Communion and Liberation

“Christ: The New Principle of Knowledge and Action”

Notes from the contributions by Francesco Cassese and Davide Prosperi at the Beginning Day of the adults of Communion and Liberation of the Lombardy Region, Italy

Unipol Forum, Assago (Milan) and by video link, September 14, 2025

"Christ: The New Principle of Knowledge and Action"

Notes from the contributions by Francesco Cassese and Davide Prosperi at the Beginning Day of the adults of Communion and Liberation of the Lombardy Region, Italy

Unipol Forum, Assago (Milan) and by video link, September 14, 2025

Davide Prosperi

On June 6th, Pope Leo XIV spoke of "a unity that has its foundation in Christ, who draws us to Himself and thus unites us with one another."[1] Let us then call upon His Holy Spirit to accompany us in this gathering and along the entire journey that we want to travel together this year as well. This is why it is a joy to be here.

Come Holy Spirit

Francesco Cassese

Good afternoon! It is truly beautiful to be able to begin this journey, even more so knowing that we are called to make it together. Today here in the Assago Forum there are over 11,000 of us, while another 2,500 are following by video link in 5 areas of the Lombardy Region of Italy.

Before beginning I would like to share the message Davide sent Pope Leo for his 70th birthday, which, by happy accident, is today.

"Your Holiness, on the day of your birthday, we are grateful to God for the gift of your life and for your fatherly embrace of the Universal Church. As Fr. Luigi Giussani always taught us, we long to serve the Church and its Pastors wherever Christ's initiative takes our lives. For this reason, we wish to cherish with ever greater vigor the gifts of unity, communion, and peace that you have communicated to us since your election. We assure you of the prayers of all the communities of Communion and Liberation throughout the world for you and your mission. With my best wishes and looking forward to meeting you soon, I remain Yours faithfully, Davide Prosperi."[2]

I would like to start with a story related to my family. Some years ago my nephew was still an adolescent and was a bit restless, irritable and fractious. I remember returning to my sister's family a few months later and finding him calmer and smiling. Looking at him, I realized he had grown taller, and probably had reached the same height as his classmates. So I understood that part of his irritability was due to the fact that he hadn't been growing. It is a simple thing, but it was very meaningful for me. I realized that all of us, children and teenagers, but also adults, are meant to grow, to deepen in our humanity, and when this does not happen, we complain, measure ourselves and others, and feel impatient with everyone.

[1] Leo XIV, *To the moderators of lay associations, ecclesial movements and new communities,* June 6, 2025.
[2] D. Prosperi, "Happy Birthday, Pope Leo!" September 14, 2025, *clonline.org*.

In Fr. Giussani's book, *L'incontro che accende la Speranza [The Encounter that Awakens Hope]*, which collects unpublished texts from the 1985 Spiritual Exercises of the University Students of CL, he used the image of a swamp. Those who live their lives just repeating what they already know are like stagnant water that reflects nothing. Instead, spring water is always clear and for this reason reflects the sky. This is the way our companionship becomes a sign of destiny, enabling people to glimpse eternity.[3] We feel the urgent need to deepen our relationship with the Mystery who makes all things, but on our own we cannot imagine the road for doing so. We want to go forward on the road we are travelling, in the living, concrete, incarnate discovery of the totality of the charism and the essential features of the experience of the Movement.

This afternoon, my task is to offer a brief summary of some significant steps we have taken together in the last year. Next, I want to propose three questions that have emerged in the life of our communities.

I'll begin with last year's Beginning Day, entitled *Called, that is, sent: the beginning of mission,*[4] a moment that stimulated the life of many communities. In the course of many conversations this summer, I came to realize how the words we had shared a year before had been filled with experience, become substantial, and taken on flesh.

Then there was the letter Pope Francis sent you on February 1st, a deep and paternal gesture, a sign of his attention for the entire Movement, for the journey we are making together within the history of the Church. Then in April he died. Though it was very painful, it was also an experience of the greatness of the Church, manifested to the world in an extraordinary way. We remember his funeral well, with all the powerful of the earth present, seated on plastic chairs like the rest of the people. An image of a certain impact, which made visible the acknowledgement of a unique and true spiritual paternity.

A few weeks later, there was the election of Pope Leo XIV. One of his first public addresses was on the occasion of the Jubilee of the Ecclesial Movements, Associations and New Communities. He spoke strong and true words to us, which touched us immediately. He indicated the goal of the charisms, to "awaken in hearts a desire to encounter Christ." Embracing his invitation to be "a leaven of unity, communion and fraternity," to place our life "at the service of the Church's mission"[5] so that Christ may be known, confirmed us in the journey undertaken (in fact, his words are in perfect accord with what we placed at the center of our proposal last year) and at the same time made us perceive all the more strongly how much responsibility we have. In fact, we are the first to stand in need of conversion, because often we are lukewarm, uncertain, full of measures, held back by resistance and reticence.

Another precious sign on this journey was Pope Leo XIV's letter to Alberto Brugnoli, president of the *Memores Domini*, on the occasion of the Summer Spiritual Exercises in La Thuile.[6] It is a letter that provides support during our trials, gives us back a sense of free and open breathing, and clearly indicates the journey (it is available on the CL site, and we can all read it). Written to the *Memores Domini*, and referring to their particular and concrete situation, it is a sign of the Pope's paternity for the whole of our experience.

