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*The journey
of hope*

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The Jubilee of the pilgrims from Sweden.

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GIUSSANI

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All sinners

In the year 1300, Boniface VIII—the pope whom Dante sent to the infernal circle of simoniacs while he was still alive—decided to establish the Jubilee, a Holy Year during which the faithful from all over the world were invited to make pilgrimages to Rome, the site of the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul, to obtain indulgences. At that dramatic turning point of history, burdened by fears and uncertainties, the pontiff sensed a desire for change, for purification, believing that the faithful felt the need to start anew. Thus, responded by opening to them the “treasure of indulgences.” This is something more than the forgiveness of sins granted by God in confession, because the Plenary Jubilee Indulgence also erases the temporal punishments that result from having transgressed divine law—punishments that remain even after receiving absolution in the sacrament.

These are words that today may seem incomprehensible to many, at a time that has forgotten the meaning of sin and no longer feels the need to ask for forgiveness. Why, then, is such an event being proposed once again? Why is the world's attention being drawn back to indulgences, the very issue that led Luther to spark the Protestant schism? What is being conveyed in this 2025 invitation to set out for Rome? For over seven centuries, the church has periodically proclaimed the Jubilee: at first every one hundred years, then every fifty, and finally every twenty-five—or even more frequently, if we consider extraordinary Holy Years, such as the Year of Mercy proclaimed between 2015 and 2016 by Pope Francis. The Church continues to repropose the Jubilee so that forgotten truths may resound once again in the world: that every person is “a great mystery that is illuminated only by the presence of Christ” (as Monsignor Rino Fisichella says in the interview that opens this issue of *Traces*); that we are all sinners, incapable of accomplishing what we aspire to on our own; and that life involves a need to be forgiven and a desire to bring this embrace to everyone.

“The Jubilee,” wrote St. John Paul II to Fr. Giussani in the message for the 2000 Spiritual Exercises, “invites us to fix our gaze on Christ, man's Redeemer. In reality, only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man find complete fulfilment.” This is confirmed by two testimonies we have collected. “Visiting the holy places was a re-encounter, a confirmation in faith and hope,” recounts Mikhail Grigorev, fresh from a pilgrimage to Rome with a hundred Russians led by Archbishop Paolo Pezzi. Thus, Mikhail helps us rediscover another reality related to indulgences. The Catechism expresses it this way: “The Christian who seeks to purify himself of his sin and to become holy with the help of God's grace is not alone. (...) The holiness of one profits others, well beyond the harm that the sin of one could cause others.” We are not alone—we are part of a companionship that helps us on the path toward destiny. As Fr. Giussani says in a preview of the text *The Encounter that Lights Hope*, soon to be published on the CL website, this companionship “is the only one where, whatever you do, we embrace you as if you had gone away the night before.”

Letters

Loretta, Mario, and Andrea

edited by
Paola Bergamini
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We are never alone

After finishing my trip to the hair salon, I saw a woman I rarely bump into, waiting for her hair color to set. Smiling, I told her that I too should change my look, and I added “I wouldn’t even know what occasion I would do it for.” She answered, “For your wedding anniversary!” I told her that the next day marked four years since my husband’s death. Such a sudden death, after we had said “ciao” to each other a half hour before, left me unable to breathe, but only for a moment, because the Lord had thought of everything. My husband had our son and a friend with him. Giorgio always told me that he wanted to die in the mountains. That day, we would have celebrated his seventieth birthday, first with a dinner of his choosing and then with our children and their families. The woman looked at me and said, “How can you be so serene? You have faith!” I responded, “Yes, I believe that we are never alone but are always looked after by the Lord in everything that happens. There are moments when I have nostalgia, but then I think that for him, it was a good death: it was Lent and we had prayed at Mass the evening before and prayed the Rosary after dinner.” She told me that she has a cousin who has a tumor and doesn’t have long to live but that he is serene; she doesn’t understand how he can be that way. Then looking at me, she added, “It has done me good to hear you talk.” So I told her that we have a soul that corresponds to what the heart desires because the Lord put it there and that He wants our happiness. Then I dared to ask her if she went to Mass and she said, “Sometimes, but I have a friend who goes...” I suggested that she follow this friend because we need to be with those who look at the good. I added, “Think of how

good the Lord is—that morning of my husband’s death, I was listening to a homily from a priest who said that Lent isn’t so much a time of renunciation, but of seeing how the Lord presents Himself in our days, asking us that we be able to recognize Him. So in front of the telephone call reporting Giorgio’s death, in my heart I began to pray together with my daughter who had broken the news to me, and in this way I accepted His will because he had prepared me for that moment.” The woman was moved and you could see that she was more serene. Returning home, I thanked the Lord for having been able to speak about Him and for the grace to be able to encounter Him within everyday life.

