



*Day. Pas. Alexandre B.*

# "BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW"

(Ap, 21:5)

Notes from the Weekend of  
the English Speaking Communities

Windsor, 9-11 January 2026



Communion  
and Liberation

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**I. Introduction in the evening of Friday 9 January 2025**

**Giacomo Mazzi**

Why are we here, whether for the first time or after thirty years? Many of us have made a significant sacrifice to be here: a sacrifice of time and money in lives that are already extremely busy, especially at the beginning of the year. Let us not take this for granted. We are here. Many of us have travelled from far away. Why? Some of us have known Davide for many years, from when he was a visitor to our community. Most of us have come to know him through a screen since he was asked to lead the Movement worldwide. But more deeply, we are here because we belong, and because we desire to belong more and more to this place that continues to attract us to the One who has taken hold of our lives and does not let them slip into nothingness. This desire to belong, this begging to belong to Him through the Church, through the charism that was given to don Giussani, is what made us say yes to this proposal. It is an act of begging, of faith, and of hope. Let us never take this question for granted, or settle for superficial answers such as “because the Movement proposed it” or “because I liked it years ago.” This weekend is an opportunity to be surprised again by the novelty that Christ brings to us now, here, today. He comes to find us where we are, even, in a sense, going out of His way to do so, like when he went and found the Samaritan woman at the well.

**Hope and Gratitude**

We come from a very dramatic year. The wars that continue to rage, geopolitical tensions, social and economic insecurity, and the beginning of 2026 marked by tragic news, such as the young people who lost their lives on New Year’s Eve in Switzerland. We cannot help but feel the pain and hear the cry for meaning that rises from these events. Even within our own community, many have gone through deeply painful and dramatic experiences. At times we feel demoralised, small and powerless in the face of world events, and often even in front of our friends, our families, and ourselves.

What can sustain us in the midst of all this? Is it possible to look at these events with a new gaze, the gaze of God, and to hold on to the certainty of His faithfulness to His people, to each one of us? Are we merely hoping for circumstances to change, or are we willing to accept the challenge a friend reminded me of at the last School of Community in Cambridge: *we already have everything we need to live, and to live fully?* In the end, coming to this weekend feels like an act of fidelity to God, an act that implores His fidelity. I am here with a heart full of questions, and deeply grateful to be in this place where my heart is always reawakened, where Christ’s faithfulness gives me back to myself.

As we read on the Christmas poster:

“We know how much people of our time are searching, even unawares, for a place where they can rest and live their relationships in peace, where they are redeemed from the lie, the violence, the nothingness in which everything otherwise would tend to end up. Christmas is the good news that this place exists, and not in the heaven of some dream but on the earth of a bodily reality.”

A place where doubt returns to being a question, and the heart is reawakened, as we sang earlier. This is not only for those who still need to encounter Christ and the Church. It is for me as well. I need to rediscover this every day, to verify it every day in front of my reductions, my sins, my inability, and sometimes even my unwillingness, to love and to be loved. I need this place to be reawakened to what truly makes my life worth living, what gives meaning to every moment of my life.

A friend told me: “I come to the weekend because it shows me to whom I belong. When I rediscover that I am not made as I would like to be, I need to see again the humanity I desire for my life, which I find only in this place. So I come here with the question and the desire to rediscover how and where

Christ, despite my personal limits and those of our companionship, makes Himself present in the life of our community. I want to see how this becomes a further step of certainty for my faith.”

### **What is the Nature of this Place?**

This place is not simply a group of friends. As don Giussani beautifully defined it, it is «a companionship guided to destiny».<sup>1</sup> I would like to spend a moment on both words: *companionship* and *guided*.

#### *Companionship*

We all need friends, to feel loved, welcomed, embraced. But sometimes I notice in myself a reduction of this to a purely sentimental warmth, a sense that “everything is fine.” That can be necessary at times, but it cannot be everything. Otherwise, it remains an adolescent love, whereas we need a more mature, grown-up love.

I remember a meeting with those responsible in the UK. We were among friends, among people I rely on in my responsibility. While discussing a proposal I had made, I said that what I need is not a pat on the shoulder or someone telling me, “You’re doing fine,” but people who challenge me, who help me see what I do not see. I want to be changed by those meetings. Or think of a friend who was struggling with his fraternity group, which felt sleepy and too comfortable. He wondered whether he should look for another group. I told him “I hope that when I become sleepy and start looking for a bourgeois life, my friends will shake me and ask me: are you sure this is what you want? Is this how you want to spend your life?”

As Davide wrote in his Christmas letter: “We may all be wretched, but in our unity we cherish something great: Christ’s love for each one of us. He has reached us within this companionship, and through our faces He wants to meet other poor people like us, who are unknowingly waiting for His gaze, waiting to experience what Christ has brought into the world, namely, the love of the Father, the answer to our desire for fulfilment.”

#### *Guided*

This companionship is guided, guided through the gestures and steps of the journey we have lived this year; guided through Ettore and Davide, who continually point us to the Church and to Pope Leo, who is courageously leading us on the path of faith.

Guided through the work of the School of Community, but also through events such as the beautiful Summer holiday, where once again we witnessed the supernatural origin of our friendship, capable of facing even death, and through the testimony we heard from Fr. Paolo Prospero at the beginning of the year, which challenged our understanding of freedom and reminded us that we are not fatherless.

### **A love that calls and challenges**

A companionship guided to destiny cannot leave us unchanged. By its very nature, it calls us to move. It challenges the way we understand ourselves through communal judgment, and this challenge bears fruit. For example, the contributions we have received, people sharing their struggles with the certainty that they will not be lost. Or the unity among us, which goes far beyond any human effort or natural sympathy.

I was struck during a conversation with a friend who reminded me of Jesus’ words: “*It was not you who chose Me, but I who chose you.*” So often I still think that I am the one choosing, choosing the form, the path, the people through whom my “yes” to Christ should unfold. But it is not so. How many times have we been surprised by the unexpected ways through which Christ entered or re-entered our lives? Think of the apostles. Some of them had real and understandable reasons to hate one another, Peter the fisherman and Matthew the tax collector would have been natural enemies. Yet

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<sup>1</sup> L. Giussani, *Is It Possible to Live This Way? An Unusual Approach to Christian Experience. Vol. 1 Faith* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), 149.

they were together because Jesus had called them and was present among them. In these days, more than 300 of us from many different countries are here. We are invited to discover what is already making us one.

## Conclusion

I would like to conclude with words from Pope Leo's homily at the Epiphany a few days ago:

"Today we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord, aware that in his presence nothing stays the same. This marks the beginning of hope, for God reveals himself and nothing remains unchanged. His presence puts an end to that type of melancholic complacency which causes people endlessly to say, "There is nothing new under the sun" (Eccles., 1:9). [...] How many cities, how many communities need to hear it said, "You are by no means least." Yes, the Lord still surprises us! He reveals himself and lets himself be found. His ways are not our ways, and the violent do not succeed in controlling them, nor can the powers of the world block them. This is the great joy of the Magi, who left palace and temple behind in setting out for Bethlehem; it is only at that moment that they see the star once again! Thus, dear brothers and sisters, it is wonderful to become pilgrims of hope. It is wonderful for us to continue to be pilgrims together! The faithfulness of God continues to amaze us. If we do not reduce our churches to monuments, if our communities are homes, if we stand united and resist the flattery and seduction of those in power, then we will be the generation of a new dawn."<sup>2</sup>

And as Msgr. Paccosi reminded us, speaking of the Magi:

"The kings of the world, and each of us, who so easily feels like a little king of his own life and of others', are asked to have the humility to set out on a journey, and then to kneel before God as a child, discovering that this is the place where everything is reborn."<sup>3</sup>

May we live these days eager to discover the novelty Christ wants to bring into our lives through our unity, through our "yes," through our fidelity to the path to which we have been called.

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<sup>2</sup> Leo XIV, [Homily for the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord](#), January 6th 2026.

<sup>3</sup> G. Paccosi, "Il luogo dove tutto rinasce [The place where everything is born again]", available at: [interris.it](#).