Even in the early years of the Movement, Fr. Giussani was already speaking about the two es-

[3] Cf. L. Giussani, *L'incontro che accende la speranza [The Encounter that Awakens Hope]*, LEV, Vatican City 2025, pp. 28 and ff.
[4] F. Cassese and D. Prosperi, *Called, that is, sent: the beginning of mssion]*, available at https://www.clonline.org/en/publications/booklets/2024-10-15-called-that-is-sent-the-beginning-of-mission.
[5] Leo XIV, *To the Moderators…*, op. cit.
[6] "Keep your gaze fixed on Him," Pope Leo XIV's letter to Alberto Brugnoli, July 21, 2025, *clonline.org* available at https://www.clonline.org/en/current-events/articles/letter-pope-leo-xiv-memores-domini).

sential pilasters of our reality, on the one hand "*Christian life as communion*" and on the other, "*collaboration with the event of the world, the cosmos.*" He said, "These are the two linchpins, exhaustively so, of our conception. These are the two points, period."[7]

There is a striking harmony with what the Pope said in his address to moderators on the occasion of the Jubilee of Movements, when he invited us to "collaborate faithfully and generously" with him, saying that precisely "unity and mission are two essential aspects of the Church's life, and […] the Petrine ministry."[8]

In order not to be abstract as we move forward, not to be disconnected from the reality in which we find ourselves, more concerned about carrying forward a line of logic than supporting the evolution of a life, further steps, emphases and inquiries must be grounded in the earth of what we have already accomplished. They must take into account what happens among us. We learn from history. In other words, we must verify past experience in light of the proposal to the entire Movement, starting with last September's Beginning Day.

So then, let's ask ourselves, "What point have we reached? What has truly become ours? Or what has created difficulties, resistance, misunderstandings or even been ignored?" Now we will try to look at the discoveries as well as the difficulties and questions, starting from everything we have experienced, including the School of Community and the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity and of Young Workers.

1. CHRIST DRAWS US TO HIMSELF

Cassese

I'll begin with the first question, taking as a starting point Beethoven's *Concerto for violin and orchestra in D Major, op. 61,* which we heard as we were entering. In his introduction to this concerto, Fr. Giussani used the image of the "individual" and the "community," comparing them to the violin and the orchestra.[9] The flights of the violin are taken up and supported by the orchestra. But we have to admit what a great pleasure it is to hear these spectacular flights, these displays of virtuosity! They are probably the most gripping moments in that concerto, the moments we appreciate the most.

I would like to link this to my first question. What does it mean that the desire for fulfillment that characterizes me, you, each of us, that determines the human heart, finds its answer within belonging? What does my humanity have to do with the communion of which we have spoken? How does this belonging not end up blocking my questions and desires?

Prosperi

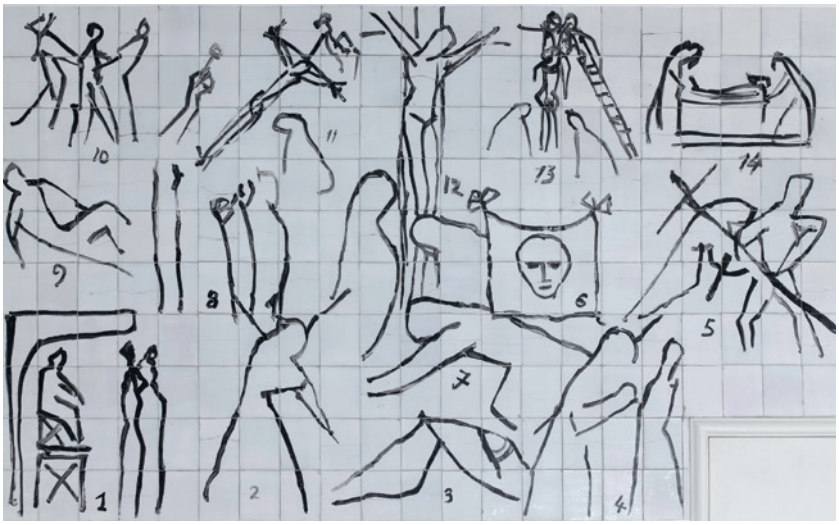
We started with Pope Leo's words. Christ "draws us to Himself and thus unites us with one another."[10] All of us are here, even those here for the first time, because in some way we have been attracted to Christ through a human encounter that has won us over. As it says in *Gaudium et Spes*, "Christ […] by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself."[11] His Presence corresponds in an unimaginable, unique way to the irresistible and undeniable de-

[7] L. Giussani, *Una rivoluzione di sé. La vita come comunione (1968–1970) [A Revolution of Oneself. Life as Communion (1968–1970)]*, Rizzoli, Milan 2024, pp. 12–13.
[8] Leo XIV, *To the Moderators…*, op. cit.
[9] Cf. L. Giussani, "La dimora dell'io [A Home for the Self]," in *Spirto Gentil. Un invito all'ascolto della grande musica guidati da Luigi Giussani*, edited by S. Chierici and S. Giampaolo, Bur, Milan 2011, pp. 135–137.
[10] Leo XIV, *To the Moderators…*, op. cit.
[11] Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

mands of our heart. In the relationship with Him, my "I," my humanity finds fulfillment, true joy and peace.

All the School of Community work on *The Religious Sense*[12] up to here has helped us enter deeply into this dynamic, while the journey we are about to begin on *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*[13] will be the opportunity to fix our gaze on Christ, on the event of God who became man to become man's companion.