Loretta

Life has worth if it has a great purpose

I have always been passionate about cycling, be it on- or off-road, and with the spirit of an amateur, I have participated in organized races throughout Italy. On July 8, 2023, I left for a race at 7:45. I had been training and I felt good as I faced the first climb, in spite of my sixty years. I arrived with some of the first riders to the top of the climb and I launched myself into the descent. After a few kilometers, I touched bikes with another cyclist and then everything went dark. I awakened the next day in the intensive care unit of the Bolzano hospital with a medullar injury. All the circumstances I’ve had to face permitted me to recenter my life, my person, on the true meaning of myself: this condition of being paraplegic has caused me to rediscover my affection for the movement. This is because my friends have witnessed to me a good, a company, that hasn’t carried with it the fact that before my fall, I lived this very friendship with them in a distracted way, taking it for granted. What strikes

me every time is the discovery of a loving faithfulness to the destiny of my person. It might seem absurd to call my present condition a gift, but, in spite of the pain and the discouragement, I can do that because when I encounter the faces of my friends, I understand that life has worth if it has a great purpose that goes beyond the surface. I live now with a profound sense of gratitude for precise faces—my family and so many friends. I look at myself in the mirror: it is a life sitting down. After the bewilderment that takes your breath away, there is born from memory, from experience, a certain awareness that I am not alone and never have been in this year-and-a-half of being a paraplegic. With this concrete good, I can live the real intensely and can therefore realize that my fulfillment passes through these circumstances and that our friendship is a place of education for that. It is the only road for living my life with a fullness, with a grace, that before was unimaginable.

Mario, Perugia (Italy)

A gift made to someone I love

In our community, we got a message to organize some booths outside of the churches for the sale of *Traces*, in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the death of Fr. Giussani, to whom the February edition is dedicated. I think this was a beautiful opportunity to help others meet a person who has had such an important impact on my life. I proposed organizing a booth in the square, with songs and a certain number of copies to.... give away. Yes, to give away, with us offering the necessary funds, in order to remove the two objections I usually have in my head. The first is the discomfort I feel in asking for money from people I don't know. The second is making it easier for the recipient by removing any filter. In the end, you want to communicate the precious things in your life to everyone. The appointment was for Sunday, the 23rd of February. Some friends took charge of organizing everything and when I got there, I found a table with some people who were singing and only a few magazines to give away because most of them had already been sold. As soon as people heard the name Giussani, they were attracted. We tried to give away the last thirty copies. At first, it was really difficult, and in the end, three people took them. I was struck because I give a gift of to someone who interests me, someone I love. And whoever receives my gift, as it says in the School of Community, wants to know where it comes from. That's how a unity begins. How beautiful our experience is.

Andrea, Legnano (Milan, Italy)

TO OUR READERS

Dear Readers,

As of this edition, *Traces* has a new editor-in-chief, Stefano Filippi, who for the past two years has been the senior editor of the magazine. He, Valentina Frigerio, and Mattia Ferraresi will share responsibility for CL's instruments of communication. I am very grateful to them for the seriousness and willingness with which they have accepted this assignment. I wish them well in their work, and that, for all of us, they might track down the signs of Christ's presence, Who "still today passes, transforms, liberates." I give heartfelt thanks to the editorial staff and to all those who in these years have supported and accompanied my work; it has been an adventure that I will treasure for the rest of my life and a boundless grace to see a new humanity "happen" day after day.

Happy Easter!

Alessandra Stoppa

All of the editorial staff of the Editrice Nuovo Mondo and the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation wish to thank Alessandra for her invaluable, passionate, and professional contributions. In these years, she has been able to contribute to the production and development of instruments of communication for the movement.

To Stefano, we wish him well in his new role, which he assumes in continuation of Alessandra's work and within the context of the new organization of the Fraternity's communication and information activities, both paper-based and digital. This journey began with the new visual identity and restyling of the CL site and continues today within a shared responsibility. In particular, Valentina Frigerio, from the first of March, becomes the responsible for CL's international site and its digital activities and Mattia Ferraresi, a journalist and ongoing collaborator of *Traces*, will have the role of editorial consultant. Stefano, Valentina, and Mattia will work together on the editing of *Traces* and on the structure that takes care of communicating the movement. It will be beautiful to write this new chapter in the history of the magazine with those who have always contributed to building it: its readers. Continuing to search for stories of people who live, we tell these stories for you every day, as the new subscription campaign highlights, even in the world of digital tools, always faithful to the mission of witnessing to the beauty of our faith and to those "many men and many women who have not yet had that encounter with the Lord that has changed your life and made it beautiful!" (Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the members of Communion and Liberation, October 15, 2022).

Simone Finotello, Responsible for CL Communication

The great unknown

“Hope is the ability to look to the future knowing that God does not leave us alone. It is the certainty that good always triumphs over evil.” Monsignor **Rino Fisichella** introduces the meaning of Jubilee 2025, for which he has organizational responsibility.



Stefano Maria Paci

He is one of the men closest to Pope Francis, someone in whom Bergoglio places great trust. A refined theologian with great pastoral ability, he also possesses extraordinary gifts as an organizer. Monsignor Rino Fisichella, archbishop of Voghenza, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, and president of the International Council for Catechesis, previously led the Theological-Historical Commission during the Great Jubilee of 2000 under John Paul II. Later, Pope Francis entrusted him with organizing the Jubilee of Mercy in 2015. And now, ten years later, Bergoglio has called him to also lead the recently begun Jubilee of Hope.

Monsignor, you are the head of a structure with enormous responsibility, tasked to manage a global event like the Jubilee of 2025. People normally ask you about its organization, but I am interested in something more specific: What does this assignment mean to you personally, for your faith, and your personal growth?