## II. Extracts from the morning and afternoon assemblies on Saturday 10 January 2025

### Extracts from the Saturday morning assembly

**Sara** (Luxembourg - contribution read by Giacomo, as in the end Sara could not be present in person): For thirty years in the Movement I have carried an immense gratitude for the life that this encounter has given me. It has made Christ familiar to me and has made my life fruitful and joyful, even amidst the difficulties that, like everyone, I have had to face. Belonging to this story and to this people means that, in the concrete life of every day, my gaze upon things and persons - even within my limits and incoherences - is filled with the mercy and hope that everyone longs for. This difference is visible, and I often find myself bearing witness to it. These are “my” people, the origin of what has conquered and transformed my life. I am here for this reason.

In recent years, what has kept alive in me the flame of the charism has been above all the fidelity of and the fidelity to friends, to prayer, to the sacraments, and the search - even outside the Movement - for places where Christ truly lives.

At the same time, as our bishop once told us, in CL we are living a moment of desert, of trial.<sup>4</sup> In my view, this “desert” is like wandering in circles, turning around ourselves rather than walking a road forward, like the Israelites in the desert. The work of School of Community and the retreats seem more a repetition than a help to faith, tightening around secondary themes instead of opening to the encounter with Christ. I pray that the Lord may lead us out of this, and give strength to you who guide us: to seek Him where He shows Himself, and to trust more in His work than in the plans that, even legitimately, you may have.

In my view what is essential is that new people - and each one of us - may encounter Christ. My hope and prayer is that our common work and guidance may always have this as its only objective: to show Him.

**Davide Prosperi:** Thank you. It is a pity, Sara, that you are not here. It would be interesting to have a dialogue.

Of course I will not deny that we are confronted with trials, it is evident to everyone. But the desert is something else. The desert is aridity, loneliness, loss of confidence in the past. In one word it is the fading of hope. Can you say all this about the time we are living? If so you have to provide evidence. Just a few days ago I sent my New Year’s greeting message to the entire Movement, thanking you all for the beauty and flowering that we are witnessing throughout the world.<sup>5</sup>

You tell me that Christ is not in our plans, but where the event of His presence happens. I fully agree. In that message I mentioned what I had seen while visiting communities around the world. Of course it was only a taster, I could not go into the details. How do we explain this beauty and flowering? If Christ has nothing to do with this, are they perhaps fruits of our plans?

If by “plans” you mean the fact that a proposal consists of faces, gestures and content, then allow me to note that – in order to see where Jesus “happens” – one’s eyes need to be wide open so as not to risk missing Him because one keeps looking somewhere else.

For example, if the Church – the Mystical Body of Christ on Earth – points out a path and people to follow, do you think that looking where “Jesus happens” does not mean to take seriously what these

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<sup>4</sup> It was clarified that this comment from Card. J. C. Hollerich to the CL community in Luxembourg is from a homily of March 5, 2022 (first Sunday of Lent) and was given as an encouragement, inspired by a passage from the first lecture of the liturgy (Isaiah 58, 9b-14): “*Le Seigneur sera toujours ton guide. En plein désert, il comblera tes désirs et te rendra vigueur*” (literally: the Lord will guide you always. In the desert, he will fulfil your desires and give you strength).

<sup>5</sup> D. Prosperi, «A grateful “yes”», available at: [clonline.org/en](http://clonline.org/en).

ones – to whom Jesus has entrusted His presence in history – indicate? Or should we rather continue waiting for the Messiah who has not yet arrived?

Certainly, the Mystery can always show Itself in unexpected and unforeseen ways. But it will hardly do so in contradiction with the One who came to reveal His face in the world. Therefore, in an experience like ours, the real point is not simply to “get connected” with what is new or exciting: in fact, even evil or falsehood can, at times, have a certain fascination or prove convenience. The point is to follow the presence of Christ in what He brings about, and this “following” can require obedience, patience, fidelity.

For example, if we are at a community vacation like this one, and gestures, encounters, moments of prayer and silence are proposed, in order to discover how Christ makes Himself visible in the everyday life of these days together, then fidelity to that proposal is necessary. If everyone does whatever he or she wants or if there is no proposal at all, this would not be openness to the world, but rather fatalism. Openness to the world begins with the willingness to adhere to the proposal that comes from the place to which Christ has entrusted me through the encounter. By following this proposal over time, I will learn to recognise the features of His face, even when the companionship is no longer there, because the companionship lives within me. This is the full experience of a lived communion that we spoke about at the Beginning Day.<sup>6</sup>

**Sara (UK):** When I was invited to this weekend, I was looking forward to come. The reason is that I have been accompanied by this Movement since I first met it at university.

My heart is full of gratitude for the path and the people that I am given in my life, thankful for this companionship and for the possibility of looking at the deepest desires and questions of my heart and for being moved and accompanied by a mysterious presence.

This does obviously not come from my capabilities but from a “yes” – with all its limitations and struggles and doubts – to a place and to a path. This is why I am here today, because I want to get to know this mysterious Presence and let it conquer my heart.

During these months, though, since this proposal was made, in a few meetings and assemblies, I found out that some friends did not have the same desire to come here.

And maybe this is a bit of an exaggeration, but I was very wounded by the way this separation came out and we talked about it in our Fraternity group. This fact left us with a feeling of bitterness and a bit of sadness.

After one of these discussions, I suddenly remembered how many times the Pope asked us to preserve unity among us. And I realised that if we do not keep looking at the other as a gift of the Mystery, division is the outcome.

This is how I want to look at my friends and at the people I meet, whether we are in agreement or not. I think unity is only possible when we keep looking for the One, the only One that can fulfil the depth of our heart. And without the Church and its motherhood towards us, none of us would be here and nothing of this would be possible.

**Prosperi:** Thank you, Sara. In the *Risk of Education*, Fr. Giussani tells us that this is an immense freedom, the freedom of not being bound to the outcome, to the response people give. Even just recalling this is a challenge for us.<sup>7</sup>

Think, for example, of the reaction of our students. I am a professor, I know some of you are too, and teachers at primary and secondary school, but also parents. I think of my wife who teaches in a middle school and sometimes comes home in the evening saying: “Today it was impossible to keep the students under control in the classroom”.

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<sup>6</sup> See F. Cassese – D. Prosperi, “*Christ: The New Principle of Knowledge and Action*”, Notes from the Contributions at the Beginning Day of the Adults of Communion and Liberation of the Lombardy Region, Italy.

<sup>7</sup> See L. Giussani, *The Risk of Education. Discovering Our Ultimate Destiny* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019), 61-65.

For many, the difficulty of managing a situation generates a sense of failure. A lack of correspondence is the outcome of that failure, of our inadequacy. According to Fr. Giussani, on the contrary, if such a correspondence exists, it is a joy that changes the whole life, for which one thanks God even more than for life itself.<sup>8</sup> If a correspondence does not exist, it is a pain that allows us to enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ's cross. If we are truly willing to put ourselves at stake, the way in which we live failures or the inability to manage things that are greater than ourselves would already change (the temperament and character of certain students are truly beyond us and our forces).

Fr. Giussani continues telling us that this is the task we have. «Teaching [or more in general education] is the occasion to make the prophecy present», accessible.<sup>9</sup> The end is already present because Christ has already shaken the Earth 2'000 years ago, by rising from the dead. He has already shaken the hearts and flesh of human beings. This sign must become more visible. But what is this “prophecy”, the prophecy that Fr. Giussani mentions? What is the sign of this prophecy that shook the earth 2'000 years ago with the resurrection of Christ?

The prophecy, tells us St. Paul, is that Christ may be «all in all», that Christ may be everything in each person and in our being together, in our unity, as Fr. Giussani emphasised during the last Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of CL that he preached.<sup>10</sup>

This is fulfilled over time, indeed. In *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, Fr. Giussani tells us that «the end of the world will be the moment in which this Presence becomes evident to everyone».<sup>11</sup>

**Andrea** (Luxembourg): At the end of September, my wife and I welcomed our first child. And after a good collection of sleepless nights, I made a mistake at work and I passed from hero – I had recently been promoted – to zero. Each day my manager was ready to put me “on the grill” for everything I was saying and doing.

The question that arose from my heart is: “What is my value? What am I worth?”

