



FRATERNITÀ DI COMUNIONE E LIBERAZIONE

associazione di diritto pontificio civilmente riconosciuta

Uffici: Via Porpora, 127 - 20131 Milano - Tel. 02/26149301 - Fax 02/26149340 - e-mail: clfrat@comunioneliberazione.org

Milan, November 1, 2012

Dear Friends,

Having just returned from the Synod of Bishops, I want to share with you what I believe to be most decisive about the experience that I lived, in order to help us on our journey.

As you know, the theme of the Synod was “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.” The starting point was the conviction, evident to all today, that faith is no longer an obvious presupposition. This situation not only regards faith as a personal experience, but it also has consequences for the life of nations, for whom fertile land can become an inhospitable desert. We already see many signs of this “desertification:” the educative emergency, the economic crisis, political confusion, lack of trust, violence in relationships, exasperation in social life... Perhaps the most significant sign of this desertification is the inability to discern a point from which to start again, even on the part of the keenest observers, who are always ready to point out what is lacking, but are powerless when it comes to offering suggestions for how to begin anew.

In this context, it is moving to see that an institution like the Church, with 2,000 years of history behind it, is still free to challenge itself. So much so that one of the topics most often addressed in the synod hall was related to the need for conversion. Everyone was aware that, in order to make the desert blossom again, it's not enough to change strategies, nor to fine-tune pastoral plans. What is needed is a real, true, personal and ecclesial conversion. There was an awareness that, without conversion, there cannot be a new evangelization—simply because we, too, as members of the Church, participate in that weakening of faith that has brought us to the current situation. It was not for nothing that the Holy Father called for a *Year of Faith*—he did so precisely in order to help us to rediscover the gift and the beauty of faith.

From where do we start again, then?

On the very first day of the Synod, the Pope posed the fundamental question, “God has spoken, He has truly broken the great silence, He has shown Himself, but how can we communicate this reality to the people of today, so that it becomes salvation?” (October 8, 2012).

And he indicated the response clearly: “We cannot make the Church, we can only announce what He has done. The Church does not begin with our ‘making,’ but with the ‘making’ and ‘speaking’ of God. In the same way, the Apostles did not say, after a few meetings: now we want to make a Church, and that by means of a constituent assembly they were going to draft a constitution. No, they prayed and in prayer they waited, because they knew that only God Himself can create His Church, that God is the first agent: if God does not act, our things are only ours and are insufficient; only God can testify that it is He who speaks and has spoken.”

Our contribution can only be inserted into the dynamism set in motion by God Himself through His Spirit. “Only God's precedence makes our journey possible, our cooperation, which is always cooperation, and not entirely our own decision. Therefore, it is important always to

know that the first word, the true initiative, the true activity comes from God, and only by inserting ourselves into the divine initiative, only by begging for this divine initiative, shall we too be able to become—with Him and in Him—evangelizers. God is always the beginning” (Benedict XVI, October 8, 2012). Only those who let themselves be taken hold of by God, who became close to us in Christ, will be able to respond to the challenge of new evangelization. “The real protagonists of the new evangelization are the saints” (Benedict XVI, October 28, 2012).

Hearing the call to conversion that came from the synod hall, I could not help but remember the call that Fr. Giussani issued many years ago in Viterbo, inviting us to “recover the truth of our vocation and our commitment.” Because we, too, he told us, run the risk of “reducing our commitment to a kind of theorization of a socio-pedagogical method, reducing it to a kind of activism that follows upon this theorization, and then a commitment to the political defense of it. Instead, our task is to reaffirm and to propose to man, our brother, a fact of life.” Fr. Giussani asked, “But what does a fact of life rest upon? Where is this life? You yourself are this life.” And yet, to us this position often seems like it is not concrete enough, not historically significant, a sort of “religious choice.” In fact, continued Fr. Giussani, “For many of us, the fact that our salvation is Jesus Christ, and the fact that freedom for the life of man, here and in the after-life, is continually bound up with an encounter with Him, all this has become something of a merely ‘spiritual’ call to us. The concrete facts of life are considered to be something else altogether: the concrete facts of life would be something like a commitment to organized labor, having certain rights legally sanctioned; it would be a question of organization, the work of teams and requiring many meetings. But all this would not be done as an expression of a need vital to our existence, but rather as a kind of inescapable mortification of our lives, as a weight and the price to pay for belonging, a belonging that we are still inexplicably desirous to pay for.” And he concluded, “We must go back and start over in order to recover the truth of our method for a rebirth of life within us, among us, and in the places where we live our lives. We have to take up again our awareness of where all of this dynamic began.”