If you are here, it is because, encountering a specific companionship, you perceived in it the breath of a promise of life, you sensed a Presence that corresponds to your heart's original expectant awaiting, and you said to yourself, maybe not even explicitly, "I'll go with them." This is the concrete and tangible meaning of the charism given to Fr. Giussani. It is the way Christ came to us persuasively, fascinating us, attracting us to Himself and therefore making us one.



Matisse, *The Way of the Cross* (1949–1951), Rosary Chapel, Vence
2025 ©Foto Scala, Firenze

In *The Encounter that Awakens Hope*, Fr. Giussani said, "The Mystery who makes all things, who became a man, touches me, reaches me, becomes encounter through a physical point, that young man or woman who told me a certain thing, that small group with whom I went on a trip, or that voice that spoke, or that gesture made, that initiative in which I participated. My God, it is an infinitely small, absolutely infinitesimal point! The Mystery who makes all things reaches me through them, reaches me through this companionship."[14] It made Christ's gaze and His love something we could experience; and in this way we felt called, deep in the core of our being.

To further explain this, I'd like to turn to an image, the *Way of the Cross* painted by Matisse in the chapel of Vence.[15] It may seem like a confused mishmash, but actually there is a precise order. In the center, together with the extension of the cross, you see Veronica's veil. The point is that we cannot see Christ's face directly; we see it through Veronica's veil. As you will note, it is the only face in which you see eyes, and they are looking at us. It is the gaze of Christ that reaches us through the Church, the mystery of our communion. This is the form Christ chose for remaining present in history, with certain features, with a precise face. Not a direct gaze, but veiled. The Son of God could have chosen another way, but He chose this one, and so, seized by Him, notwithstanding how wretched and petty

[12] L. Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2023.
[13] L. Giussani, *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 1998.
[14] L. Giussani, *L'incontro che accende la speranza [The Encounter that Awakens Hope]*, op. cit., p. 52.
[15] Chapelle du Saint-Marie du Rosaire (Vence), *Way of the Cross* created for the back wall, designed and decorated by Henri Matisse between 1949 and 1951 for the Dominican Sisters of the town.

as we are, we participate in the reality of His mysterious face.[16] It is the Christian paradox: through imperfect flesh the perfection of the Mystery communicates itself.

In this way, we discovered faith not as something intellectual or intimist, but as an involvement with a Presence, His presence here and now. In the book we published this summer, *Un volto nella storia [A Face in History]*, Fr. Giussani wrote, "For the Christian, 'faith' is not a theory. Rather, it is the acknowledgement of an event, […] of a reality that happened and continues to happen. It is the acknowledgement of the reality of Christ, […] of His continuity in history, that is, […] of the mystery of the Christian communion."[17]

The grace of the encounter that led us here today and thus the companionship into which it placed us are the way Christ turns to each of us, saying "Come with Me. Follow Me." If we are here today it is because we are responding to this call (some with more awareness, some with less), "Yes, here I am! Here I am with all my difficulties and burdens. Here I am with gratitude for my joys and affliction for my sorrows. Here I am, with the heavy burden of my errors, but here I am! I am here for You, Lord. Please, accept me!".

Certainly, it is always possible for us to refuse. You understand it when you look at the story of the rich young man. "Now someone approached Him and said, 'Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?'." Jesus gave him an apparently strange answer, "Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good."[18] Being good is something we are incapable of, because only God is good. Here Jesus began to introduce the point He wanted to make: you, on your own, through your own strength and energy, will never be able to earn life, eternal life, for yourself.

Then when He encouraged the young man to obey all the commandments, he replied, "All of these things I have observed. What do I still lack?"[19] The Gospel reports, "Jesus, looking at him, loved him [He loved him!], and said to him, 'You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow Me.' At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions."[20] This notation in the Gospel is striking. In fact, he could have left "angry" or "disappointed," because he had not received the answer he expected. Why instead did he go away "sad"?[21] Because *it cost him* to leave. He had truly recognized Christ in all His uniqueness, but this was not enough. His attachment to his goods, his projects, the fruit of his labor was too strong to abandon everything and follow Him.

In this story, Jesus seemed to position Himself in contrast to the things that God Himself, the Father, had given the rich young man. There's a recent song by Benson Boone (*Beautiful Things*) that says, "Oh God, don't take these beautiful things that I've got."[22] Why doesn't the rich young man leave his things behind? I believe it was for one reason alone: even though he recognized and valued the greatness of that man in front of him, he could not decide to follow Him because his attachment to what he possessed, to his own measure, was more powerful. Fr. Giussani continued, as if following

[16] "Baptism is the action with which Christ, died and risen, grasps those who the Father has put into His hands and takes them up into Himself. In this way, they become part of His figure, of His personality, members of His Body." (L. Giussani–S. Alberto–J. Prades, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2010, p. 31.

[17] L. Giussani, *Un volto nella storia. Il compito della Chiesa nel mondo (1969–1970) [A Face in History. The Task of the Church in the World (1969–1970)]*, Rizzoli, Milano 2025, p. 201.

[18] Mt 19:16–17.

[19] Mt 19:20.

[20] Mk 10:21–22.

[21] Mt 19:22.