It is true that the structural dimension of a Jubilee always risks overshadowing the fundamental goal

of a Holy Year, which is a spiritual event. It is no accident that it comes every twenty-five years so that people can pause, reflect on themselves, and search within—whether they are Christians or not—for those deep questions in everyone’s heart that often remain unspoken. The pilgrim, unlike the wayfarer, knows where he is going. His goal is to pass through the Holy Door, and as we well know, Jesus says in the Gospel of John that “I am the gate, whoever enters through me will have salvation.” I am reminded of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Constitution of the Second Vatican Council that speaks of the church and the contemporary world. In paragraph 22, it says that the mystery of man is resolved and illuminated in the mystery of Christ. And indeed we all are a great mystery that is illuminated only by the presence of Christ. For me, this assignment is, above all, an act of personal esteem given by the Holy Father, and it also represents an even stronger involvement of the Dicastery for Evangelization in helping people understand that the Jubilee is not just a great pastoral opportunity but also a moment of evangelization. Let me give you an example: we wanted to create a pilgrimage route



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here at St. Peter's, from Castel Sant'Angelo to the basilica. It is a closed, protected route that only pilgrims walk, guided by a cross. Thousands of tourists and many, many Romans come here and see these people walking, praying, singing, reflecting, following a cross. They see that those people are happy, that what they are doing has meaning. They inevitably wonder who these groups are, where they come from, and what they are doing; this is already an act of evangelization: seeing people today doing such "strange" things and finding joy raises questions that need answers.

Organizing a Jubilee must be a great challenge, but what do you think it will add to your life, how will it enrich your life?

This Jubilee has been conceived in the light of hope. The previous one I organized, in 2015, was dedicated to mercy. I must confess that ever since then, every time I celebrate the Holy Eucharist and encounter the term "mercy," this word takes on a very special value for me. It prompts me to reflect even more, not only on how often the liturgy speaks of God's mercy, but it also provokes me to experience it directly, to personally live that mercy. Now, I hope the same will happen with the theme of hope. We always talk about faith and charity, but rarely speak about hope. After World War II, the great Charles Péguy wrote memorable pages about the three sisters: two big ones, Faith and Charity, and the younger sister, Hope, hidden between the robes of the two big ones. It seems to me that Hope is still the great unknown. I think that not only should we re-discover, "revive" as Pope Francis says, the hope that is within us on a

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Monsignor Rino Fisichella: After his leadership of the Jubilee of Mercy, Pope Francis called him to lead the Jubilee of Hope as well.



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personal level, but we also need to restore the balance between faith, hope, and charity at the ecclesial level, in Christian life. This is something extremely paradoxical: by not talking about hope, we forget the fundamental content of Christianity. St. Paul speaks of “Christ Jesus our hope,” because he is thinking of eternal life, of the life already given to us in baptism, which must reach its fulfillment. But we have become so timid in speaking of hope that we no longer even talk about eternal life. It may sound paradoxical, but even at funerals, we priests no longer talk about eternal life. We talk about how good the deceased person was, what they did or did not do in life, we talk about their merits (never their faults), and will fill the ritual with words. But a funeral should instead be the most profound experience of silence, because even though before death and the mystery of death silence remains, there also remains the great cry of faith and hope in the resurrection. This cry should break that circle of human silence. Yet, we seem to have nothing more to say before the mystery of death. That is why I hope that this Jubilee will become a great opportunity for evangelization and a great pastoral opportunity. I hope it will lead us to seriously take up once again one of the most fundamental aspects of Christian life:

hope. And I hope it will make this awareness grow in me as well.

In fact, even overshadowed within the church, the word “hope” is used widely in these days, which are shaken by wars, violence, pandemics, and economic disasters. Hope is increasingly evoked more as an incitement to not be discouraged.

Be careful: this idea of hope, which is often even used by Christians, is actually typically pagan. If we foreground all evils and give birth to hope from there, we return to the pagan myth of Pandora. But this is not the Christian view of hope. Christian hope is not born because there is war, violence, sickness, pain, and suffering. Both the Old and New Testaments show how the Christian vision of hope is radically different from the pagan vision that starts from these dramatic situations and sees hope as nothing more than the last gift left unopened inside Pandora’s box when she lowers the lid. No! Christian hope is the ability to look to the future knowing that God does not leave us alone. Christian hope is the strength to know, to have, the certainty that good always triumphs over evil. Therefore, it is not surrendering ourselves to a

“I am among the few who defend the certainty that as long as there is a Christian person, we are not in a post-Christian world. As long as there are Christians in the world, there will be living, dynamic testimonies who are convinced that faith, hope, and charity are the winning cards.”

utopian future, but committing to building the present and to live in it despite its difficulties—yet doing so in the light of a certainty: the presence of Christ and his victory.

You mentioned Charles Péguy. I remember that Hans Urs von Balthasar—whom in a beautiful book you once called “the summit of 20th century culture”—said that “no one has ever spoken so Christianly as Péguy.” The great French writer argued that we have entered a post-Christian world in which Christianity no longer shapes life. He said, “We are the first, after Jesus, without Jesus.” Do you share this view?

