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common prayer, that you pray together, even one Hail Mary a week, so to speak, but you should pray together, there should be an expression of common prayer; secondly, a deepening of your knowledge of the faith, therefore School of Community; thirdly, reciprocal charity: if you see someone who is ill, you cannot fail at least to phone him later; if someone's father is very old and he doesn't know how to take care of him, you absolutely must try to help him.

This is the very same idea that, from the sociological point of view, we found in the famous piece by MacIntyre that we read at the beginning of this year.* The same idea. I said then: the multiplication of these groups is the rooting of the Movement in society, it is an influence on society.

As one of you has recalled, at first I said this in a maximalist way, in other words, I talked as though a Fraternity group had to be a group of people determinedly devoted to this. Then, since no one "devoted himself," months passed and meetings were held, but nothing changed. So I turned to relaunching the same idea in completely minimalist terms: "I urge you to do the Fraternity at least as enrollment. In order to live the Fraternity you have to enroll and – the second idea I recommended – at least as an expression of detachment from earthly things and love for heavenly things, or poverty as we say using a Christian term, you have to give an offering to the monthly common fund: enroll and give an offering to the monthly common fund, maintaining above all prayer in common, and in second place obedience to the directives of the Movement, i.e., staying within the channel of the Movement."

So the Fraternity groups were created, they multiplied (I don't know how many there are, hundreds and hundreds of them), enrollments were duly done, Spiritual Exercises were held every year, with increasingly good results, monthly recollections were started, here and there.

But a month ago, about a month ago, something happened that is like a starry comet bursting over the stable of the Baby Jesus; a woman, who is a magistrate, came to tell me that she and some of her friends (and who knows, maybe their husbands too)

wanted to form a group like a *Memores Domini* house: not to live together in a house, but to have a rule and direction (what she actually said to me was: "A priest to direct us," which is not the same thing as the *Memores*). To you this may not seem like much, but I was deeply struck by this, because it was a return to the maximalism of the beginning, it was the sign that the level, albeit subterranean, of the desire for good among us had risen greatly, it was the sign that the Movement had caused a seed to grow, had caused consciences to grow. The evidence had come to me: what if this direction should multiply, if it should increase!

This is a true revival, in the strict sense of the word. Surely there is some other case, there are other cases. Therefore, we must pray to God and commit ourselves above all to increasing this reality, which we

cannot increase if we are not a part of it: not by preaching, but by taking part in it. The difference with the beginning of the Fraternity is that ambiguity is no

longer possible: either you are there or you are not, you cannot pretend to yourself that you are doing it when you are not. Then, it was possible to pretend.

Therefore, houses of *Memores Domini*, houses dedicated to God, Fraternity: it is the same, the identical phenomenon. It is Baptism that makes one grow up enough to be a protagonist in the world of a new human reality. I have always said: if those in the *Memores Domini* reached 100,000, Italy would be a bit shaken by it. But it was not the same reasoning, this is more global. We must pray to Our Lady to give us the grace to be witnesses at least of the beginning of this revival: only from this, as the sociologist MacIntyre says, can a bulwark be raised against the barbarism that is being reborn. ■

*Alasdair MacIntyre, concerning the situation of Europe at the end of the Roman empire, noted this: "A crucial turning point in that earlier history occurred when men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman *imperium* and ceased to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of that *imperium*. What they set themselves to achieve instead – often not recognizing fully what they were doing – was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness." (A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

The idea of Fraternity

by Luigi Giussani

The idea of Fraternity

We offer here a passage from a forthcoming book containing as yet unpublished talks by Fr Giussani along with letters from John Paul II to the Fraternity. The book will appear in the fall, on the occasion of the pilgrimage to Loreto for the twentieth anniversary of pontifical recognition.

Today's discussion sparked in my mind the remembrance of how the idea of the Fraternity was born.

Already then we were holding assemblies of the *Responsibles*. Normally at that time they were held near Varese (at Leggiano at the *Domus Mariae*). About 250 persons attended. On one of those Sundays I had this idea, I was struck by this idea: they are grown up, they are mature, they are adults, they are responsible for shops, factories, they are responsible for their family, which is the most important enterprise by nature, why shouldn't they have the responsibility, why shouldn't they feel the mature responsibility for their own holiness?

This was the first idea that came to my mind. If you recall, I said it explicitly: you are adults, just as you have the responsibility for human things, to increase human things, so should you have the responsibility for your journey towards destiny. Responsibility: therefore, no longer taken care of like children, organized like kids or set in motion like university students. You have to live your human journey towards destiny, which is called the journey towards holiness, you have to realize it yourselves and take it on as your own responsibility!

And the second idea was this. The Movement has accustomed us to perceiving the Christian method

in every event of the commitment and fulfillment of the person. Now, the Christian method of the event of the person is that of communionality: only if the person is "translated," translates himself, into a lived communion and therefore into a community can his effort be sustained. So I propose that your life be characterized by this phenomenon: that you freely join together, forming a group (so as not to use the word "community" all the time), which can have any kind of origin: friendship, acquaintance, preference, working together, or through any proximity, whether because of an occasion, or being neighbors or in the same parish. Do you recall that I said almost these very words? You join together, a priest in this case can belong to the group as one among the others, with what prevails in him being the fact of Baptism, not of Ordination, and thus above all he himself will receive serious help.

The group cannot be too large: 20-25 people; it must be free and spontaneous. The content of your recognition of yourselves as a group must be: by seeing each other, that you feel the need to help each other so that your faith may progress. Therefore the entire reality of the value of the group must consist in the esteem and love that each of you must offer towards the growth of the other's faith.

This has to bring as its consequence: first of all,



1956. Field trip to the Portofino Light House
with the second year students at Berchet High School.

“You alone – thinking –
O ideal, are real”

Giosuè Carducci