**Proserpi**: Thank you. I think that, first of all, we need to learn to look at the “noes” we receive from reality. We substantially reason like everyone else: a “no” is a misfortune, a failure, a sign of incapability, a “no” from reality. Instead, for someone who has been living an experience of meaning in everything, even a “no” is not bad because it is the instrument through which our freedom can grow. Confronted with a “no”, you either give up or you are forced to change. You are forced to commit yourself more, to involve yourself more, to suffer more. That is – paradoxically – to bind yourself more deeply to the person in front of you.

You discover what is asked of you, in a first place, through what you are given. We want to identify with Christ. We want to learn to live as Christ lived. We are here to this end. This is a theme we also addressed during the Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity. I was struck by Msgr. Paccosi's insistence on how to recognise the “yes” said to Christ within the apparent failures in life, within the experience one finds oneself living.<sup>12</sup>

I think the first issue we must face is that we are shaped by the mentality of the world. We should take this into account even though we firmly believe in the things we tell each other. The influence of the dominant mentality is within us. Power works by wearing us down from the inside, instilling doubts in us about what we recognise as most true in life: our companionship.

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<sup>8</sup> See L. Giussani, «On the Way», in *Litterae Communionis - Traces*, 2 (2000).

<sup>9</sup> L. Giussani, *Assisi 1978*, in *Agli educatori. L'adulto e la sua responsabilità* (Milan: Cooperativa Editoriale Nuovo Mondo, 1990), 70.

<sup>10</sup> L. Giussani, «Christ is All and in All: 1999», in Id., *To Give One's Life for the Work of Another* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022), 83-120.

<sup>11</sup> L. Giussani – S. Alberto – J. Prades, *Generating Traces in the History of the World: New Traces of the Christian Experience* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 66.

<sup>12</sup> See «We came to know love». Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, pp. 65-67 and 92-96.

Precisely the companionship without which it would be impossible to resist power. But I will perhaps return to this later. And what is the misunderstanding on which power plays? As soon as there are failures, mistakes or even an injustice that we suffer and to which our heart cries out, the misunderstanding is to turn the whole of ourselves into a failure, because things have gone badly. But we do not coincide with what we do. We do not coincide with our failures. We are not our failures. Especially when someone is innocent and suffers an injustice. Psychologically, it is hard to accept. I think of some conversation I had with a young girl who had been abandoned by her parents right after her birth.

Only faith can break through the world of rationalism in which we are immersed and give us back a reason to live, the freedom to welcome the whole of reality as a gift.

When my mother found herself without a husband – he was dead – and with two kids, she had to decide what to do. She did not take an immediate decision, but she continued to live having one clear thing in mind: that there was an objective element in her life, namely her two children. Before anything else, the powerful sign that Christ continued to be present in her life was that Christ was asking something to her. Responding to Christ meant responding to what Christ was giving her to live and defend. Not an image of her own, not what life should have been and had, instead, been taken away from her. You entrust yourself to what Christ gives you and you become responsible for it. You take responsibility for what Christ gives you, not for what you decide, even in front of an apparent injustice.

It is a wager on which you put everything at stake. It is the wager of life. You give your life to Christ, which means you give your life for what Christ gives you and asks of you.

**Alessandra (UK):** I have a question about our companionship. I was really happy to read in the prologue of the new Constitutions that the nature of the charism of Communion and Liberation is a companionship: the memory of Christ generates our companionship, and within our companionship the memory of Christ is generated.<sup>13</sup>

**Prosperi:** It is quite a good summary.

**Alessandra:** That really helped me to know who we are, to know our identity.

At the same time, I see – in myself and in my friends – the risk to reduce this companionship to a sentence I often hear: “You can only meet Christ in a companionship”. Meaning somehow that you can only meet Christ if you are surrounded by people, if you have friends. Implying that if, on the contrary, you are alone geographically or for personal reasons, you cannot. I feel that there is a risk of banalizing what don Giussani meant with Christian companionship, and I would like to better understand what it means, what it meant for him and for me in the last year.

Meeting new converts that have asked for Baptism recently – think of the phenomenon of people that do a personal journey without meeting a companionship, decide to ask to be baptised, and only then, after their Baptism, meet a companionship – has been a huge correction for me.

It is challenging to see that many people meet Christ before meeting a companionship. At the same time, I feel that we, as Movement, really have something to offer them and discover ourselves more what our companionship truly is.

**Prosperi:** I answer in two ways. The first one is very brief. What you told us shows that what converts our heart is not our companionship, it is Christ himself, even if conversion happens through our

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<sup>13</sup> See the Prologue of the *Constitutions* of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation: «The specific nature of the charism of Communion and Liberation may be described as follows: - insistence on the memory of Christ as affirmation of the generative elements of the Christian experience, in that they give rise to the true image of man; and - insistence on the fact that the memory of Christ can only be generated within an experience of communion; and - insistence on the fact that the memory of Christ inevitably tends to generate a visible and propositive communion in society».

companionship. In some instances, it is possible that Christ chooses a different way. And then you can meet these people who were baptised before meeting you, before meeting a companionship. The second way I wish to answer is in fact not an answer by myself. This morning, I had breakfast with the friends of the CLU and we faced this very question. I would like them to answer you. Could one of the students come here spontaneously? Otherwise I will have to call...

**Paolo** (Norway): I guess you are referring to the convert that I spoke about this morning. She is a Brazilian girl that has come to our church more or less six months ago. Her conversion story is quite interesting.

But what I spoke about this morning concerned more how, through the encounter with the Movement, she discovered things that already belonged to her history.

We were having dinner. After dinner we started singing. We told her that we know a beautiful Brazilian song: Romaria. She answered "Yes, I know it too, it is very well known. Everybody knows it in Brazil". We started singing and, when we arrived to the last part of the song – when it states: I have come to show my gaze, to stare at you, because I do not know how to pray –, she started crying and she told us: "I sang and heard this song thousands of times, but I have never understood its meaning". In this instance, the Movement allowed her to rediscover her own culture.

Another discovery in her life: when she was not yet Catholic, she had Gianluca as a professor. He is visiting professor at our university. She met him as a teacher.

Later, he – Gianluca – came to visit us when we were having the Beginning Day in Trondheim. He is visiting and helping our community in Norway, in particular also the CLU. She participated to the Beginning Day, saw him and asked: "What are you doing here? I just converted and I find you here". Then, getting to know him better, discovering that he is a *Memor Domini*, that his whole life is given to Christ, she opened up her question in its full breadth: "I now go to church, it is beautiful. But I truly want Christ to take my whole life. How do you do that?"

**Ana** (Ireland and Brazil): I moved to Ireland a year and four months ago. I come from a huge CL community in Brazil. I was used to be together with them all the time.

In Ireland I see a lot of people arriving from abroad and then leaving again. I felt very lonely during the Summer and this sparked a question: "I miss my friends, the friends that leave. How can we recognise God's presence without our friends around? Likewise, how do I deal with this loneliness?"

**Prosperi**: And how did you answer?

**Ana**: I have already talked about this with Mauro in Ireland. When he first started Communion and Liberation in Ireland, there was no one else. I think that I just need to reach out for my friends and this will help the Presence to happen.

**Prosperi**: The Presence is in you. If you want to live with this Presence, the people you meet and the friendships that begin with them become full of this Presence even before they recognise it as we do. Mission is the widening of our friendship, the sharing of an experience of the Good encountered and lived in Christian communion, before the teaching of a doctrine.

We are used to thinking of the Movement as something that already exists before us, that pre-exists us. In some way this is true, of course, because the Movement is already present in many places, in 90 countries around the world. But the Movement is also generated by each one of us, by the way we live the relationships with friends, in the light of the Presence we have encountered through this charism.

There is no limit to our way of living, regardless of where we are. This friendship is our unity, our communion, wherever we are. Your friends can go abroad, they can leave you physically, but they are still present because we can always share our experience, our difficulties, our questions. And one can also run many, many miles to reach what he or she needs.

**Ana:** I think it is important because I somehow feel that I do not want to bother my friends. And this does not happen only to me.

**Pepe (Norway):** Do bother your friends! Not necessarily me, but also me if you wish...

I have been in Norway, since September, and I am seeing things that I have never seen before, even though I am quite old...

One of them is that people are approaching Christ and the Church not by getting in touch with a companionship, but through other ways.

People who come to mass for months while not being baptised, not knowing where they are and standing up and kneeling down with the others. Or people coming to listen to the catechism for months. 17 years old boys listening every week to the catechism and disappearing afterwards, and no one knows them.