I am among the few who defend the certainty that as long as there is a Christian person, we are not in a post-Christian world. As long as there are Christians in the world, there will be living, dynamic testimonies who are convinced that faith, hope, and charity are the winning cards. What we probably need to acknowledge is a world of post-Christianity, which is something different. That is, it is a world that is no longer shaped by faith, that has moved away from faith, as Heidegger noted, and as Nietzsche hoped for. But this is the weak thinking in which we are

now immersed—a society that regards Christianity as a private matter because it believes it is dead. It is a society whose thinking is becoming increasingly fragile and is disappearing because it lacks the strength of faith that leads to intelligence; that is, to *intus legere*, to read within and enter deeply. Faith has precisely this great purpose: to help human reason go deeper and deeper. When this is missing, something fundamental is missing from human life, human history, the very experience of people. That is why I do not share the idea that we are in a post-Christian world; rather, we are in a world where Christianity is experiencing a crisis. But this is something entirely different. The world needs Christians, it needs our proclamation, and above all, it needs the hope that only we can bring.

One last question: what did the pope say to you when he called you and entrusted you with the task of organizing the Jubilee of Hope?

He said something that made me smile, “Only you can do it.” I replied, “Holy Father, I could give you a list of others who could do it instead of me.” But he did not want to hear the list. So I simply bowed in obedience, stood up, and got to work. ■



Only those who hope can live

Unlike optimism, hope goes beyond what exists. It is a force opposed to fear, affirming the ability to build the future. The teaching of a contemporary thinker.



Byung-Chul Han

The Jubilee of the Armed Forces,
celebrated February 8th–9th.

My latest book, *The Spirit of Hope*, addresses the reduction of life to mere survival. Critics of my books are very surprised that I am now speaking about hope. I have always been accused of being very pessimistic in my thinking, but in reality, my thinking is one of hope because only those who hope can think, or rather, can live.

However, thought grounded in hope has nothing to do with optimism. On the contrary, unlike hope, optimism is devoid of any negativity. It neither knows doubt nor despair. Its essence is pure positivity. Optimists believe that things will go well. For them, time is closed, static, devoid of real evolution. The future, as an open space of possibilities, is unknown to them. Optimists see the future as something that has already been defined for a long time, as if things had to follow a pre-established and unchanging script. However, the future is intrinsically unavailable, so the optimist does not consider the unexpected or the unpredictable.

Optimists never question the social structures in which things are placed and which determine their course. They are irremediably subject to their own social system without even realizing it and are therefore incapable of fundamental criticism. Today, we do not need optimism, but radical hope in something new, hope in a completely different way of living that arises from criticism, awareness, and the will to change.

Unlike optimism, which lacks nothing and is not in motion, hope is a movement of searching, an attempt to orient oneself. It pushes toward the unknown, the unfamiliar, the open, going beyond what exists today. It moves toward the unborn, toward the new. Coming into the world as birth is the fundamental formula of hope. I contrast this basic formula of hope—coming into the world—with Heidegger’s “being in the world,”

which associates the human condition with death. Hope is what allows us to escape this logic of finitude, opening us up to new possible realities.

Pessimism is fundamentally no different from optimism: it is its mirror image. Even for the pessimist, time is closed off, a prison with no way out. Pessimists reject everything, without trying to renew themselves or imagine innovations. And just like the optimist, they stubbornly remain blind to possibilities. Hope, on the other hand, implies an openness toward the future, a forward momentum that allows us to see beyond existing structures, to imagine what is not yet there.

Fear and hope are opposing forces. Fear haunts us today like a spectre. We are constantly confronted with apocalyptic scenarios: pandemics, world wars, climate catastrophes. More and more often, the end of the world or of human civilization is evoked.

This brings to mind the so-called *doomsday clock*, the apocalypse clock, which in 2024 is set at ninety seconds to midnight. Never before have the hands been so close to the fatal hour. This symbolic clock not only signals the risk of global catastrophes, but also reflects our collective state of mind, our inability to see beyond the crisis and imagine a different future.

Consequently, life is reduced to problem-solving and crisis management: pure survival. The survival society is similar to a sick person who tries to avoid imminent death by any means. Only hope can restore life to its authentic meaning, going beyond mere resistance to events and opening us up to new possibilities.

The climate of fear suffocates every seed of hope. Fear leads to paralysis, to collective depression. Resentment increases and with it the brutalization of society. Fear favors authoritarian regimes. Former U.S.

Byung-Chul Han.



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president Barack Obama said in his farewell speech that democracy could collapse if we surrender to fear. Where there is fear, there is no freedom. And where there is no freedom, there is no hope. Hope, therefore, becomes an act of resistance, an affirmation of our ability to build the future.

Hope provides guidance, gives us meaning and direction. The German word *Angst*, fear, derives from *eng*, “narrow,” and refers to something that suffocates every openness and perspective. Those who are afraid feel trapped. Fear closes doors to the future. Hope, on the other hand, opens horizons, allows us to see what is not yet visible, and to glimpse possibilities where others see only walls.

Paul’s letter to the Romans says: “Hope that is seen is not hope. Who hopes for what they already have?” Hope is always directed toward the “not yet,” the unknown. Václav Havel, the dissident, and the president of Czechoslovakia after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, expressed an interesting thought on hope. I quote: “Hope is a state of mind, a dimension of our soul. It is not essentially dependent on some particular observation of the world or estimate of the situation. Hope is not

prognostication. It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons.” Hope, therefore, has a religious dimension. It is not simple waiting, nor illusion, but a force that pushes us to fight for what is right, regardless of immediate success.