What was the beginning?

“The Movement was born out of a presence that imposed itself and brought to people’s lives the provocation of a promise to follow. But then we entrusted the continuity of this beginning to speeches and to projects undertaken, to meetings and to things that we had to do. But what we have not done is entrusted, handed over, our lives; in this way, the beginning very quickly ceased to be the truth offered to our person, and instead has become the starting point for an association, for a reality upon which we can shrug off the responsibility of our own work, and from which we demand the resolution of things. What was supposed to be the open-armed welcoming of a provocation, and thus a following that is alive, has become an obedience to the organization.”

In order to be able to offer a fact of life to our fellow men, there must mature in each of us a self-awareness of our original dependence, to the point that it allows us to be reborn in any darkness; and it is necessary to be so taken hold of by the event of Christ that His memory dominates our days, because never am I more myself than when You, Christ, happen to me and flood me with Your presence. In this way, we will be able to live life as vocation, where “everything, every relationship, every joy, as well as every difficulty, finds its ultimate reason in being an opportunity for a relationship with the Infinite, God’s voice that continually calls us and invites us to look up, to discover in adherence to Him the complete fulfillment of our humanity” (Benedict XVI).

In order for our life to be thus changed, our willingness toward conversion—toward following—is necessary, according to Fr. Giussani’s invitation. “Following is the desire to relive the experience of the person who has provoked you, and who still provokes you, with his presence in the life of the community [...]; it is the desire to participate in the life of that person, in whom something from an Other has been brought to you. And it is precisely this Other to whom you are so devoted, toward which you aspire, to whom you wish to adhere, all within this common journey.”

Only those who are willing to follow a teacher and try to relive his experience will be able to give a contribution that is at the height of the situation. “New evangelizers are like that: people who have had the experience of being healed by God, through Jesus Christ. And characteristic of them all is a joyful heart that cries out with the Psalmist: ‘What marvels the Lord worked for us: indeed we were glad’ (*Ps* 125:3)” (Benedict XVI, October 28, 2012). Only by becoming “new creatures” will we be able to demonstrate the beauty of an existence lived in faith, by making visible in daily life the newness that happened to us, through a diversity with which we live the same life as everyone else, from work to free time, in the different way in which we use reason and freedom, face circumstances—life and death—respond to the needs of our brothers, or participate in public life.

In these times, in front of what is happening to our Movement, the experience of the people of Israel often comes to my mind. I hope that we will not have to undergo what they did: refusing to listen to the reproaches of the prophets, the people were brought into exile. Only then, stripped of everything, did they understand where their true consistency lay. Israel became humble, a presence able to bear witness to its Lord, free from any hegemonic pretence to identify its security with a possession and with human success. Through the harshness of that circumstance—exile—God purified His people and made them shine in the midst of everyone.

Remembering that “the Christian is attached to nothing but Jesus” (Fr. Giussani), let us help each other to walk in the memory of Him, obeying the voice of the Mystery who calls us through that great witness who is Benedict XVI. If we spared ourselves this, which is *the* work of life, then we would fail in our task of witnessing, for which the Lord gave rise to the charism of the Movement in the Church, and which continues to arouse curiosity and interest, as I was able to verify at the Synod.

If we follow with simplicity—as many of you continually witness to me—then we will not miss out on the good that knocks at the door of our days, as Fr. Giussani always reminded us. “It is a promise within every battle. While the battle rages, through all the time in our lives that is struggle and toil, it promises us to enter more and more into the You, because the You is a present: ‘You are my strength and my song.’”

With great affection,

Fr. Julián Carrón

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Julián Carrón". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small flourish at the end.