of the present time.

In friendship,

Davide Prospero