Nietzsche sees hope as a “yes” to life. He writes: “Zeus did not want man to throw his life away, no matter how much the other evils might torment him, but rather to go on letting himself be tormented anew. To that end, he gives man hope.” Martin Luther King expressed active hope with these famous words: “With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.” To live is to hope. To hope is to live.

This text (not reviewed by the author) is an excerpt from the lectio magistralis given by Byung-Chul Han on the occasion of receiving the Pensare Contemporaneo 2024 Award in Piacenza, Italy, which we publish with the kind permission of the organizers and with our translation. It touches on key themes from his latest book, The Spirit of Hope, recently published by Polity Books. ■



The Jubilee of the World of Volunteering celebrated on March 9th.

FROM RUSSIA WITH FAITH



Matteo Rigamonti

One hundred faithful set out from Moscow on a pilgrimage. “From the Holy Door to the prayer for the pope in front of the Policlinico Gemelli Hospital, it helps me enter into the mystery of the Church,” said one of the participants.

A task is born from a lived communion. When he first read the announcement, Mikhail Grigorev did not hesitate for a second. A five-day pilgrimage with the Archdiocese of the Mother of God in Moscow. To Rome, to Pope Francis, for the Jubilee Year of Hope. He signed up “right away,” he told *Traces*. The “decisive” factor for him was that the pilgrimage would be led by Archbishop Monsignor Paolo Pezzi, who is a “witness of faith,” a precious gift that helps one “enter into the very mystery of the Church.”

Monsignor Paolo Pezzi leading the Russian faithful in prayer in front of the Policlinico Gemelli Hospital (Rome).



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Misha, as Mikhail is called by his friends, lives in St. Petersburg and works in the Mary Queen of the Apostles Major Seminary, where, thanks to him, the seminarians can enjoy services necessary for everyday life, everything from meals to electricity. He departed from there with his wife, his mother-in-law, his two daughters, the husband of the first daughter, and the boyfriend of the second one. Starting from an archdiocese that is four times the size of France, his family arrived in Italy with about eighty Russian faithful from every parish, accompanied by two bishops, a few priests, and two women religious, as well as other faithful living in Rome.

The youngest in the group was seventeen years old and the oldest was seventy-eight. For most of the group it was their first Jubilee, and for some, it may be their last. After all, it is not easy for Russians to make the journey to Italy for this special historical occasion. For this reason, those who walked through the Holy Door carried with them, in a gesture of true communion, the entire church in Russia.

“It was a journey to the origins of our faith,” explained Monsignor Pezzi to *Traces*. Monsignor Pezzi led the pilgrims together with Auxiliary Bishop Monsignor Nikolaj

Dubin. “In particular, the pilgrimage to the Policlinico Gemelli Hospital where we prayed the rosary was a chance to deepen our sense of kinship and affection for Pope Francis through prayers and offering.” Yes, Pope Francis. They were supposed to meet the Holy Father at an audience, but that was not possible, which is how the idea of this “pilgrimage within a pilgrimage” was born. They decided to walk to the statue of John Paul II and pray for the pope’s health and for peace. A kind of peace that, as Pezzi explained to Agensir, certainly cannot move in the direction of the rearmament of Europe. What is significant about that interview, which Davide Prospero referred to in a letter to *La Repubblica*, is that it was born in the context of this pilgrimage.

The group of pilgrims continued to walk up to twelve miles a day. “Personally, but not just me,” shared the archbishop, “I was touched by the Way of the Cross in the Vatican Gardens. The Word of God, the hymns, the readings, set the tone for the entire pilgrimage by putting Christ back at the center of our lives and bringing us closer to Christ.” The next day was the Jubilee visit to St. Paul Outside the Walls, followed by a pilgrimage to the place where the saint

After all, it is not easy for Russians to make the journey to Italy for this special historical occasion. For this reason, those who walked through the Holy Door carried with them, in a gesture of true communion, the entire church in Russia.

was martyred. “There were moments that moved us, especially when we stood in front of his relics,” continued Monsignor Pezzi. He said, “For many it was the first time that they had experienced something like this; furthermore, “The following pilgrimages to the Catacombs of St. Sebastian and to the Basilicas of St. John Lateran (with a visit to the Holy Stairs, which I believe will remain forever in our memories), of the Holy Cross, and of St. Mary Major, enabled us to understand better the constructive value of sacrifice, of offering and above all of entrusting ourselves.”

Misha confirmed this as he explained that “visiting all of these holy places was incredible. It was a moment of encounter, of affirming faith and hope.” Hope, in Russian *nadežda*, is also the name of a friend of his who lives in Italy. For him, seeing Nadežda again under those circumstances was “more than just sentimental.” It helped him remember that it is possible to walk together, even when they are many miles apart. “We set off with high expectations. We returned with an abundance of spiritual fruits,” said Monsignor Pezzi. “First of all, our faith was strengthened. By welcoming the other and in the companionship among us and with Pietro, we have rediscovered a formidable

source of hope with a resulting desire for mutual charity,” precious seeds to treasure and to nourish. And there will be many opportunities for that, even back in Russia, given that it is challenging to travel to Europe. In fact, in another interview with Italian TV, the archbishop also remarked that in the archdiocese he is “working with the local pastors to organize more pilgrimages, to give more faithful the possibility to obtain indulgences and to grow in their awareness that life is a pilgrimage.”

Meanwhile, Monsignor Pezzi thanked the Jubilee Committee, “who gave us a warm and kind welcome,” as well as the Italian Embassy in Moscow “for helping the pilgrims obtain the necessary visas.” And now the community, together with other movements, is looking into the possibility of participating in the Jubilee on June 7–8 from Moscow, a simple gesture of charity and mission to the faithful and to those who are still waiting for an announcement. This seems to meet the need that was rediscovered and expressed by the pilgrims who went to Rome. As Misha told us, “Many have called me and asked how it went. What can I do for them? What can we do? We must remember everyone in our prayers.” And who knows what else may arise. ■

The hidden Jubilee

In addition to the patriarchal basilicas, many little-known places in Rome conserve traces of the apostles and the first Christians. A little guide for discovering their daily life.

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Lucio Brunelli

There are the four majestic patriarchal basilicas—Saint Peter’s, Saint Paul Outside the Walls, Saint John Lateran, and Saint Mary Major—each with its solemn holy doors and an unparalleled treasure of apostolic memories and Christian art. They are obligatory stops for every pilgrim who comes to the eternal city for the Jubilee. And then there are lesser-known places, often hidden in narrow alleys and rarely visited by tourists, where the traces of the first Christians surprise and move you perhaps even more, because you feel them closer there; in these places it seems you capture them in their daily lives, women and men like you. So then, let’s enter that maze of little secondary streets between Campo dei Fiori, via dei Giubbonari, and Lungotevere dei Vallati.





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What an emotional experience it is to go up the steps of San Paolo alla Regola, the church built above the remains of the home of the apostle to the peoples. According to a long tradition, Paul lived here between 61 and 63, during his first sojourn in Rome.

He was under house arrest while awaiting judgment, but had some freedom of movement. The Acts of the Apostles informs us that “he remained for two full years in his lodgings. He received all who came to him, and with complete assurance and without hindrance he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.” So, he was a foreigner, in rented lodgings, under military custody, but at least in the first phase of the trial was left free to preach. Close by, along the mud-

The apse of the basilica of Santa Prassede, in the Esquiline neighborhood of Rome.

Santa Pudenziana, a very ancient place of worship.



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dy banks of the Tiber River, many Jewish artisans processed leather to make tents, probably commissioned by the most powerful army in the world. This was the same work that Paul did, and the same work done by the spouses Aquila and Priscilla, who were among the first Jews he converted, mentioned with tenderness in his letters. Two thousand years later, what an impression it makes to see in the nearby Jewish ghetto myriads of shops that still make or sell fabric.

From Paul to Peter. Let's move up to the Esquiline hill. Here, too, a stone's throw from the basilica of Saint Mary Major, the surprise arrives in two little secondary streets where the sounds of horns and ambulances are suddenly dampened. In via Urbana, you go down a lovely staircase to enter the church of Saint Pudenziana, one of the most ancient places of worship in Rome, with a breathtaking mosaic from the early fifth century. The church was built on the remains of the *domus* where Senator Pudenzio host-

The church of Saint Pudenziana, one of the most ancient places of worship in Rome, with a breathtaking mosaic from the early fifth century, was built on the remains of the domus where Senator Pudenzio hosted his friend, Saint Peter.

ed his friend, Saint Peter. By arranging with those responsible for the church, and protected by a hardhat, you can visit the subterranean excavations.

You can imagine the old fisherman of Galilee moving somewhat uncomfortably in the luxurious home of an important figure of imperial Rome, a place he probably never would have dreamed of staying. How it must have affected this working-class, rough man to see the magnificent capital of the empire and have these unexpected friendships with people in high places; he must have felt wonder at the fact that preaching about Christ could touch the heart of a pagan senator close to the emperor, who in Rome was venerated as a god. T

The senator had two daughters, Pudenziana and Prassede, both of whom embraced the faith, and who, during the persecutions, gathered the remains of the martyrs, and apparently were also killed. We can imagine them as very young, dressed tastefully, beautiful. How much joy must their encounter with Christianity have given them, such that they had no fear of death? If we continue less than ten minutes on foot, we come to another little alley that hides from traffic the church of Saint Prassede, Pudenzio's other daughter. On the left as you enter is the shrine to Saint Zenone, with its shining ninth-century mosaics. You cannot come to Rome without enjoying with your eyes and heart such dazzling beauty, the expression of the piety of the Christian people.

How many other alleys unknown to most people, and how many other stories of faith and holiness await pilgrims to "that Rome," wrote Dante, "where Christ is Roman." In the recent book by Paolo Mattei, *Un nonsoché che assomiglia alla felicità* [A je ne sais qua that resembles happiness], and in *Roma felix*, the "guide" by Stefania Falasca and Giovanni Ricciardi, you can find many other addresses, stories, and places dear to Christians, like the Church of Saint Ambrogio della Massima, built over the church where the young Saint Ambrose lived with his sisters before moving to Milan. It's on a tiny little road that connects Piazza Mattei, with its marvelous fountain with the turtles, to the Portico d'Ottavia. In the church cellar you can visit the remains of Ambrose's house.

Another great saint of the first centuries spent his youth in Rome, and like Ambrose, seemed destined for an important career in the civil service. He was called Benedict and came from Norcia. The remains of his house can also be visited. They are incorporated into the church of San Benedetto in Piscinula, in front of Tiber Island, on the Trastevere side. Seen from outside it does not attract much attention—an anonymous façade and double-parked cars, a noisy little square. But the interior leaves you dumbstruck, with the surprise of a well conserved Romanesque building where it becomes easy to pray, moved as you kneel in the little chapel facing the remains of Saint Benedict's Roman house. ■

THE REBEL AND THE CROSS

A child in his mother's arms reaching out to kiss the cross: in this gesture "everything is positivity." The impulse of the nonconformist Segantini is the image chosen for the 2025 CL Easter poster.

EASTER 2025



Our Hope

Our hope has a name, Jesus. He entered the tomb of our sin; He descended to those depths where we feel most lost; He wove His way through the tangles of our fears, bore the weight of our burdens and from the dark abyss of death restored us to life. Let us celebrate Easter with Christ! He is alive! Today, too, He walks in our midst, changes us and sets us free. Thanks to Him, evil has been robbed of its power; failure can no longer hold us back from starting anew.

Pope Francis

Christ's victory is a victory over death. And the victory over death is a victory over life. Everything has a positivity—whatever our immediately perceptible, documentable situation may be, even the most painful, unimaginable—, is a good that is about to be born on the edge of our horizon as men.

Luigi Giussani



Giuseppe Frangi

“At that time, the Berra school was producing palettes full of hope.” It was the year 1879. The young Giovanni Segantini was finishing his studies at the Academy in Milan with top marks, earning silver medals in both the perspective and landscape painting schools. To pay for his studies, he had worked as a teacher for the boys at the Marchiondi reformatory—where he himself had been confined between the ages of twelve and fifteen. From the institution’s archives, we know that he immediately pawned the medals he won at the Academy to make ends meet. Segantini certainly did not have an easy childhood. The son of Agostino and Teresa Lovata, he was born on January 15, 1858, in Arco di Trento, making him a

citizen of the Habsburg Empire. “With the body in which my soul was fated to be a prisoner, I had to fight many battles. Abandoned and orphaned at the age of six,” he wrote in a draft of his autobiography. His mother died when he was only twenty-nine: “I am her second and last child. The first died, a victim of the flames, and my birth caused my mother an infirmity.”

Following that tragedy, his father moved to Milan, where he had a son and daughter from a previous relationship. For little Giovanni, these were years of hardship. First, he was confined to a cramped home while his half-sister and half-brother worked; later, he was sent to the Marchiondi reformatory. The institute’s correctional file reads: “Giovanni Segantini of Trento—admitted on December 9, 1870; escaped on August 16 and returned on September 1, 1871; released on January 31, 1873. Poor conduct, assigned to the cobbler section.” The artist later reflected, “In this situation, I could not but become wild; I remained restless and rebellious against all established laws.” From this harsh childhood, Segantini inherited the unpolished prose of someone who had never received a proper education and, as he himself wrote, he developed “a feeling of pity for all the wretched.”

By 1879, however, his life had taken a turn. A picture of his, painted on a makeshift support—an old fireguard—caught the attention of the jury at the Academy’s spring exhibition and was acquired by the Fine Arts Society. Everyone was impressed by the pictorial quality of his depiction of the interior of the Milanese church of Sant’Antonio Abate. Even Vittore Grubicy, a very active owner of a gallery, along with his brother Alberto, was impressed. He took Segantini under his wing, guaranteeing him a fixed monthly income. Thus, in the fall of 1881, the artist could fulfill his dream of leaving Milan to go and live in a setting more in tune with his mountain origins. He moved to Pusiano, in upper Brianza, with his very young wife Bice Bugatti, the 17-year-old sister of Ettore, the legendary automobile creator. “I moved to the Pre-Alps and stayed there for about four years,” he writes in the autobiography. “Nature became for me like an instrument that played in harmony with what my heart was singing.” It was the perfect setting to give form and voice to the hope he had cultivated during his Academy years.

Nature became the language to express his deepest emotions. In 1882, he painted one of his most famous subjects,

Ave Maria a trasbordo: a family of shepherds crossing a lake with their flock of sheep on a typical boat. Two wooden arches—used to cover the boat in case of rain or too much sun—frame a calm and gentle landscape. On the far shore, one can make out the bell towers of Bosisio Parini, Garbagnate Rota, and Casletto, all villages overlooking the shores of Lake Pusiano. At the center of the arches, the radiant glow of the just-set sun rises like a halo over the landscape. It is the moment of the Angelus, and everything in the painting conveys the profound feeling conveyed by prayer.

Segantini, a rough yet sincere man, felt completely in tune with that world: “I tried to reproduce feelings that I felt, especially in the evening hours after sunset, when my soul was disposed toward gentle melancholy.” *Ave Maria a trasbordo* portrays an ancient world, yet it does so with a modern pictorial language that explores the effects of light. He experiments with a new technique, pointillism, that would characterize his later masterpieces. Not surprisingly, the painting was sent to the Universal Exhibition in Amsterdam in 1883, where it was awarded a gold medal. It returned severely damaged, to the point that a few years later, Segantini decided to repaint it in an even more purified and intense version, which is now housed in the museum dedicated to him in St. Moritz.

During his years in Brianza, Segantini worked on what he called “pastoral works,” infused with a deep religious sentiment. He was inspired by Jean-François Millet, whom he discovered through reproductions procured for him by Vittore Grubicy and thanks to the biography of the French painter written by Alfred Sensier—a cult book that had also won the heart of Vincent van Gogh in those same years.

As Francesco Arcangeli, an art historian of rare sensitivity, wrote, “It was Millet who led Segantini’s imagination into the vast realm of events, things, hopes, elevating the humble, pastoral peasant genre tale into a solemn epic. Does it matter if the master’s ideals may seem generic? There is no epic without enthusiasm, without optimistic inclination, and Segantini has a deep faith in the inevitable goodness of the nature of life. It is precisely this all-encompassing sentiment that nourishes his epic narratives from within, saving them from distortion or rhetorical exaggeration.”



■
 Giovanni Segantini, *Kissing the Cross*, 1881–82, Segantini Museum St. Moritz, on permanent loan from the Otto Fischbacher Giovanni Segantini Foundation.
 © Stephan Schenk.

Among his “pastoral works” of this period, between 1882 and 1884, Segantini worked on his very own subject, the *Kissing the Cross*, in four different occasions. Two versions are oil paintings preserved in St. Moritz and at the Amsterdam Museum, while two are pastels now in private collections.

There is a very personal thread connecting this subject to *Ave Maria a traspordo*. It can be found in the lines of the autobiography: “I still remember my mother, and if it were possible for her to appear here before my eyes, after 31 years, I would recognize her perfectly. I see her again with my mind’s eye—that tall figure of hers, with its languid gait. She was beautiful, not like dawn or afternoon, but like a spring sunset.”

What moved Segantini, then, was the wound of an absence: the loss of a mother too soon, when he was only six years old. It is the mother who holds the child tightly on the boat and rests her cheek on his. It is still the mother who holds the child firmly in her arms as he reaches out to touch the cross and kiss it—a stunning detail, rendered by Segantini with simplicity and naturalness. The mother offers herself as a reliable support, allowing the child to reach

out without fear. With his two small arms, he clings to wooden poles, wrapping himself around them, almost pressing his face against the center of the cross. There is no sense of obligatory devotion in the child’s gesture; rather, it arises from a spontaneous and pure familiarity and affection, from a “loving-kindness” toward that presence evoked by the cross. Thus, when we stand before this painting, we cannot help but be moved by the thought of the rebellious and nonconformist Segantini surrendering to a similar impulse, attuning his painting to the simplicity of heart that inspires the child’s gesture. He does more than depict the scene, he adheres to it; or, as he himself put it, he creates a work “fused into a single piece.”

In the background, the painting is bathed in the glow of sunset, the very light that the artist associated with the memory of his mother: it is “the hour that stirs longing... and softens the heart.” It captures a yearning that would drive Segantini even higher, seeking in the mountains of the Engadine the intensity of a pure light, almost a reflection of paradise, characteristic of his masterpieces. As he wrote, “It was in these lands that I stared most boldly at the sun, that I loved its rays and longed to conquer them.” ■

The Religious Sense: New Revised Edition

LUIGI GIUSSANI

With a new translation by John Zucchi

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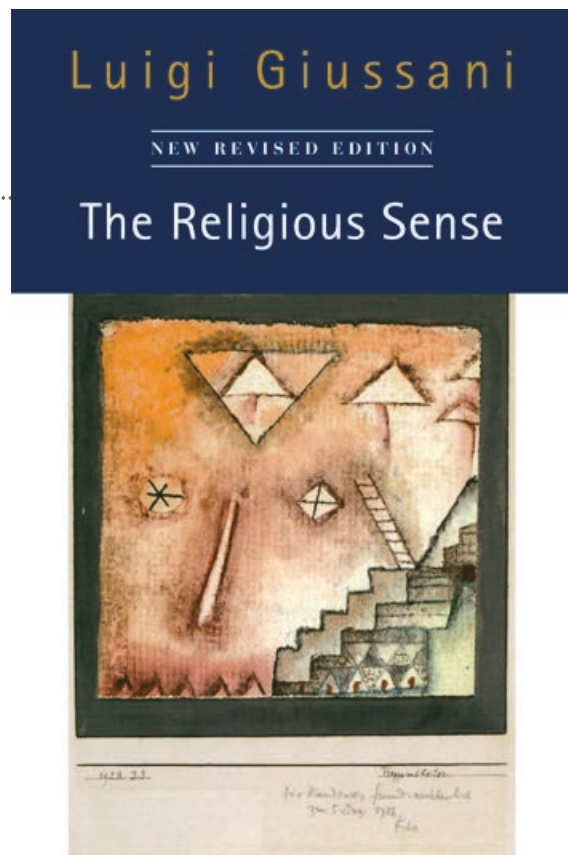
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