It is an approach where the companionship is not the first point, the starting point.

But I think that, in the end, the problem is the same for us all. If we remain at the level of a companionship, without going through it until Christ and until the whole Movement and the whole Church, we remain in our small group, not being aware that it is a small sign of something bigger. This would be a short circuit.

For people approaching the Church through liturgy or through catechism, it is the same. They need to go their way until the very point which is Christ's presence in the Church and to start living a community. Otherwise Christianity gets reduced to some kind of magic drug.

So I think we have quite something to offer.

In a first place we need to be open to the action of the Spirit, not stating that things must happen only in the way we know and are used to. But we definitely have something to offer: a dimension of communion which is vital for these people approaching the Church along different routes. The question is, then, what do they find when they come?

**Giacomo (UK):** I add a small thing from my own experience.

I now live in Cambridge, where there is a beautiful community. But 20 years ago, the day after I got married, my wife and I left for Edinburgh, Scotland, where there was nobody of the Movement.

Two things stuck with me when we left, when we were moving from Milan to the North of this island and we were worried about not having anyone of CL nearby.

The first thing is what a friend told me: "Go there and serve the Church".

I remember the gratitude that I experienced when I entered the university chaplaincy in Edinburgh and we stayed with the people there. And then a miracle happened and we started a School Community there. It was not the result of our actions.

The second thing is what was told us – to me and to my wife Maria – by my aunt, who is a Carmelite nun. Before we left, she told us: "Do not worry! God will precede you in Scotland". That really gave us the certainty that we were sent. Even when you are alone, the Movement is there because you are there and you have been sent there. This awareness gave us the freedom to start inviting friends, in particular even just for a dinner at our place.

It is moving to see all the beautiful fruits that have matured since then and the community that sprang therefrom.

**Jackie (Ireland):** I am a person who left and came back. I would not say it is a great thing to do, but it is the way it happened to me. It is the way that was chosen for me and it allowed me to have a far greater, more mature love for Christ and a more mature love and understanding of what the companionship means to me.

I move to what I wish to ask: in the world we currently live in a time of huge polarisation.

You have – for example – a political opinion or a religious opinion or perhaps also no opinion at all. And there is a cohort of people who hate you for that, and your own cohort of people hate the others. I don't use the word "hate" lightly. It is really hatred, vitriolic hatred. Even among colleagues and acquaintances, I feel I need to be careful about what I say. How do we live that atmosphere of hatred and division as "us", as people who have met Christ through the Movement?

**Prosperi:** What would you say? I have my answer, of course, but it is not just me who should answer the questions.

**Giacomo (UK):** Our role is to allow a dialogue that seems impossible. Not because we are better than the others, but because we believe that there is a truth and this certitude relies on the fact that we have met it, not on knowing or claiming to know all its aspects.

The certitude that there is a truth allows us to stay in front of different perspectives, even totally opposite to each other, looking for the seeds of truth in those different opinions and wishing and allowing these seeds of truth to grow.

It is a true dialogue because we do not simply give.

Do you remember Charlie Kirk, who was killed for his ideas? I think that it is truly valuable to go out and discuss with the others.

Still, a friend who knows much more about dialectics than me, made me realise that there is not a true dialogue if you are not willing to be changed by the other.

So it is not just a matter of winning a debate – something Charlie Kirk was obviously very good at – but also of whether, when you encounter someone, you are willing to be changed yourself. This does not mean to completely change opinion, but to recognise that, in what the other is saying, there is something valuable for me, something that can make me grow. Without this availability we slip into hatred.

I really dislike the statement "let's agree to disagree". You preventively state that it is just about your and my opinion, which means that I ultimately do not care. This kills a priori any possibility of a true dialogue.

**Martin (Ireland):** I work in child and mental health, which is a very ideological space. There are people all around me with strong ideologies. I have my ideas, they have theirs. What really interests me is how you build bridges with people, how you create a culture of teamwork, collaboration, and shared purpose. That is something I am deeply grateful for: the sense of how we build in the Movement, in the charism. How we build something together with people we are not necessarily on the same page with, trying to find common ground.

When my daughter Amelie died in September, I had to leave work. I just could not work for about two months. When I came back, the clinical director rang me and said: "Martin, we didn't realise how much we needed you," because in my absence a lot of people had been fighting. I am not saying that to suggest that I am a great guy, but to say that we do carry within us a real capability to build bridges. It is not for nothing that the Pope is called the *Pontifex*, the bridge builder. I think we have to learn how to do this consciously, especially because, as Jackie said, we are living in an extremely polarised world. I saw that even around Amelie's funeral, the nature of it, the witness we had given. I could see that some people were looking at me differently, not always positively.

To be a witness in the world is not easy. It often leads down a path of humiliation, where people write you off or label you as naïve or whatever it might be. But I really believe this charism has a particular gift: what we learn through it gives us the ability to reach out, to take people seriously, and to genuinely try to understand them. I am always struck by how people respond when you sit down with them and truly try to understand them, because very often, you are the only person in their life who is doing that.

**Prosperi:** I wish to put forward a couple of things regarding the Jackie's question.

I was struck by the word that you used: "polarisation".

If I look at my experience, at my whole life – when I was a kid, then a teenager, then later – I never heard this expression. The word "polarisation" has only recently entered our vocabulary. This is interesting, it has to do with what Pope Benedict XVI used to say: «the Christian West has developed a kind of "self-hatred"»<sup>14</sup>. A hatred of its own identity.

I do not think that, when I was younger, people agreed more than they do now, but this was not a problem. Why? This is the question: Why was disagreement not a problem?

In my family, my mother, my brother and I did not always agree. It was difficult to agree with my brother, most of the times. He used to love too much to be right and me to be wrong...

The point is that unity does obviously not depend on our opinions.

If we are sincerely involved in the relationship with the other, putting forward our reasons – not just opinions – is always possible.

It is important that we trust our own reasons to be valuable and true, but that – in a relationship – our freedom remains open to what the other one puts in front of us, his or her reasons. Of course, we need to put the real reasons on the table, but then, if we are both attached to our destiny and both want to pursue the truth, doing so will let us grow. This, however, only under the assumption that such a truth exists.

Going back to Benedict XVI, he also used to tell that one of the most serious issues of our present times is relativism: no truth exists, no truth can be stated. This is not so far from us too: when the true reason of our unity is not granted the first place, not only we can no longer go beyond disagreement, but even hate can, unfortunately, arise. This fact is a great wound for me. For example, when I see that friends within our own companionship dislike other friends from our companionship regardless. Everyone can, of course, be confronted with difficulties or suffer the perception of not being understood. But this does not prevent us from being in an open position, an open attitude, and staying in the light of the One who gathered us together. If we do not recognise any longer those who have been put together with us by His initiative, with whom we have been called, over time we will no longer recognise even that His light and the night will win.

### **Extracts from the Saturday afternoon assembly**

**Maria** (UK – invited intervention about Oxford Convergence): I would like to share the experience that some of us have had over the past few years in organising a two-day cultural event in the UK called *Convergence*, now in its third edition. I speak personally, but also on behalf of the other organisers. Despite the constant feeling of being small, the beauty we have lived in these years has been the superabundant fruit of your "yes" to the proposal, a proposal that, though confused at the beginning, carried the desire that we might live the beauty of the encounter with Christ and share it with the whole world.

What I could not deny was that things simply did not add up. Our small "yes," and all the efforts we put into the event, could never have produced the experience of beauty, truth, and the deep sense of fellowship and unity that I have witnessed in these days. My heart was seized by the question: *Who are You, who is giving us this experience of the hundredfold?*

There are three points in particular that describe what we have learnt through our, sometimes ironic, attempt to live out the cultural dimension of our charism, both for ourselves and for the world.

*Leadership as gardening.*

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<sup>14</sup> J. Ratzinger, *Europa* (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 2004), 28; the text is substantially identical to a conference held by then Cardinal Ratzinger in Berlin on November 28 2000.

Convergence is made up of a series of panels and exhibitions proposed each year by members of our community. We feel that our role mainly consists in identifying the seeds of these contributions, accompanying their development throughout the year, and eventually bringing them together into a single event, much like a gardener caring for the plants entrusted to them.