[22] B. Boone, *Beautiful Things*, from the album "Fireworks & Rollerblades," © Night Street–Warner Records, 2024.

out loud the young man's thoughts, "What right does he have to tell me to come with him?" And he added, "'Come with Me' is not a law of life. Coming with You is not a law of conscience, a moral law recognized by the community, by society. Coming with You is another thing, an extrapolation. Come with You is something strange and bizarre, abandoning my father and mother, my girlfriend, my money... Who could say 'Come with Me!'? [...] With full authority, who could say that? Someone who was my Lord, to whom I belonged." Here then is "the great word: belonging."[23]

The same holds for each of us. Fr. Giussani observed that for us, it is not so much an actual refusal (which may happen at times, as we know all too painfully), but "a resistance in front of the evidence of belonging. 'Come with Me, because you're Mine!'. It is fantastic to read the Gospel, discovering in Christ this consciousness of being the Lord of the people, when He used the word 'His own'. 'His own,' 'My own.' We develop resistance against this belonging."[24] In fact, as children of the culture of our times, we affirm "I am mine." Maybe we don't articulate it as a clear thought, but in our facts and choices we affirm it. But it is a lie that blocks us, because, as we have seen in this year's School of Community, it is crushingly evident that human beings do not make themselves; we belong to an Other. We are in a relationship with the infinite. We belong to God.[25]

"Our creaturely dependence would remain an enigmatic and fleeting perception if it had not been revealed clearly in Christ."[26] In belonging to God made man, to Christ, our dependence on God becomes clear: we belong to Christ. "We belong to Him whom we have encountered. *We belong to Him*, and for this reason–Fr. Giussani added–we also belong to the instrument with which He reaches us, that is, the companionship, the community."[27] This is precisely when our resistance kicks in, when belonging is not to an idea, but to the Christian Fact: belonging to Christ and the Church.

So then, let's ask ourselves, "Why should we abandon everything to follow Christ? Why should we accept to belong to Him, according to all the historical nature that this entails?" Fr. Giussani said there is only one reason, "This presence is necessary so that I may be, so that I may be myself."[28] All my substance lies in belonging to this presence, and consequently all my fruitfulness, the fruitfulness of my and your life. In fact, in belonging to the companionship in which the encounter with Christ makes itself concrete experience, "our whole person is taken up, and changes as time passes. We really think, perceive, judge, feel and experience affection, work; in other words manipulate reality, give ourselves (our life, our death) in a profoundly different way."[29]

2. FROM BELONGING, A NEW JUDGMENT

Cassese

Now I'll go on to the second question. In these years of School of Community we have learned,

[23] L. Giussani, *L'incontro che accende la speranza [The Encounter that Awakens Hope]*, op. cit., p. 59.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 64.
[25] "At this moment, if I am attentive, that is, if I am mature, then I cannot deny that the greatest and most profound evidence is that *I do not make myself*, I am not making myself. I do not give myself being, or the reality which I am. I am 'given.' This is the moment of maturity when I discover myself to be dependent upon something else. If I descend to my very depths, where do I spring from? Not from myself: *from something else*. This is the perception of myself as a gushing stream born from a spring, from something else, more than me, and by which I am made. If a stream rushing forth from a spring could think, it would perceive, at the bottom of its fresh surging, an origin it does not know, which is other than itself. [...] *I* am 'you-who-make-me'." (L. Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, op. cit., p. 110).
[26] L. Giussani–S. Alberto–J. Prades, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2010, p. 50.
[27] L. Giussani, *L'incontro che accende la speranza [The Encounter that Awakens Hope]*, op. cit., p. 71.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[29] L. Giussani–S. Alberto–J. Prades, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, op. cit., p. 51.

since the first chapter of *The Religious Sense*, that judgment is "the beginning of liberation."[30] And yet, I realize that the word "judgment" is often perceived as something harsh, almost a blade that wounds, a condemnation or something that even crushes our freedom. Other times it seems to evoke an attitude of superiority, as if placing oneself on a higher step than the others. So then, I'd like to ask you to help us understand better the meaning of the word "judgment," because it is one we have dwelt upon many times this year.[31] I would also like to ask you to clarify what Fr. Giussani meant by "communional judgment," the possibility of giving a judgment on reality starting from a lived communion, because this expression is sometimes interpreted either as passively relying on the opinion of the companionship or as coming to decisions according to what the majority thinks.

Prosperi

We've said we are here together because of the attraction of Christ. But the attraction of Christ has an effect on our life. It does not leave us the same as before: it perturbs and changes life. If this Presence we want to "be mixed into like dough"[32] is not an idea or the fruit of our imagination, then inevitably it perturbs, shakes and changes life, leaving nothing the way it was before; it generates a new being in me, a new identity, which is my true identity.

The encounter with Christ present "has a genetic value, since it represents the birth of a new subject which arises in a precise place and in a moment of history, where it is nourished and grows as a new personality, with a unique conception, irreducible to any other; it is given a new *nous*, a new knowledge. When this Presence is at work in all life's relationships, when all relationships 'depend' on this, when they are saved, judged, coordinated, evaluated and used in the light of this Presence, then we have a new culture."[33]

As the title of this Beginning Day says, Christ is the "new principle of knowledge and action." This expression comes from *The Book of Hours*.[34] Belonging to Christ brings a radical change to our life, which first of all is a change of gaze upon ourselves and all things, an alteration of the categories of intelligence, of the way of thinking and evaluating. In fact, Jesus said, "Change mentality.[35] Saint Paul wrote, "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect."[36] Fr. Giussani often expressed this concept using the word "judgment": change judgment.

