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New York Encounter: Following 'This Urge for the Truth'

In the words of Servant of God Father Luigi Giussani, the founder of Communion and Liberation, the Encounter exists to help people 'live the real intensely.'



Despite the proliferation of scientific mastery, encyclopedic information, and a 24/7 news cycle, it often seems like the truth about important social, political, and even scientific matters is harder to find nowadays than ever before, lost in a swirl of misinformation and competing narratives. As a result, many fall back upon the version of events produced by their 'side,' or abandon the search for truth altogether.

One Catholic apostolate is suggesting another way.

The importance of the truth and the need to seek it in all of reality will be the focus of [this year's New York Encounter](#), an annual three-day cultural event organized by the Catholic lay movement Communion and Liberation. Set to begin this evening at 6:30 PM EDT and continue throughout the weekend, the Encounter will feature discussions, exhibits, and performances with people "who face these questions head-on," on topics as diverse as international relations and eroding public trust in science.

While the Encounter is in person in downtown New York City, [most of it will be available to watch via](#) [read://https_www.ncregister.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ncregister.com%2Fblog%2Fnew-york-encounter-following-this-urge-for-the-truth](https://www.ncregister.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ncregister.com%2Fblog%2Fnew-york-encounter-following-this-urge-for-the-truth)

While the Encounter is in-person in downtown New York City, [most of it will be available to watch via livestream](#), a holdover from last year's event, which was held remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions.

That year, the Encounter's theme was entitled "When Reality Hits," and it focused on the impact of the tumultuous events of 2020, like the coronavirus pandemic, widespread social unrest, and the presidential elections.

This year's theme is responding to the fact that many Americans seem to ["live in different worlds, each with its own 'truths' that often spare us the hard work of seeking *the* truth,"](#) as the 2022 Encounter's program states.

"Reality no longer surprises us," the description continues. "It is twisted to fit our interpretations, and its meaning is purely subjective. Its impact does not open questions which would set us on a journey... As a result, we feel both trapped in our certitudes and afraid of the unexpected. We are left dissatisfied, with the nagging feeling that we are losing ourselves and yet, a subtle, relentless desire for what is true remains."

The Encounter's emphasis on the human person's natural tendency to seek the truth, and the importance of doing so wherever it is found, is reflected in the origin of this year's theme: "This Urge for the Truth."

Although it's a phrase that has deep resonance within a Catholic vision of human nature, the quote doesn't come from Scripture or a papal encyclical. Instead, it's taken from *The Gay Science*, a work by the existentialist philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

"One day the wanderer slammed a door shut behind him, came to a halt, and wept," reads the passage in question. "Then he said: 'This penchant and urge for what is true, real, non-apparent, certain—how I hate it!'"

While some might think it strange for a Catholic event to pull from an atheist for its theme, the decision reflects the Encounter's commitment to "test everything and retain what is good," an instruction from St. Paul that serves as the event's inspiration. The Encounter also cites Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's claim that "the intelligence of faith has to become the intelligence of reality" as its *raison d'être*.

"In pursuit of this goal," the event's "About" page reads: ["the Encounter aims to discover, affirm, and offer to everyone truly human expressions of the desire for truth, beauty, and justice."](#) Or, in the words of Servant of God Father Luigi Giussani, the founder of Communion and Liberation, the Encounter exists to help people "live the real intensely."

[This capacious concern for the truth is also reflected by the 2022 Encounter's engagement with a wide assortment of issues and speakers](#), not necessarily typical at Catholic events and conferences.

Titles of featured conversations include ["Facing Truth: Capitalism and Its Inner Challenges,"](#) ["Journalism is in the service of truth,"](#) and ["Body and identity,"](#); topics covered delve into [overcoming ideological divides in politics](#), [racial reconciliation](#), and [facing unsettling questions related to COVID-19](#); and featured speakers include [New York Times](#) columnist David Brooks, Anglican theologian Rowan Williams, and former U.S. Congressman Dan Lipinski.

These discussions are complemented by a range of performances and cultural exhibits, such as a [presentation on the life of Servant of God Dr. Takashi Nagai](#), a [fusion of Emily Dickinson poetry and music performance](#), and — an annual favorite — the interactive display curated by John Touhey, this year called [The Surprise Exhibit](#), which "may change your life or leave you angry and confused" (though unfortunately only if you're in-person — the interactive nature of this exhibit prohibits it from

being livestreamed).

And at the heart of the Encounter? Sunday Mass, celebrated by Apostolic Nuncio to the US Archbishop Christophe Pierre, during which the Truth Himself will reaffirm His Presence amongst us.