Recognising this Life that exists outside of us, that does not originate from us, is essential at every stage. Not only because without it Convergence would not exist, but more deeply because this recognition sustains us throughout the year, especially in moments of tiredness (we all have very demanding jobs). It is always beautiful to see how the Movement is already alive among us: our people, individually and in groups, already live the cultural dimension of our charism. We do not need to make it happen; it is already there. Our responsibility is simply to recognise it with humility and openness, and to create a space for a common journey.

### *The path of unity.*

Within our community there are different sensitivities, shaped by different histories and professional backgrounds. Last year in particular, two of us wanted to organise something on end-of-life issues, which were at the centre of the UK's political debate. One works for a think tank whose aim is to contribute to public debate in a scientific and "lay" way, seeking dialogue with people holding different views; her concern was to avoid turning the issue into an ideological culture battle in the name of truth. The other is a doctor, deeply sensitive to the human cost of euthanasia, and driven by an urgent desire to defend life against the dehumanisation taking place in our secular society.

At first, these positions did not seem reconcilable, and there were both intellectual and personal tensions. Yet both were willing to walk a common path over the course of the year, to engage in a relationship and a shared following. What eventually emerged at Convergence was something of a miracle: the two perspectives, expressed through a panel and an exhibition, were neither in contradiction nor merely juxtaposed. Instead, each contributed from a different angle to a single cultural concern: different facets of a single Truth.

This polyphonic unity was also reflected on a personal level, as those who chose to walk together discovered that differences of approach are not an obstacle to unity. I believe that among the cultural contributions the Movement can offer is precisely this experience: the beauty of walking a common path together, "a dynamic unity in diversity",<sup>15</sup> as Pope Leo says, our common journey of faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### *The encounter with others.*

One of my students, Iman, who comes from a Muslim background, was deeply struck by the engagement with mental health she encountered at Convergence. She was filled with joy, as if all the struggle she had gone through had finally found a home in the friendship with Giovanna, Gisele, and Martin. She told me, "Now I understand more who you are." This was deeply humbling for me, because it made me realise that my face is mine, and yet it is also defined by the companionship that constantly embraces me and draws me out of my nothingness. In a sense, the companionship in which He becomes familiar to me, the place where I encounter the *You*, the otherness of Christ, is also the place in which my true face is slowly revealed.

**Michela** (Malta): It is challenging to be open with some people who live a different experience than mine. Deep down there is a fear of creating walls rather than bridges, especially when affection is involved.

A small example: one of my favourite team members is a lesbian woman. She is married to a lady and last year her wife gave birth to a baby boy.

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<sup>15</sup> Leo XIV, Address to the Participants to event promoted by the Cardinal Domenico Bartolucci Foundation, June 18th 2025.

The conversation with her has never landed on this topic and maybe it does not need to, but I ask myself whether just being there and saying who I am – for example, I tell my colleagues (and they are surprised to hear) that I use my days leave to come to this type of “religious meetings” – is enough to “bring what has happened to us” to other places.

**Agata (Ireland):** I just want to say something about the question concerning loneliness that was raised this morning.

I understand the question: it can be very difficult, not only for people belonging to the Movement, but for every mother and family who lives abroad.

I understand it well, but I have to say that for me, in the last past years that I lived in Dublin, loneliness has actually been my best ally.

When you realise that no one can fulfil your desire – not your family, your husband and children – you ask yourself whether and where this desire can be truly fulfilled and whether we really believe or not that Jesus is with us every day of our life.

Is He with us when we are alone? When we are confronted with failures?

If we really believe that He is here, we cannot say “I am alone”. He is with us, we are in His presence.

We know that He is in a specific point where we can always go to Him, which is the Eucharist, where He is a real presence.

It is good to call a friend, but we do not truly believe that He is there even if we do not manage to call. Even more, He too is begging for us, to quench our thirst for Him. He is asking us to stay with Him. He wants our company and we think we are alone, but he wants us to be with Him.

If the incarnation has taken place, there is no moment that is banal, no moment in which we cannot ask Him to reveal Himself to us.

A new path begins from such an awareness. I now cherish the moments of loneliness, they are privileged moments in which He can talk to me and I can talk to Him, somehow like the silence we are invited to keep at the end of the lessons of the Spiritual Exercises.

I wish to conclude with an example.

My sister too used to live in Dublin. She had a beautiful career, lots of friends, everything. But she was looking for more. When Covid happened, she could no longer see her friends. She was single and in solitude. In that very moment she felt the call. She had earlier met the Missionaries of Charity in Dublin, the sisters of Mother Teresa. In that very moment of solitude, she understood that God was calling her. She left everything: friends, money, her comfortable life, her motorbikes and jewellery, and everything else, to follow Him.

It is just out of love that you can follow and decide to completely abandon yourself and leave. For me, that was a big testimony, because she was happy, she was truly happy while leaving everything behind.

Only He can really fulfil our life, completely, totally. And then you want to give Him everything. I went to see my sister, in Nairobi, in an area that is really poor, dirty and everything. She left everything for that. This made me realise that the “love in action” I saw in my sister doing this, leaving everything and going to Kenia, is exactly the same thing that God did for us. He left everything to come to us, as miserable as we are, unable to do anything, unable to love, as Emma mentioned earlier today. We have to face our misery, with humility. And still He left everything to come to us.

So many people around us are struggling with anxiety, depression, lack of love. We receive such a grace and we still say that we are alone, lonely. No, we are not alone.

He left paradise, richness. He is the King of Heaven and he came to Earth. This fills me with joy and with the desire to tell everyone about. Life is worth for this.

Of course we are confronted with struggles and problems like everyone, but we know that He loves us. We should help each other, testify each other how great the grace we receive is.

**Prosperi:** Referring to Michela's question, I understand you mean that you do not want to stay on the surface, you want to go deeper in the relationship with your teammate, but you find yourself distant because of a different way of looking at your life, values, rights and so forth.

By the way, I suggest you to read the speech that yesterday Pope Leo delivered to the members of the Diplomatic Corps in the Vatican.<sup>16</sup>

Coming back to your question, Michela, there are two things I wish to highlight.

The first one is that there is something which links you to your colleague, a deep bond. It is the fundamental question: "What does it mean to be loved? What does it mean to love?" Your colleague has the same question you have, she has the same problem that you have and that I have too. What does it mean to love and to be loved? With this in mind, we can try to work together, not starting from the arrival point, but starting from the beginning, starting from our humanity.

The second point: How to be present? How to be a presence? What does it mean in everyday life? We can answer in many different ways. Now I just wish to put forward an example.

A journalist once asked to Mother Teresa of Calcutta: "Why? Why do you do these things? I would not do the things you do for these poor people for a billion dollars" She answered: "Me too, I would also not do it for a billion dollars. I do it for much more than a billion. I do it because I see Jesus in the face of the poor, that is why I share my time and everything I have and my own person with him". For her living charity was a gift given to her, not the opposite – a gift she was giving – or better, before the opposite.

This explains the many stories from her life that seem impossible but are true stories. For example, the guy that was found amidst the garbage, about to die. She took him and brought him to the place where all the sisters were. They washed him and they took care of him. He could speak the words: "I have lived all my life as an animal, but I die as an angel". Because he had found the love, he had found the love through a person. There was no prejudice about who this guy was, what did he think about politics, about sexuality, about gender, about whatever. This is difficult to accept for us, for our mentality. It is possible only if we identify ourselves with what Mother Teresa was living.

Another example: a sister was very tired of washing the dishes. Mother Teresa asked her: "Why are you doing it?" She answered: "Well, I am doing it because it has to be done. And so I do it for Jesus". Mother Teresa insisted asking further: "What does "doing for Jesus" mean in this case, while washing the dishes?". The sister was not able to give a concrete answer, but Mother Teresa, starting from her experience, was. She said: "There is one, who is Jesus, waiting for the dish you are cleaning, to use it for eating. If it is Jesus who is there, you will wash the dish very well, even if you are extremely tired".

What is most impressive to me is the fact that Mother Teresa told all these things and did all these things while she was – let us say – in the desert. In her youth she had had a very personal relationship with Jesus, she could talk to Jesus. But afterwards, for almost 40 years, she could not feel His presence. How many times she must have slipped into a doubt about this relationship, about the presence of Jesus, but she bet on it. She bet on the fact that she had met Him that time. And by betting on His presence, her experience grew and she was much more human than everybody else around her.