A new, truer and more complete judgment emerges from faith lived in the Christian community. Fr. Giussani recounted that our movement began when he met four Berchet high school students in the street and encouraged them to judge life in the light of faith. "The next week, these four presented themselves at the assembly and began their contribution with these words: 'We Catholics…' From that moment on in that school […] there was no hotter topic than the Church and Christianity."[37] The use of this "we" indicates a

[30] L. Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, op. cit., p. 11.
[31] Cfr. D. Prosperi, *Culture: to be for Christ*, June 5, 2024, *clonline.org*.
[32] Cfr. L. Giussani, *Lettere di fede e di amicizia ad Angelo Majo [Letters of Faith and Friendship to Angelo Majo]*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (MI) 2007, p. 28.
[33] L. Giussani–S. Alberto–J. Prades, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, op. cit., p. 112.
[34] "Invocazioni [Invocations]" Wednesday morning prayer, *Il libro delle ore [The Book of Hours]*, Jaca Book, Milano 2006, p. 122.
[35] Cf. Mt 4:17.
[36] Rom 12:2.
[37] L. Giussani, *Il movimento di Comunione e Liberazione (1954–1986). Conversazioni con Robi Ronza [The Movement of Communion and Liberation (1954–1986). Conversations with Robi Ronza]*, Bur, Milano 2014, p. 22.

new wellspring for the criteria of judgment that we apply to history.

If we have been reached by what Fr. Giussani called the "real Christ,"[38] that is, by the concrete, historical, contemporary presence of Christ within a companionship, we cannot help but have another vision. For example, we have seen shared attempts to publicly express a new vision in some issues of *Traces*, which were then developed on the CL site (I'm thinking of those regarding care for life, the family and peace, but also the most recent issue, just out, on freedom of education.) The same holds for many of us engaged in normal, daily situations or in particular circumstances, which document a different life, beginning with the categories used to judge, a life that is itself a "public" testimony before the world.

This was the sense of the expression I used in a recent interview, "The day we stop judging will mean we've lost our faith."[39] It means we will have lost the conception of faith we received in the encounter with the charism given to Fr. Giussani, a faith that has to do with life in all its aspects and judges it in a new way, illuminates it in a new way.

For that matter, a faith that does not become judgment is a faith that does not touch life. If it does not change our judgment, everything stays the same as before, and we live an abstract faith that does not truly have an impact. In the end, we reason like everyone else. What's at stake here is the conception of Christianity and faith. John Paul II used to say (and this is a line Fr. Giussani quoted often), "A faith that does not become culture is one not fully listened to, not entirely thought through, not faithfully lived."[40]

A few weeks ago, Pope Leo XIV told a delegation of French political representatives, "The salvation Jesus obtained with his death and resurrection encompasses all the dimensions of human life, such as culture, economics and work, the family and marriage, respect for human dignity and life, health, communication, education and politics. Christianity cannot be reduced to a simple private devotion."[41]

Instead, concerning "communional judgment" in the second part of the question, I agree it is necessary to help each other gain a better understanding, as we have used this term often.

In the context of defining the dimensions of Christian life as communion, in *Una rivoluzione di sé [A Revolution of Self]* Giussani spoke of "*communion of judgment*."[42] Later, he came back to the point and developed it further in the new book *Un volto nella storia [A Face in History],* "Faith is actual knowledge of the summary category of reality, which is Christ. From this point of view, faith means 'appropriating Christ for oneself,' taking on Christ's vision of reality, making it your own. [He means "appropriating" in this sense.]" We want to see what He sees! We want to be able to see reality the way He does! Fr. Giussani continued, "But how does faith appropriate this vision? How does it participate in Christ's vision of reality?" Through immanence in the Church. In fact, he continued, "the Church is the place of those who participate in faith in Christ's judgment and therefore *strive* over time to express this judgment."[43] There is no

[38] L. Giussani, *Un volto nella storia. Il compito della Chiesa nel mondo (1969–1970) [A Face in History. The Task of the Church in the World (1969–1970)]*, op. cit., p. 204.
[39] M. Matzuzzi, "Tra fedeltà al carisma e richiamo all'unità. Intervista al presidente di Comunione e liberazione, Davide Prosperi [Faithfulness to the charism and the call to unity. An interview with the President of Communion and Liberation, Davide Prosperi]," *Il Foglio*, June 11, 2025.
[40] John Paul II, *Discorso ai partecipanti al Congresso nazionale del Movimento ecclesiale di impegno culturale [Address to the participants of the national congress of the ecclesial movement of cultural engagement]*, January 16, 1982.
[41] Leo XIV, *Address to a delegation of French political representatives, Val de Marne, in the Créteil Diocese in France*, August 28, 2025.
[42] L. Giussani, *Una rivoluzione di sé. La vita come comunione (1968–1970) [A Revolution of Self. Life as Communion (1968–1979)]*, op. cit., p. 26.
[43] L. Giussani, *Un volto nella storia. Il compito della Chiesa nel mondo (1969–1970) [A Face in History. The Task of the Church in the World (1969–1970)]*, op. cit., pp. 114, 116–117.

arrogance here. There is a striving over time to express this judgment and make it concrete in the concrete vicissitudes of life.

Faith is a global horizon of knowledge, and this establishes an alternative, which Fr. Giussani summarized in this way, "Either you judge within faith, or you judge outside faith. There are no neutral fields of knowledge." This means "you judge either inside the Church or outside the Church. You do not exist up to a point with the Church and beyond that independently from the Church. Because the human person is one–one!–and cannot be divided."[44]

The "communional judgment" of which Fr. Giussani spoke is the new judgment born of faith, which draws its origin and hence its categories from lived communion. Therefore, if you separate yourself from the communional life and think you judge according to faith, "drawing inspiration" from the charism, from outside the immanence in the companionship in which the charism lives, you are lying to yourself, because even without wanting to, you depend on others and are influenced on the common mindset.

In a gathering in the 1980s (later published in *Traces*) with the monks of Cascinazza on this theme, Fr. Giussani said, "A judgment springs forth from the consciousness of belonging. It is conditioned by the consciousness of belonging. To whom do I belong? To whom do we belong? Judgment always emerges from how we answer and live the answer to this question."[45] Therefore, judgment is either an expression of belonging to the living reality of the Church, to the companionship in which Christ has placed you to deepen your relationship with Him, or it expresses what most conditions you, the mindset of the environment where you are. Fr. Giussani used this word "environment" to indicate that which determines our mindset.[46]

Thus this insistence on "communional judgment" is not intended as a call to order but as a way of accompanying us in the *personal* journey of faith. It is not a matter of discipline, but of love for our life. In fact, the only goal of all this is the flowering of the new "I" in us, as Jesus answered the elderly Nicodemus when he asked, "How can a person once grown old be born again?".[47]

Now, "communional judgment" does not only and does not always indicate the final result. Obviously, this can depend on the circumstances and the debatable nature of the issue. But first and foremost, it is the genesis of judgment and the itinerary for reaching it, as expression of the search for judgment according to faith. It is a journey made together, in a guided companionship, which entails listening, comparing ideas and striving for unity. This is the case when seeking a common judgment, in certain cases on important topics, to propose publicly with a poster, a press release, an article or an exhibition, as in the exhibit on peace that GS prepared for the Meeting[48]. It is equally the case regarding a judgment you form personally on your life situation, on questions raised by your environment, on the education of your children, decisions on your future and career. For those who belong to the Christian companionship, the judgment is *always* communional, that is, its criteria come from immanence in the communion, in a continual attention to comparing ideas and experiences.

In this sense, common and public judgments also express belonging, dialogue, comparison of ideas, a desire to discover together the judgment of faith, not the affirmation of this or that opinion,

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 117.
[45] L. Giussani, "On communional judgment," in *Traces-Litterae Communionis*, June 2001.
[46] Cf. L. Giussani, *The Journey to Truth is an Experience*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2006, pp. 18–19.
[47] Jn 3:4.
[48] Cf. *Profezie per la pace [Prophecies for Peace]*, edited by B. Cedone and T. Sperotto, Itaca, Castel Bolognese (RA) 2025.

even of those in leadership. This requires of each of us the authentic desire for this discovery and the willingness to try to identify with the reasons underlying a certain judgment, when the Movement takes the responsibility of proposing it to everyone, given the crucial nature of the issue and the historical need for the consequent position taken.

When you try to identify and understand, you may have difficulty or something may not seem right, and so you will bring this difficulty to a frank and open dialogue with those in authority, "Why was this said? I would have said something else." The leader, in turn, must consider a sincere question seriously, take heed of what prompted it, and if necessary, correct himself or herself. Your observation may contain a new and more centered element that can help the whole companionship move forward. This is what we call striving for unity. It does not mean that we all have to "toe the line." This is how we move forward on our journey.

Therefore, this journey engages everyone in conversion, all the more so because communional judgment is never abstract, that is, it does not stop at the enunciation of theoretical criteria, but goes into the issue, be it when you take a position on the circumstances and challenges of your personal and social life, or be it when things concerning everyone are involved, the organization of the whole of society, for example in caring for life, the family, peace and education. These are all issues we can have different positions on–up to a certain point, I hope–but the question is whether we approach them by striving for dialogue and a common judgment that can be offered to everyone, whether what dominates is not my own opinion or recrimination, but the striving for unity. It is a *striving*, certainly, and thus it respects the freedom and the pace of each person.

For that matter, Fr. Giussani always insisted on education to a critical sense, giving reasons for things, the personal need and responsibility for judgment.[49] The Movement wants to be the place of growth of our awareness of the reasons for every proposal, starting with the Christian one, and therefore of the generation of free people with a critical sense, builders of history. For this reason, there is no conflict between stimulating critical awareness of reality and stressing sequela of the companionship. Our companionship is and wants to be the place of education to the use of critical judgment, and belonging to it is for the maturation of our personality. In fact, nobody is self-educated. Everyone needs a place that helps us to develop an intelligence that is increasingly able to "test everything; retain what is good."[50] This also and maybe primarily happens through the proposal of concrete examples of judgment, which thus are of both cultural and educative value.

Every judgment, be it yours or the companionship's, is by nature perfectible, an approximation. The point is not to avoid making mistakes; we cannot be stopped by this (saying nothing for fear of making a mistake). Rather, what truly counts is that we do not abandon the road upon which we have been placed, that we do not refuse to belong.

Consider the *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* we listened to as we entered. The violin truly becomes the protagonist when it makes the orchestra's theme its own, and in a certain sense its drive is born again in belonging to the orchestra. Instead, defeat for us would be in some way to theorize a conception of freedom as autonomy. In the end this separates us from the origin and leads us to reason like everyone else, making us less critical, inducing us to yield to the pressure of what Fr. Giussani called "the powers that be."