It is difficult – also for us it is difficult – to understand how this can be possible. Still, we are called to live the same, we are asked to love, to bring the love of the Father to all human beings, to everyone, because this was the mission of Jesus Christ himself, to bring the love of the Father.

**Cristiano (UK):** My wife Marta and I have been living in Durham, near Newcastle in the north of England, for more than two years. It is only the two of us (plus another mum) who belong to the Movement, so we participate in the School of Community remotely with the community in Edinburgh, Scotland.

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<sup>16</sup> Leo XIV, Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, January 9th 2026.

I moved to Durham from Milan after our wedding, and after the first months, when all the magic of newlywed life was sparkling, we realised that it was not enough for us. We started feeling quite alone, especially because it was difficult to make new friends. I was working from home, and while Marta's colleagues were friendly, it was hard to truly bond with them. The young people in the parish also did not look like the friends I was used to having in Italy, so we didn't integrate much. However, complaining about the situation did not seem the right way to go. If we were there, it was for a reason. So we started asking for help and guidance from our friends, and in particular my wife had a conversation with Giacomo that was very helpful. He said to us: *the two of you are already enough; do not underestimate the grace of being married.*

From that moment on, we tried to be more open to reality, even when it didn't fit our expectations, and to face it together as a couple. We began saying yes to invitations and started living the life of the parish, gradually building relationships with the young people there. We didn't do anything extraordinary: we invited them to our home for a plate of pasta, and we shared our personal experiences and questions during the weekly reflection meetings at the parish. Even though they were not the friends we would have chosen for ourselves, our friendships with some of them have truly flourished over the past months. In particular, we became close to a young British couple. He is Anglican, but he began his journey towards becoming Catholic, not because of a community, as was mentioned this morning, but because of his love for literature. For this reason, I simply introduced him to Franco Nembrini's work on Dante. It was moving to see how Franco's lessons on the *Divine Comedy* helped him clarify his deepest questions. It has also been moving to see how this friendship has enriched our own faith. Now they are curious about everything and can't wait to come to the Meeting in Rimini, next August. Together, we would like to start a School of Community in Durham. During this time, they also discovered that they were expecting a baby. Their daughter was born three weeks ago, and they asked us to be her godparents.

Therefore, we truly went from loneliness to sharing the journey of becoming parents, since we are also expecting a baby girl. We are overwhelmed with joy for all these unexpected gifts. It feels as if the Lord was waiting for our "yes." Of course, this doesn't mean that saying yes once is enough. The challenge is to say yes every day, especially when life becomes difficult, for me in particular, as I have many questions about the future and constant worries about my work. But we know that this education to say yes to reality comes from the Movement. That is why we are here, with all our limits, and why we do not want to leave.

**Stefano (UK):** My wife and I experienced a tough loneliness two times. At the very beginning, when we got married and we went to live in a small town called Vimodrone, close to Milan.

It a paradox, but being there – very close to the centre of the Movement, where there is a big community – we felt lonely because we had left our community at the university. We felt out of place. Now, fast forward until 2014, when God somehow picked up our – so to say – “secularised”, “earthly” desire and moved us to a different place. We wanted to have a working experience abroad for all the reasons the “world” tells us it is worthwhile having one. We happened to go to Cologne in Germany. Before leaving, we contacted the international secretary of CL and asked whether there was a community there. Well, there was – and is – a strong one. We spent there four years and our life got completely changed, to the point that we told each other: “This is the place. We wish to live here, it is truly so beautiful!”. My job was not so secure, so we invested some money – 5'000€ – to finance an outplacement for me, so as to find a new job. We decided to go “all in” and to buy a house, which we did.

The outplacement worked very well. I found a new job, but not there, in the UK, in Lancaster, where we now live. And that is where we had our second round of loneliness.

In Germany, we were living every day with the community, we met friends and other families every day. On the contrary, in Lancaster, the closest families were an hour and a half away. We found ourselves alone, but we were different, transformed by what we had lived and how we had been educated in the years in Cologne.

When we arrived in Germany, it was “our plan”, while in Lancaster we arrived filled with the certainty of having been sent. We, then, simply started to engage with the local parish.

For the centenary of Fr. Giussani my wife Laura, organised what she called a “musical evening”, an evening alternating pieces of classical music with texts by don Giussani. This went on for four or five evenings. Then we explained that there was a life behind – what the life of the Movement is for us – and we invited everyone to join us and work together on the School of Community, which indeed started soon thereafter. Initially at our place. The grouplet grew and we asked our parish priest to have our meetings hosted by the parish. He agreed and joined himself.

Happy and grateful, we grew into the certitude that we would stay in Lancaster, we decided to buy a house, but once again something happened. I was not looking for a job and yet was called for a job. Several reasons led us to conclude that is right to go, to leave Lancaster, which we are now about to do.

The father of our parish asked us: “What is going to happen when you leave?” and then he added something that was very moving “I do not want this to become some kind of ordinary ‘Rosary group’”. Even when you leave, the people coming need to understand that we continue to work on Fr. Giussani’s book in the way you have shown us. But I am afraid I am not able to lead our grouplet”. His question is evidently still a little bit open...

**Alice (UK):** Our community is very small, just a few people. I can recognise myself in one of the observations by Sara from Luxembourg, when she said that she has the impression that with the School of Community we are going in circles. As she does, I also feel that I do not know where we are going with the work of the School of Community, with our path. I desire to experience the hundredfold, to have the transfigured face that Maria mentioned. I do desire a fullness of life. But when you are in a grouplet of four poor people, it is hard to see the hundredfold. It is hard to see transfigured faces around. And when you are leading a School of Community, as I am, it is also hard to point towards a direction, while somehow feeling that I have nothing to offer. Does the question make sense?

**Prosperi:** I am not sure I understood what you mean.

**Alice:** What I am trying to say is that, in our small School of Community, I do not see many transfigured people. Even worse: I do not see any transfiguration in myself. This is what scares me most. I am not talking about supernatural lights, I am talking about life.

**Prosperi:** What do you mean when you refer to a “transfigured” life?

I understand that you mean the fullness of life that fascinated me at the beginning, the fullness that Maria was testifying before, people that can stand the test of the challenges.

This is something that is not normal, it is not usual, it is not obvious. It is really not common that one can live one’s own life for something unifying, for an idea.

Everybody around us, and often the same applies to us too, is forced to live for the present moment as it is, and the next moment will be different from the present one, and so on. And everything is divided in our life.

On the contrary, living a life in which there is a line connecting everything, the red line connecting everything that we are living, is unusual. Fr. Giussani writes: «In the Christian perspective, each of man’s actions is for the whole world. Each act assumes a cosmic dignity because each one collaborates consciously with the heart and will to the design in which the mystery is revealed and fulfils its plan: from washing dishes to guiding the Church, from caring for a child to governing a country. In this perspective, man is free from circumstance. Chance does not determine his value. He

can be great, he can journey to perfection, even under the worst or the most humble of conditions.»<sup>17</sup> This is, in my view, a “transfigured” life.

It is not necessarily so amazing, so fascinating, so exciting, but it is full of meaning. And if it is full of meaning, it is visible that life deserves to be spent this way. It witnesses the unifying force, the idea.

For example, in your small school of community, a way of sharing the desire you express is to try to go deeper into the experience of each one of you. Relating the points you put forward to what you are living, so that you avoid remaining at a theoretical level: a kind of abstract summary. We should always ask the reasons that lead us to say what we say and ask the existential meaning of our words. If we can express the things we put forward in a way that is easy to communicate, this means that we are really sharing our experience.

I think that it is easier here in the UK because the language is more straightforward. In English you can say in hundred words, what we need to use a thousand words for in Italian. In Italy, we can easily build flowering speeches with no sense, but we should be as concrete as possible, because being concrete we are also convincing and we convince each other by sharing our experience.

**Giacomo:** I would add a small thing. The title that we chose for these days is: “Behold, I make all things new” (Ap, 21:5). It does not read “I make a new friendship”, “I make a new experience”, but “I make all things new”. The novelty He brings changes everything. He is claiming that. It is not a sentence of mine, God himself said it. We should take His promise seriously and let Him show what he has promised us. Everything is made new by Him, even the things we do not expect any more to be changed: a sterile friendship, a decaying or “sleeping” School of Community, which – by the way – is not the one in the Midlands. His claims encompasses everything.

**Daniele (UK):** In fact you – Davide – already answered to a large extent my question when telling us about Mother Theresa. But I still need help, more help.

Two years ago my wife and I discovered that our son Tommaso Christopher would have Down syndrome. At that moment I felt God was asking me to set a further step and offer my life completely. Among many things, I perceived a call to begin a new and ambitious business that would employ people with disabilities. Since then I have poured my heart and soul into trying to make it a reality, investing both my time and my money.

The most extraordinary part of this journey has been the increasing depth of my relationship with Christ. In those months I could see Him everywhere and I was often moved to tears. He kept transforming my failures and worries into hope and into a kind of energy that strengthened me even more.

Unfortunately, in these very last months I have faced many setbacks with the project for reasons beyond my control. At the same time our life with Tommaso has become increasingly difficult. My relationship with Christ has cooled down and I have often found myself – while trying to help Tommaso to fall asleep in the middle of the night – crying out: “Why are you doing this to me?”

Today, after all these years, I am aware that my fulfilment does not lie in something I do, like this project or any other job. Yet there is a cry within me: “I thought You were taking me somewhere. I took a great risk to follow You”. Now I do not understand and I feel betrayed: it looks like there is a high chance this project will not go through. I feel helpless and useless at times. Moreover, I perceive a hidden sadness which I still have a trouble understanding.

It is as if something in me really hoped this project would be meaningful for the world and for myself. That I could give my life through it and that its failure would prevent my relationship with Christ from being strengthened.

I see a great risk of turning angry with God and the world, which is something that I already fell in in the past. I would honestly be willing to drop the idea of pursuing this particular business and look for

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<sup>17</sup> L. Giussani, *Why the Church?* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 35.

a job instead. But I am afraid that this is not truly the heart of the problem. I ask myself, would that make any difference in my relationship with Christ? At the same time, I look at Christ on the cross and I understand that His earthly life did not have an happy ending. There is no need to lie to myself about it. What if everything goes wrong?

I really do not want the circumstances to have the final word on my relationship with Christ as already happened in the past. I need help because I feel stuck.

Deep down, while the battle for my soul is raging, I always have something in me that keeps repeating me that there is no point in trusting Christ if the circumstances, sooner or later, always turn against me. I am sorry for killing the mood...

**Fr. Andrew** (Ireland): I enjoyed what you, Davide, said about the hundred words in English being a thousand words in Italian. I often thought about this, I believe it is because Italian is such a beautiful language. But we Irish are not satisfied until the hundred words in English can be reduced to ten. Anyone who knows the Gaelic language will probably understand...

Anyway, my ten words: It was my brother Michael who knew the Movement. For about ten years, my only contact with it was through Michael's friends. Then, nearly thirty years ago, I went to work in Milan. Quite by chance, or really, by grace, I ended up working in Città Studi for two years, and there were people from the Movement there. It was not through any deliberate connection; it felt like a miracle. I was immediately struck by the Movement, by the charism. At that time, I went to confession once a month to Father Barbetta, the parish priest of Città Studi. Every time, he said the same ten words to me: "When you allow yourself to be amazed by what God is doing in your life, you will change." That sentence has stayed with me, and it returns whenever I am confronted again with what the charism means for me now.

By temperament, I am a man who, from childhood, never had a strong capacity for initiative. That taught me to live by following the initiative of others. Eventually, after a long story, I became a priest. I have often been worried, and sometimes even scandalised, by the fact that in twenty years as a priest I have never once asked someone to consider becoming a member of "Comunione e Liberazione". And yet, everything I say in church, the way I relate to people, what I say in confession, all of it is nourished by what the charism has been saying to me over time. More and more people come to me for confession now. The bishop jokingly explained it by saying I am going deaf, he warned me that if people find out, they will come in droves. But joking aside, this weekend, listening to your testimonies, I think I am beginning to see a very consoling answer to my question about those twenty years of never inviting anyone. Because of the temperament God has given me, the only method I have is to accept invitations. When someone asks me for help, or invites me somewhere, my heart quickly discerns whether that invitation is a word coming to me from God. If so I have learnt not to refuse those invitations. That is the way the mercy of God is working on my life. I am also so grateful to the other friends who are able to invite new people and bring them. Different people have different jobs. I do not know whether this is a bit a "cardboard excuse", but this is my experience.

**Prosperi:** What you just said, Fr. Andrew, is truly great and great are the steps you have set. Temperament is given by God. This means that there are just two possibilities, either God made a mistake with you (or even worse did wrong to you...) or God asks you to walk a way that is different from the one asked to Giacomo, for example, or to your brother. Both of you, each one with his own temperament, are needed to make Christ present with his multiple faces. We heard before that unity is polyphonic. It is the same also for the temperaments. You should not be scandalised by the fact of being as you are. Moses needed Aaron to speak as he could not speak properly, but God asked him much more than speaking. Your experience is the experience of God's mercy, of discovering and experiencing that God allows you to do His will as you are, that you do not need to be different from how you are. Probably Gandalf, one of the main characters of *The Lord of the Rings*, would say that this is truly a good thing!

I wish to quickly go back to the question about freedom and authority.

How is freedom generated? We tend to see the generation of freedom as something “pointwise”, something that happens just once. But freedom requires education too, as we learned at the School of community.<sup>18</sup> Better and stronger: education is actually directed to freedom even more than to reason a such.

Freedom is educated, for example, by trials. This morning, we said that a true authority puts us in front of trials, tests, challenges. This is how our life is. If we accept the presence accompanying us, trials educate freedom. If we do not accept it, trials are only negative things.

It is an act of presumption, of arrogance, from our side, when we start thinking that we do not need anything beyond our own feeling and thinking. The proof that this is true is that, when one understands that he is doing a mistake, the first temptation – and often also the first move – is to cut the relationship with friends. Why? Not because true friends judge you, but because their very presence is a judgement on you. The presence of your friends is itself a judgement on your life, on what is good and on what is bad. If my own judgement is that I am making a mistake, I will cut the relationship with my friends because my friends incarnate the judgement of what is good.

How can we then be open, really open to the correction by someone else?

By letting our affection to our own destiny grow. If we love our destiny, we are happy and grateful to be corrected when we happen to take a route which brings us farther away from the fulfilment of our destiny. But this requires to «love the truth more than yourself»:<sup>19</sup> so, it implies a challenge to your morality – as Fr. Giussani writes in *The Religious Sense* –, to your freedom.

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<sup>18</sup> See L. Giussani, *The Religious Sense* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2023), chap. 13.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

### III. Synthesis and conclusions on Sunday 11 January 2026

#### **Ettore Pezzuto**

We have reached the end of these intense days of work. At this moment, our task is not simply to recall what was said, but to try to see together the unitary design that has emerged from our dialogues, testimonies, and guiding interventions, that is, to recognize the action of the Holy Spirit among us. I would like to retrace our journey, giving proper breadth to the richness of what we have heard, so that nothing is lost.

#### **1. A generative solitude**

We were confronted with the drama of solitude. Ana, our Brazilian friend, and Michela from Malta spoke about the difficulty of finding oneself alone or in hostile environments, not knowing when sharing the truth stops building bridges and starts building wars. Agata from Dublin and Serena from the Netherlands<sup>20</sup> shared similar experiences. Alice from the Midlands clarified that solitude can even be lived within our own community.

And yet, what we have seen during these days is that solitude is not the last word; it is not a trap. Solitude can become generative: it can generate our own humanity and the community around us. In fact, this is precisely what we have witnessed. This is the first fact we need to look at, the miracle we have seen in these days, which we should not take for granted. It is a paradox we have encountered again and again: for many of us, solitude has not been the final word.

Our friend Agata even said: *“Loneliness has actually been my best ally.”* How is that possible? Because, as Agata explained, true solitude does not exist, in fact. She told us that even when we are alone, even when we are confronted with failures, *“we are in His presence”*. That is to say, we are not alone.

With this certainty, we can move, we can beg, and we can be attentive even to the smallest signs of His presence, and above all be grateful for the companionship He is already and always giving us. The experience of Cristiano from Durham was particularly illuminating in this regard. He was geographically alone with his wife in Durham, but through a dialogue with Giacomo he came to understand that they were already a presence, one to another. This became for them the beginning of a journey of generation, for themselves and for the people around them.

As Cristiano put it, they *“went from loneliness to sharing the journey of becoming parents. [...] It feels as if the Lord was waiting for our “yes””*.

#### **2. Failure**

A second recurring experience that emerged in many contributions was that of failure. We heard about professional failures, such as those shared by Gianluca<sup>21</sup> and Andrea, or the experience of Piddu (i.e. Daniele), whose question in some way remained open after the last assembly: his desire to set up a company working with people with disabilities, following the birth of his son, seemed to have led to nothing.

Even when we have honestly followed the signs of reality and the good desire given to us, at times we seem to arrive at failure. How do we remain in front of that?

What is at stake here is our concept of success and failure, and the value we attribute to ourselves and our initiatives. Most of the time, even when we look at our own lives, including our religious lives, we apply the criteria of the world, reducing reality to our perceptions and measures, and forgetting that God is the true creator of reality and that He has a good plan for us.

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<sup>20</sup> Intervention omitted.

<sup>21</sup> Intervention omitted.

Allow me to share a personal witness. A few years ago, the bank where I was general manager was the victim of a scam by a customer, resulting in a significant financial loss. I felt deeply humiliated. What freed me was a friend who lives with me in my *Memores Domini* house, who asked me: *“The Lord has always accompanied you in life, how could He leave you alone even on this occasion? Has God ever betrayed you?”*

That question opened my gaze to a greater reality, allowing me to move beyond my limited, human definition of failure toward the recognition of God’s faithfulness throughout my life. This evidence made it possible not to stop at the reduced perception of feeling defeated, worthless, or abandoned, and to remain open to the possibility that God could use, and was already using, that failure for a greater design. Therefore, it could not be called a total failure.

### **3. Letting our project go and looking at God’s project**

This leads us to the third point: the road to liberation is to let go of our own project and look at God’s project in our lives. This opens the possibility of change, and therefore of hope.

The witness of Fr. Andrew was especially helpful here. As Fr. Barbetta told him: *“When you allow yourself to be amazed by what God is doing in your life, you will change.”*

This is an education of the gaze, an education of desire, and therefore an education in freedom, an education to say yes. As Cristiano said again:

*“The challenge is to say yes every day, especially when life becomes difficult, for me in particular, as I have many questions about the future and constant worries about my work. But we know that this education to say yes to reality comes from the Movement”.*

### **4. Following and obedience**

This helps us understand the human convenience of another central theme of these days: following and obedience. Davide clarified this through his biblical reading of the contrast between Saul and David. Carlo had asked him: *Why does following make us free?*<sup>22</sup>

Saul represents the “closed heart”: the person who believes that, having been chosen once, he can now continue on his own terms. His freedom seeks to detach itself from the authority of a path. He obeys only when it suits him and on his own conditions. Without a true reference point, his freedom closes in on itself, becoming fear, suspicion, and violence. In the end, Saul uses God for his own project. Even though he is the rightful king, his refusal to wait, to follow the timing of Another, the method of Another, and to depend on Another, leads him to lose everything.

David, on the other hand, represents the “open heart.” Even when authority contradicts him or humiliates him, his freedom remains open. He allows himself to be generated by authority. His freedom is fruitful because he accepts dependence.

Here lies the answer: true freedom is not autonomy, which leads to fear, violence, and self-destruction, but the recognition of our dependence on God, along the path where He has placed us. Let us be clear: this is not a moralistic call to do the right thing. Following means accepting a dependence.

### **5. Polyphonic communion**

What do these biblical examples mean in the concreteness of our lives, in living the life of the Movement and of our Fraternity? A quotation from Fr. Giussani helps us here:

*“It is one’s reference to a concrete companionship that makes it possible to move, to avoid being stationary; in other words, to be converted, the change from which the changing of the world derives and on which it depends. Our companionship is the presence of Christ who is there to save you, to*

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<sup>22</sup> Both the intervention and the detailed answer by Davide Prospero - telling and commenting the Biblical story of Saul and David - have been omitted. The same content was put forward also during a successive assembly of the responsables of the Italian communities and is going to be published in that framework.

*make you more true.*”<sup>23</sup> Obedience and following first of all mean obedience to our community, to the people God has placed on our path, to us here, who have lived these days together. With our different sensitivities and histories, brought together. Maria’s experience with Convergence is a clear example.

Those who accepted to walk a path together discovered that *“each contributed from a different angle to a single cultural concern, different facets of a single Truth.”*, as our friend Maria put it. This polyphonic unity was also reflected on a personal level: differences of approach were not obstacles to unity. I believe that among the cultural contributions the Movement can offer is precisely this experience: the beauty of walking a common path together, to quote Pope Leo, of living and experiencing this *“dynamic unity in diversity (...) our common journey of faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”*<sup>24</sup>

Yesterday marked the second anniversary of the death of our dear Carras. As you know, his most famous motto was: *“The one who hugs the strongest always wins.”* He used to say that even when there are big differences between us, we must always listen to one another, because the other cannot be 100% wrong. Perhaps the other is only 5% right, but I can see that 5% only by listening and embracing the other.

This polyphonic unity is something to be embraced first for our own sake, but also something to be shared with the world.

## **6. Mission and presence: bringing the Father’s love**

This brings us to the final point: mission, which is the sharing of His presence. Davide was very clear in explaining how this is both a personal and a communal experience. I quote his words again:

*“If you want to live with this Presence, the people you meet and the friendships that begin with them become full of this Presence even before they recognise it as we do. Mission is the widening of our friendship, the sharing of an experience of the Good encountered and lived in Christian communion, before the teaching of a doctrine. We are used to thinking of the Movement as something that already exists before us, that pre-exists us. [...] But the Movement is also generated by each one of us, by the way we live the relationships with friends, in the light of the Presence we have encountered through this charism”.*

This friendship is our unity, our communion. Even when friends move abroad or are physically absent, they remain present because we can always share our experiences, difficulties, and questions. We have seen many witnesses of mission lived in ways different from what we imagine, and often in ways that surprise us. I think of Fr. Andrew, who described how his experience of mission involved the mortification of not having brought anyone explicitly into the Movement, yet becoming a point of reference for many. Or Stefano from Lancaster, who, after leaving following many years, was asked by his parish priest how the School of Community could continue without him. And finally, the beautiful witness of Martin, when the clinical director called him to say they had not realized how much they needed him, as many conflicts had emerged during his absence.

We Christians are called to build bridges, to love the people around us, and to be surprised by finding ourselves through loving others. This is possible not because we are better than others, but because we are already experiencing a love toward us, a love that embraces us in our limits, failures, humiliations, ironic attempts, and betrayals. *“A love that does not impose itself, that supports freedom, that becomes the strength of existence and relationships.”*<sup>25</sup> A love that makes all things new.

I would like to conclude with Davide’s end-of-year message to us:

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<sup>23</sup> L. Giussani, *The Work of the Movement: The Fraternity of Communion and Liberation* (Milan: Cooperativa Editoriale Nuovo Mondo, 2005), 71.

<sup>24</sup> Leo XIV, *Address* to the Participants to event promoted by the Cardinal Domenico Bartolucci Foundation, June 18th 2025.

<sup>25</sup> B. Scholz, «“The Love which moves the sun and the other stars”: the 47th Rimini Meeting takes shape», Message for the 2026 Edition of the Rimini Meeting, available at: [meetingrimini.org](http://meetingrimini.org).

*«What is asked of us, who have nothing except what has been given to us? A “yes” full of gratitude: to recognize and welcome the initiative Christ has taken in our lives, thus becoming a proclamation of His presence to the world».*<sup>26</sup>

In this light, the approval of the new Constitutions by the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life last September is a sign of esteem for our experience and of fatherly care. It allows us to face the new year with confidence, eager to continue our journey together and to bring to everyone, wherever we are, through all that we are, do, and say, the grace of encounter.

The Movement is not only something that precedes our lives: the Movement is our life, and we are all responsible for building it. Let us support one another on the journey ahead, which we entrust to the intercession of Mary, our Mother.

<sup>26</sup> D. Prospero, «A grateful “yes”».