Belonging to the companionship where Christ has come to us enables us not only to develop a

[49] Cf. L. Giussani, *The Risk of Education*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2019, pp. xxix–xxxi.
[50] Cf. 1Thes 5:21.

new judgment, but also to act in a new way, to face situations and trials, any desert, any circumstance, any pain and suffering, even evil, in a new way. We saw this at the Meeting, for example, in the exhibit on Hermannus Contractus and the one on the martyrs of Algeria, to which Pope Leo referred in his message.[51] We heard it in the International Assembly of Leaders, in different testimonies from around the world. We see it in action in the extraordinary witness of Cardinal Pizzaballa and the religious who have not abandoned Gaza and the Holy Land, notwithstanding the terrible situation and the risks of which they are well aware.

"Christ: the new principle of knowledge and action," we said. The testimony we will listen to now will allow us to see the newness introduced by Christ exemplified in the circumstances of life of someone like many of us.

Read the text

3. BRINGING TO THE WORLD THE LOVE THAT HAS REACHED US

Cassese

Before asking a final question, I would like to review some things that happened among us in our communities this year, which struck me deeply. First of all, there was the gesture of public presence called the Milan University District, organized in Piazza Leonardo by our university students for the second year, and then also the creation of the Mim Festival (Milano IncontraMi), which formed a network with different works in the city, and took place at the end of May at the columns of San Lorenzo. This initiative came about through the desire of some young people to tell the city about what they have encountered in their life. It was a simple gesture, but charged with meaning.

I'm also reminded of the involvement of some young people in the works born of the Movement, people who freely gave of themselves and also took on responsibility, for example, in the administrative council of some private schools. We have seen the creation of cultural centers promoted by friends who desired to explore pressing current themes, like those related to artificial intelligence and other challenges of our time. I also want to mention the shared work of some schools to create the "Carlo Acutis" private Technical Institute, at the beginning of this week.

I have seen the vitality of many families who have taken the initiative to become signs of new life in the contexts where they live, such as their parishes. I don't have time to tell you about everything that is happening internationally but I'd like to point to some of us from the Lombardy Region who live now in northern Europe or Arab countries and who gather to accompany each other in their work and vocation, involving new friends in this journey. What most strikes me is that these initiatives were not planned and organized from the top down, but blossomed from the experience we are living. They are signs through which the Lord invites us to walk, leading us and the story of the whole Movement to take new steps toward maturity.

Having said all this, I don't want to underestimate the journey that remains to be made. In fact, the call to mission announced in last year's Beginning Day was sometimes, especially initially, received a bit moralistically like something to add on, something to do. I realize there is always the risk of slipping into moralism. So then, in the light of what we have said, I'd like to ask you what it means to be subjects of mission.

[51] Leo XIV, *Message of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, signed by the Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, to mark the XLVI edition of the Meeting for Friendship among Peoples*, August 21, 2025.

Prosperi

First of all, we must learn from the examples that exist among us and not only among us, indicating them. However, I think the crucial point is that living a new life does not require any prerequisites of brilliance, strength, temperament or personal audacity, but immanence, with an open and willing heart, in the place to which Christ attracts me and enables me to experience His mercy.

To flesh this out for you, I'll use three images. The first comes from Graham Greene's novel, *The Power and the Glory*, which was one of the books the Movement indicated for summer reading. The main character is a priest in flight in Mexico during the ferocious anti-Catholic persecutions of the 1930s. This priest (whose name is not even given) is the last one left in that territory. But he is not an ideal "model" of virtue or the classic hero who challenges all his enemies. Rather, he is very flawed. He is an alcoholic who fathered a child in a chance hookup, and is terrorized by the persecution underway, continually trying to flee. He of all people is the last priest left in a nation that has criminalized celebration of the Mass, and thus he is the one God has chosen to continue to reach souls.

However, this morally unworthy priest is a beggar, a man who is poor in spirit. At a certain point, when he has almost reached the U.S. border and "salvation," he decides to go back to hear the confession of a dying man, a murderer, knowing that this could be a trap. He does so not out of heroism, but out of faithfulness to something greater than himself that draws him. It is the experience of "You seduced me, Lord, and I let myself be seduced."[52] God does not need the "pure" in His work of salvation: He needs the willing, even though they are fragile and flawed. So we have no alibis! Obviously, this does not mean justifying sin, but acknowledging that this sin is conquered by the embrace of God's mercy. That priest will die a martyr, and Christ, through His Church, will not leave the Mexican people orphaned.

Thus the mission to which we are called does not mean being "upright" or "good" but being beggars, needy and grateful for His love, His embrace, His companionship. This is what generates newness of action, even in the midst of an abyss of evil. Cardinal Pizzaballa has shown us and borne witness to the fact that the Christian approach is different: the goal is not to pull the weeds, but to recognize the wheat in their midst and make it grow.

We are not called to eliminate problems but to be there in their midst in a new way ("Christ: the new principle of knowledge and action"), sharing the road with those who suffer, who are in need, bearing witness about the love we have received, and in this way contributing to changing the world. Even the most difficult contradiction to accept, the suffering of the innocent (but actually, all suffering) may not be entirely without meaning.

Think of the episode of Simon of Cyrene.[53] This is the second image I'd like to propose. The Gospels narrate that the soldiers accompanying Jesus to Calvary forced a man from Cyrene, a certain Simon, to help Him. He obeyed, though this must not have been easy. We know that for a Jew, carrying the cross was something ignominious and contemptible. And yet in doing so, he contributed without realizing it to the achievement of the Father's plan of salvation.

A man like any other, who found himself in that circumstance without having willed it, was involved in the accomplishment of Jesus' mission. This indicates something important: Christ calls us by name, we infinitely small points in the universe, through the circumstances He gives us to live, and He involves us in His mission. Many will

[52] Jer 20:7.

[53] Mt 27:31–34; Lk 23:26; Mk 15:20–22.

remember that Fr. Giussani used to say, "The circumstances God has us pass through are an essential and not secondary factor of our vocation, of the mission to which we are called."[54]

Therefore, for us the key is being open to the call. The way we deal with our circumstances, even those of pain and suffering (think of certain inevitable circumstances), becomes a free offering of ourselves to Christ, rather than mere endurance, when through faith, through the relationship with the presence of the risen Christ, we become aware that our gesture is part of a design that is not ours, the Father's plan of salvation, and that in accepting the piece of road we have been asked to travel with Him on the way to Calvary, we are contributing to the glory of the resurrection of Christ.

Rembrandt, *Christ in Emmaus* (1628), Jacquemart-André Museum, Paris

Third and final image. In Rome, during the days of the Jubilee of the Movements, I had the opportunity to see Rembrandt's painting[55] of the supper at Emmaus, where some disciples of Emmaus hosted Jesus after His resurrection. In the main scene, Jesus is leaning curiously to the right in a dynamic tension because He is about to disappear from their sight.[56] At table with Him are two disciples. One of them is illuminated directly by the light coming from the face of the Risen Christ: you see him, full of wonder, in the moment he realizes the exceptional nature of the One in front of him. The other has dropped to the floor and is bent over His feet.

In the background on the left we can see a woman who is probably stacking dishes or preparing food to bring to the table. There are two truly interesting details. The first is that her torso is inclined at the identical angle as Jesus' body, as if to indicate a certain identification with Him, even if she is unaware of His ultimate profundity (because we do not know the deep sentiment with which Christ looks at us and all things). The second detail is that light is also emanating from the woman. It is much feebler than that from the figure of Jesus, but it has the same tone because it reflects the light coming

[54] L. Giussani, *L'uomo e il suo destino. In cammino [Man and His Destiny. On the Road]*, Marietti *1820*, Genova 1999, p. 63.
[55] "Il Cammino della Speranza. Rembrandt e Burnand a Roma [The Journey of Hope. Rembrandt and Burnand in Rome]," edited by Fr. Alessio Geretti. Works exhibited: Burnand (1850–1921) *The Disciples Peter and John running to the Sepulchre on the Morning of the Resurrection* (1898), Musée d'Orsay, Paris; Rembrandt (1606–1669), *The Supper at Emmaus* (1629), Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris. The works were exhibited (April 9–June 8 2025) at the Church of San Marcello al Corso, in Rome.
[56] Cf. Lk 24:13–35.

from Christ, while she is doing what Christ did: serving.

Our responsibility in the world is to be the reflection of Christ's light in love and service to Him (Psalm 4 says, "Lord, may the light of Your face shine upon us") through loving and serving others (as Mother Teresa said), those we encounter along our daily paths, in the places where we live, so they can know the light that has filled our lives, so "they should know You, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ."[57]

This is the mission to which we are called, to bring the world the love that has reached us, "the love that moves the sun and the other stars."[58] Life is vocation. As we said at last year's Beginning Day, we have been chosen, called to the relationship with Christ, called to respond to a mission, to let the world know His truth, His love, there where we are, wherever we are, in our neighborhoods, schools, universities, cities, nations and world, because the whole world is waiting for this and the entire meaning of our life lies precisely in being called to this mission. As we see in the main character of *The Power and the Glory*, there is no greater poverty and no greater enthusiasm than this.

So who is the true subject of this mission? Fr. Giussani said, "The true Christian subject is the person who lives and carries and creates, builds, the Church where he or she is; it is the Christian communion."[59] For this reason, as we said last year, mission cannot exclude belonging to the Christian communion.

Remember Pope Leo XIV's words to the moderators of the movements, "No one is Christian alone! We are part of a people, a body established by the Lord. […] The Christian life is not lived in isolation, as a kind of intellectual or sentimental experience, confined to the mind and the heart. It is lived with others, in a group and in community, because the risen Christ is present wherever disciples gather in His name."[60]

You bring this communion with you even if you are physically alone, as happens for many of us in our workplaces or in the countries in the world where we live. Each of your judgments and actions are the expression of this communion. Thus mission means that wherever we are, we bring with us and testify to what we are, to the new reality that is Christ, the Christian communion. Fr. Giussani said, "Therefore, you are not in your neighborhood [that is, in every daily circumstance] if not for and with this faith, if not bringing yourself within and expressing a new structure, which is the structure of the Christian communion: communion and liberation." And soon after he stated, with words that cannot be misunderstood, "This is our task; any other departures are not ours."[61]

[57] Jn 17:3.

[58] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: 3 Paradise* XXXIII, v. 145, translated by Dorothy Sayers, Barbara Reynolds, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, England, 1962, p. 347.

[59] L. Giussani, *Un volto nella storia. Il compito della Chiesa nel mondo (1969–1970) [A Face in History. The Task of the Church in the World (1969–1970)*], op. cit., p. 202.

[60] Leo XIV, *To the Moderators…*, op. cit.

[61] L. Giussani, *Un volto nella storia. Il compito della Chiesa nel mondo (1969-1970) [A Face in History. The Task of the Church in the World (1969-1970)*], op. cit., p. 202.

Translation by Sheila Beatty

On the cover: Vincent Van Gogh, *The Sower at Sunset,* 1888, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands