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NEW YORK
ENCOUNTER 

AN "IMPOSSIBLE" UNITY

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An "Impossible" Unity
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AN “IMPOSSIBLE” UNITY

We naturally yearn for unity and long to be part of a real community: life blossoms when it is shared.

And yet, we live in an age of fragmentation. At the social level, we suffer profound divisions among peoples and religions, and our country is ever more polarized along ideological lines, corroding our unity. At the personal level, we are often estranged from our communities, family members, and friends. When we discover that someone doesn't think the way we do, we feel an embarrassing distance, if not open hostility, that casts a shadow on the relationship. As a result, either we become angry or we avoid controversial issues altogether, and retreat into safe territories with like-minded people.

But the disunity we see around us often begins within ourselves. We are bombarded by images of what we are “supposed” to be, but they generally do not correspond to who we really are. In fact, our truest self seems to escape us. The full scope of our humanity, with all its vast and profound needs and desires, may suddenly emerge, elicited by memories, thoughts or events, but usually quickly fades, without lasting joy or real change. And unless our relationships are rooted in the common experience of such humanity, we don't even have real dialogue; we just chat, gossip, text or argue.

In the end, the unity we long for seems impossible.

But what if it is possible? How can it happen?

“YOU KNOW IT WELL: YOU CAN'T MANAGE A THING; YOU'RE TIRED; YOU CAN'T GO ON. AND ALL AT ONCE YOU MEET THE GAZE OF SOMEONE IN THE CROWD—A HUMAN GAZE—AND IT'S AS IF YOU HAD DRAWN NEAR TO A HIDDEN DIVINE PRESENCE. AND EVERYTHING SUDDENLY BECOMES SIMPLER.”

—ANDREI TARKOVSKY

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The Gift of an Impossible Unity

*The Encounter opens with music and a conversation with Sergeant **Conor McDonald**, NYPD, Patrol Service Bureau, son of the late NYPD Detective **Patrick McDonald**, and **John Bartlett**, retired NYFD fireman*

Introduction

“The need for unity lies at the root of the whole expression of man's life; it belongs to the definition of his ‘I.’ Every great human revolution has had universalism as its supreme ideal—to make the whole of humanity one. The supreme ideal of every philosophy, too, has been the unity of mankind, a unity in which each one can be himself and yet be one with others. But no philosophy has ever been able to imagine it in a precise way and no revolution has managed to bring it about. In the end, despair destroys the revolutionary ideal because it turns out to be impossible to achieve.

The more man tries to realize his original aspiration to unity, the more this unity reveals itself to be impossible, beyond the reach of his powers. Not even the unity between man and woman, between parents and children, appears possible; one is tempted to say that this, above all, is impossible. How can we come to love others? How can we come to have compassion for others? How can we come to an experience of unity in which our need for companionship is satisfied?

This need for companionship is unavoidable since it belongs to the essence of the self. So there is nothing more deceptive than the will to stay on one's own or to be alone. For in solitude man is badly off, he refuses himself. Only if the presence of another is a dimension of life, then, even though it may not be more fulfilled, at least one lives life, one accepts it. Companionship belongs to the essence of what is, to the Mystery of which all things are made...How can one say ‘you,’ and therefore say ‘I’? How is it possible to

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become one with others?”

Luigi Giussani, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, McGill, 2010



John Bartlett: Good evening everyone, and welcome to the New York Encounter. Joining me is Sergeant Conor McDonald, the son of Steven and Patty McDonald. Conor grew up on Long Island, where he attended and graduated from Chaminade High School, and then went on to Boston College. Upon graduating from Boston College, he volunteered with the Vincentians out in Denver for about a year. Right after that, he joined the New York City Police Department. In January 2016, he was promoted to detective, and in September he was promoted to sergeant.

I met Conor right around the Thanksgiving holiday. My dear friend, Angelo Sala, asked me to accompany him, so we met with Conor and then we met again. After leaving that night, I felt that I had made a new friend—a lasting friendship, I hope. Last Thursday night we met again for the anniversary, a memorial Mass for his father out in Rockville Centre. It was a beautiful Mass; I had come from Staten Island and when I got there, there were so many people. I could *not* believe the amount of people that had come, and I was stunned by the extent of affection that they had for this man. That’s really about it. I’d like to turn it over to Conor because he has a very dramatic and powerful story to tell us all.

Conor McDonald: Thank you, John; and thanks to everyone for giving me the opportunity to speak tonight, especially John and Angelo. Around this time last year, my father was supposed to speak; unfortunately, as some of you may know, he passed on due to complications from being injured so long ago, in 1986. Angelo and John contacted me and asked if I would speak tonight. I thought it would be pretty good for me to spread my dad’s story, especially around the one-year anniversary of his passing. I want to thank you all very much for giving me this opportunity. I’m extremely humbled to be here and I will do my best to spread my father’s amazing story. It’s a different story from a lot of stories out there, and I think it’s a story that, no matter where you come from and what you believe, and

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how you feel about things—I think it’s good for all of us to know it and be inspired by it. I also want to thank my family for being here: my dad’s partner, Detective Andy Serenny; my mother, the Mayor of Malvern Long Island, Patti Ann McDonald; and the love of my life, my fiancée, Katie Sullivan. I see a lot of guys in uniform, my blue family. Thank you very much for coming and supporting my father and my family.

My story starts about six months before I was born. My father was a veteran of the Navy—a Navy corpsman. The slang term for them was “Docs” because they were the medics for the Marines. He was a Navy corpsman from 1976 to 1980. He believed in service, he believed in helping other human beings; and he followed my great-grandfather, my grandfather, and my great-uncle into what I believe is the greatest police department in the world: the New York City Police Department. During that time, he met my mother and courted her for a couple years, and they were married in November of 1985. My dad had joined the police department the previous July. When July 12th of 1986 rolled around, it was just a normal, rainy mid-afternoon. I know we can picture the New York of today and it’s a beautiful place. You’re not really worried about walking down the street or into neighborhoods and getting mugged or fearing for your life. People believe they have a right to roam around Central Park without fear of being robbed or sexually assaulted. Unfortunately, back in 1986, there was a lot of heinous crime going on. The particular crime my father was trying to prevent was gunpoint robberies of bikes: young teenage kids robbing other young kids at gunpoint. There were probably about fifteen such robberies each month back in 1986, in parts of the park where now people can roam free and not worry about guns. This particular type of crime was happening on the east side near Harlem, 108th Street and Fifth Avenue. My father knew exactly where the individuals were going to be that day by reading complaints made in the days before. He was a plainclothes cop and looked just like you guys. He wore jeans, a nice shirt, and tried to fit into the general population of New York City. Him and his partner, Pete King, were starting a “four-by,” which was a shift that ran from 3:30 p.m. until around 11:30 or midnight. My dad and Pete rode up to 108th Street near Fifth Avenue, inside the park. By the time they rolled around the bend near Lasker Pond, where the pool is, where there’s also a skating rink, my father saw the three individuals: young boys, ages twelve, thirteen, and

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fifteen. At the same time, my father saw a young boy, who had nothing to do with the three other individuals, riding a bike. My dad saw the three corralling the boy on the bike, so my dad and his partner knew what was up: a felony crime, a robbery. He and Pete went ahead and stopped the car; and when the three boys saw my dad and Pete jump out, they ran. My dad ran after them and so did Pete, my dad running down the hill and Pete running another way in hopes of cutting them off.

My father was the first one to catch the boys. They were young, and you wouldn't normally suspect a heinous crime coming from such kids. Unfortunately, as a cop, you can't really make assumptions like that. My father felt he could talk to them and explain that there was a better route than the one they were taking. As he approached them, he identified himself as a police officer but never took out his gun, even though he knew that he had the authority to do so. He just approached them like he wanted to talk to them—to talk it out, to defuse the situation.

As a rookie cop in the Lower East Side, they called my dad “Father Steven.” That was my dad. He just wanted to talk it out. Unfortunately, in that split-second interval where he gave the benefit of the doubt to the young boys—who were criminals—Shavod Jones, the fifteen-year-old, took advantage of it. My dad thought he saw a gun in the youngest boy's sock, and when he reached down, Shavod Jones took his gun out of his waistband, pushed my dad down, and shot him in the neck. Then he stood over my dad and shot him point-blank in the head. Then he shot him again, this time in the arm.

This all happened as my dad's partner was running towards him. Pete saw the whole thing unfold and then couldn't really react. He ran after the boys but couldn't catch them. He ran back to my dad and called in a “1013,” which you do when you're in a really bad situation. They got him to Metropolitan Hospital, which is up in Harlem near 116th and the East Side. There, they didn't know whether or not they could save his life, and recommended that family be notified to come and say their goodbyes. We were lucky—it was an angel, as my dad said. There was a detective at the time, Brian Will Heron, who my father always said was his hero. Brian told everybody, “We gotta get a second opinion; this cop is not gonna die, and

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we gotta get him somewhere else.” They got my dad to Bellevue Hospital, where they sustained his life. Unfortunately, the bullets fired by Shavod, in particular the bullet to the neck, paralyzed my dad. Worse, the damage was to a vertebrae so high that my dad wouldn’t be able to breathe on his own, move his hands, or move his feet. Dad was pretty much gonna be incapacitated for the rest of his life. He was a good-looking man who was full of life. He was a great athlete, he did everything by the book, and for that to happen was life-altering. His life shattered.

He spent several months in Bellevue, till April of 1987. The main motivators for my dad were my mother and my dad’s mother, Anita. They both had unshakable faith. We were lucky that Ed Koch was the mayor at the time, and that the new cardinal was John O’Connor. Cardinal O’Connor made sure there was Mass every day at my dad’s bedside. People knew to come at a certain time after work for Mass, no matter what. One time, the fire chaplain and the police chaplain couldn’t make it, so the fire chaplain, Father Julian Deacon, called a friend who had just returned from a sabbatical in Rome: Father Mychal Judge, who would later be killed on 9/11 in the World Trade Center. He was a Franciscan friar who had become the chaplain of the fire department. It’s funny: Father Mychal used to say that when he came back from Rome, the first call he got was from Father Julian Deacon, who was like, “You need to go to Bellevue and say Mass for Steve McDonald”; and Father Mychal—there was no social media back then, no email—had just got off the plane and was wondering, “Who’s Steve McDonald?” Father Deacon said, “Where have you been?” And Father Mychal was like, “I’ve been in Rome!” [*audience laughter*] Father Deacon said, “Well, you’ll figure it out when you get down there. Just get down there and say Mass.”

I’m not sure if everyone here knows Father Mychal Judge, but he was a remarkable human being who did two things by my dad’s hospital bed that inspired my father. He offered a prayer that has become a family prayer for us, the St. Francis peace prayer. When Father Mike recited it after Mass, my dad said, “Fr. Mike, what is that?” Now, he couldn’t talk yet, of course, so he simply mouthed it. Father Mike said, “It’s the peace prayer of St. Francis.” If you know the peace prayer, you’ll recognize it as very prophetic in my dad’s life. He knew what he had to do from his condition

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as a quadriplegic. Father Mike put a Eucharist on my father's head because he couldn't receive; and everybody present when this happened said that my father was then inspired by Jesus Christ.

Now that's not the major story. He was injured and tragically assaulted and paralyzed, but my dad didn't let that define his marriage or his life. When I was born on January 29, 1987, my father always said it was kind of like a new hope. He knew he wanted to be a great father to me and a great husband to my mother, and he thought about this for a long time. He concluded that he had to forgive the young boy who shot him. Now back in those days, if you know your New York history, you know that in the eighties, in the early nineties, it was a tumultuous time. There was a lot of anger, hostility, and division on both sides of the political spectrum. My father felt that his injury and his story could help heal the city, and hopefully make the world a better place. Through a friend, he wrote a speech. He still couldn't talk at this point because he was learning how to breathe on a ventilator, so he asked my mom to read it. Standing next to Cardinal O'Connor, my mother told the city and the world that my father had forgiven the young boy who shot him, and hoped he would find purpose in his life.

A lot of people have come up and asked me, "Was it for real? Did he really forgive this young boy?" For my whole life, dad did a great job of protecting me from the pain he suffered. Living as a quadriplegic is no way you want to live a life. Everything is done for you. Breathing is done for you. You have to be suctioned regularly because you're unable to gather the mucus in your lungs and throat. You have to be helped to go to the bathroom, to shower; to scratch an itch on your nose; to eat and drink. Everything you possibly can imagine doing on a given day, my dad needed constant help doing it. That's why he had 24/7 nurses.

My mother would tell a story of when my dad went out to Denver for rehab. It's probably one of the best medical facilities for quadriplegics in the world: Craig Hospital. They told my mom, "Patty, come sit on the chair and don't move." She sat on the chair, and then moved after about two minutes. They said, "Patty, you can't move." My mom got so frustrated, but then she realized, *Steven has to deal with this for 1,440 minutes every day,*

not just two. My dad lived like this for thirty and a half years. Thirty and a half years.

In November of 1987, when he returned home from Craig Hospital, everyone knew who he was. He'd go around from event to event and people would say, "Hey Steve!" and talk to him. It was a nice life for a quadriplegic, but he wanted to do more, even though he didn't know precisely what. My mother told him, "Listen, you gotta get out of the house; there's way too many people in the house. [*audience laughter*] We need something; you need something; and even though you're in that chair, you have to figure out what that something is." That's when my mother inspired my dad. That's when he started going around and preaching the story of his faith, his love, and his forgiveness, especially for the young boy who shot him. My father went around the whole entire world and, like I said, people asked me, "Is he for real?" And he was. He was a hundred percent totally committed to his message of love and forgiveness.

Bartlett: Okay. I just want to say something, because he brings up a point that people question—namely, "Is this, you know, for real?" I read in his book, which I bought on Amazon [*holds up book*]*—*that when Steven was shot, the mayor went to the hospital and then called Cardinal O'Connor. When he called Cardinal O'Connor, he asked him to come to the hospital, because he saw something in this family, these people, that required him to be there. The Cardinal came over within minutes.

I just want to read something real quick. I know that we're running out of time here. What I want to point out is what Cardinal O'Connor saw on Christmas Eve. [*flips through book*] This is what he says in his Christmas Eve homily: "My top religious news story of 1986 is in Bellevue Hospital. This very moment, police officer Steven McDonald has been lying in a hospital bed now for more than five months, with his bride of thirteen months constantly at his side; always encouraging him, always praying with him. Yes. What makes this news? Many police officers have been shot. It's almost as if all the world's suffering can be summed up and placed in that hospital bed with Steven McDonald. Not for one single instant has their simple, childlike faith faltered. Time after time, their doctors have told them that, humanly, there is no hope. Medically, there can be

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no progress. Time after time, Steven and Patty Ann have insisted that a miracle will take place. To me, this is the miracle; this is the meaning of Christmas—that's faith. That's a simple faith, that's a childlike faith. Theologians, medical doctors, scientists, historians, scripture scholars, may all know better, but Steven and Patty will live every day in hope. They will accept what they see as the permissive will of God when so many—understandably—would be shaking their fist at God, threatening God, hating God. They have accepted what God has permitted to happen with no bitterness, no rancor towards the assailant, no resentment, no cries of revenge. Now, how can you do that without faith? It's as remarkable as any faith I have ever seen." [*applause*]

Our theme is, after all, "An 'Impossible' Unity." [*gestures—audience laughter*]

McDonald: That's how my father lived for thirty and a half years, and I can tell you it wasn't easy. When we would have arguments, he would always say, "No, Conor, do not let anger destroy your heart. You always must let love win." And he believed it. The one thing he always told me to do—and he believed it as well—was to pray. Telling a young guy growing up in this society to pray, when there are so many distractions—social media, movies, TV—is tough. Especially with sports running non-stop on TV and the Internet, it's tough to sit down and say the rosary, especially when your dad wants to say it every five minutes, you know? [*audience laughter*]

I've been trying to challenge myself this past year. My father eventually passed away from respiratory failure while on the ventilator. Unfortunately, no alarms went off; he just stopped breathing. He went to bed, and even with the nurse watching, he just went blue. My mother was there, she witnessed it. It's very hard to reconcile it all, but I try to take faith in everything he said. I tell people that I love my dad. I knew how important he was to people, but maybe I didn't fully appreciate his presence and now I do. I think it's important in today's society for people to hear my father's message. No matter where you go, no matter who you see, no matter who you are, no matter what you disagree with, I think we have to have—as my father always said—belief in the dignity of human beings.

That's what my dad recognized, even if it was in a young boy from a totally different background, a different skin color, or maybe a different religion.

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My dad did not care. He totally believed in forgiving the young boy and knowing the young boy was special.

That's what he wanted to convey: an impossible unity, some might say, but my father did not believe in impossibility. He believed that we should all come together, no matter our differences. The other day, we had Mass on his anniversary—January 10th is the day he passed—and I've never seen a church packed like that in my entire life outside of Christmas and Easter. [*audience laughter*] On a weekday, the church was packed. It was packed for the rosary and it was packed for Mass. I got extremely emotional because, like I said, it's been a really hard time lately not having him here. The sight of everyone in that church helped my faith, and I understood how important his message was, and is: to forgive and never let anger destroy your heart, and to love one another.

My dad always believed in the message of Jesus Christ. Trust me, it's very hard and not easy at all. My dad made it look easy. My mother and I can testify that it's extremely tough sometimes to grin and bear it. But my father's insistence on preaching forgiveness and love—I think it's a way to make the impossible unity a real thing.

I want to thank you all so much for being here and giving me the time to talk, and for John being here and letting me talk. [*audience laughter*] I hope when you do leave here and are able to read more about my dad—wherever you are from, wherever you go, please just spread his message. In today's society, his is an extremely important message: the importance and dignity of every human being in the world. That was my father's real message.

Thank you all so much for giving me time to talk. I love you, and wish you a happy new year. God bless.



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Overview

A progressive economic perspective:

1. Embraces a preferential option for the poor.
2. Celebrates progress more broadly, which gives us hope. But beware complacency! Big challenges remain.
3. Emphasizes 3 E's: empower the poor, build their entitlements, and facilitate exchange.
4. Values diversity as a source of strength per the law of comparative advantage. Exchange helps build community.

In order to advance human flourishing.



THE FUNDAMENTAL ECONOMIC RESOURCE: THE HUMAN PERSON

*A discussion on the relationship between integral human development and economy with **Christopher Barrett**, Deputy Dean College of Business, Cornell University; **Sarah Sievers**, Associate Dean of Policy and Practice at the University of Notre Dame's new Keough School of Global Affairs; and Archbishop **Silvano Tomasi**, Secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. Moderated by **Holly Peterson**, Principal designate, Nativity of Our Lord School, Broomfield, Colorado*

Introduction

“Desire is like the spark with which an engine gets started. Every human action is born from this phenomenon, from this dynamism which constitutes man. It’s desire that turns on ‘man’s engine.’ As a consequence, he starts looking for bread and water, for work, for a woman; he looks for a more comfortable armchair and a better house. He starts getting interested in the fact that some people have more than others, he looks at the fact that some people are treated in a certain way and he’s not, precisely because of the increase of these stimuli he has within himself and that the Bible calls *heart*.”

Luigi Giussani



Holly Peterson: Good morning and welcome to the Encounter. For more than ten years, Archbishop Silvano Maria Tomasi has served as the Vatican’s permanent observer to the United Nations and to specialized agencies in Geneva, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, where he has also been Archbishop and Nuncio after serving in Djibouti. Until his appointment to these posts, Archbishop Tomasi served as Secretary of the Pontifical Council for

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Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples. Additionally, he co-founded the Center for Migration Studies. Archbishop Tomasi obtained his PhD in Sociology from Fordham University.

Next to the Archbishop is Sarah Sievers. She is the Associate Dean of Policy and Practice at the University of Notre Dame's new Keough School of Global Affairs. Formerly Senior Director at Columbia University's Earth Institute, she has extensive experience in advocacy, policy, and governance issues pertaining to development. Most recently, she advised the government of Nigeria on implementing the Millennium Development Goals. Sievers has led global health and advocacy efforts and has worked with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, served in the Foreign Service, and is the founding Executive Director of Harvard University's Center for Global Development and the Earth Institute's Center for Globalization and Development. She holds an MBA from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

And finally, Chris Barrett. Chris is an agricultural and development economist. He is a professor of Applied Economics and Management at the Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, as well as a professor in the Department of Economics at Cornell University. He has over 300 publications and his research has been cited more than 29,000 times. He served as editor of the *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*. He sits on a variety of boards and panels and has won numerous university, national, and international awards for teaching, research, and public outreach. He is an elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association, and the African Association of Agricultural Economists.

Full biographies of all three of our distinguished speakers can be found in your program and on the New York Encounter website.

Archbishop Tomasi.

Silvano Tomasi: Good morning, everyone. The task of our panel, at least from what I understand, is to try to put the economy in relation to the human person; and to see the function of the economy not as dominating

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the activity of the human person or the human community, but to be at its service. I am going to try to say a few words on the basis of this little reasoning. First, as we look around and talk about the economy, we are not talking about a technical dimension of knowledge, but about human beings, because the economy directly affects persons and communities.

Since there are problems as we look at the reality of the human family affected by the economy, we need to do something about those problems and determine the best way to resolve them. My own view is that we need to aim at integral human development, and through that road we will understand how the economy should function.

As we analyze a little bit the situation of today, we see that there are quite a few problems. First of all, there is an imbalance in the economic situation around the world. If we consider that today eight people possess 426 billion dollars—the same amount of wealth as the poorest half of our planet, 3.6 billion people. Eight people and 3.6 billion people. They have the same amount of control and wealth.

Another interesting conclusion was brought forth by last December's report of the world wealth and income database of the U.N. and of the World Bank—it was a joint research effort. The conclusion is that income inequality grows in both developed and developing countries. Money and lack of money has consequences that are very practical for the lives of people.

Another aspect of this increasing gap between the haves and the have-nots is the fact that, in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the growth of income has been three times less than in the rest of the world. I will refer to just some of these notes, of these examples, because technical people can come up with a lot more information in this direction, but, the first conclusion is this: as we look at the human family, there are growing gaps between groups, and between categories of people. How do we respond to this situation? How can we change the economy so that it will be a resource for everyone? It's not simply that the people are a resource for the economy, but that the economy should be a resource for the people.

The way to begin the search for a solution is to understand what we want

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to achieve. And what we want to achieve is a type of development that is not just technical, or economic, or material; there is integral human development—as Pope Francis constantly repeats—and we need to humanize the economy. Among other things, the latest information is that there are still 850 million people who are hungry. Famine is still a reality. Integral human development demands that we analyze a bit what we understand by an expression that is used by everyone now, and is becoming more popular. Development as a different conceptualization, that in turn leads to very different social economic and political paths.

For example, the conventional idea of development as economic growth, which can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution, is strongly based upon the acceleration and increase of the production processes. Despite its benefits and health, the infrastructure, mobilization, and communications, among others—this model of development has also led in its way to an increasing level of inequality and serious environment damage. For these reasons, normative models of development appeared around the 1970s. Some of them were inspired by anti-capitalist human rights; by human rights, the green, and cultural movements, and so forth. The Church also drew the basis for an alternative development model based on its social tradition. And here, you will remember, Paul VI wrote an encyclical on the topic, *Populorum Progressio*. He explained that development cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, development must be well-rounded. We must foster the development of each person, and of the whole person of each human group, and of humanity as a whole.

In this concept, integral human development is about being; about becoming more human. It's not primarily about having more things. For this concept—integral human development—must be promoted and measured according to all dimensions of human existence. Economic, for sure, but also political, cultural, ecological, spiritual, and so forth. This idea of development relates to other alternative models of the time, such as those pioneered by some economists and thinkers, and by the United Nations Development Program. It's an effort to have a more inclusive definition of development. These alternative and more holistic models of development still need, of course, an economic system, that, while promoting economic growth, is still amenable to actual human progress. It is not a task of the

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Church to indicate such a system; it is a responsibility to participate in the public arena, so as to help correct systems that hinder integral human development and integral human progress, and to help promote systems that can truly serve humanity. This participation is a crucial dimension of the Church's prophetic mission in terms of development and justice. The current development economic model, as Pope Francis explains it, raises numerous questions about its integrality and authenticity, in fact, because it foments exclusion and inequality, as I mentioned before. It corrupts the social nature of our existence. Also, being underpinned by the myth of individual autonomy, it belittles interpersonal bonds and the necessary communitarian dimension of human flesh to flourish. The model is also inauthentic because it does not acknowledge the reality of the limits of prosperity. Following uncritically the idols of money in the market, which is a false god, rules rather than serves humanity. The current economic model is complicit in distorting the idea of the person created in the image and likeness of God.

In summary, at this point I would say that the quality of development embraces a more universal and more comprehensive type of understanding of development, and unless we do it that way, we are not going to be successful in developing an economic system that is productive and fruitful for everyone. In this context, obviously, the philosophical and ethical approach is to keep the human person and the human community as the final objective, the final target to be served by the economy. Vatican Council II said, and I quote: "As the human person is the source, the focus, and the aim of all economic and social life, so in this connection there is an important element that comes into play, and that is work."

Work and the economy are kind of the twin tracks on which the train of development moves. Since we were created with a vocation, to where work is not just a function for the economy, but is the expression of the dignity and the creativity of the human person. We can see our first clear challenge for an economy with a human face is to revisit the notion of work. An economy centered on people always wants to promote full employment, because it aims at helping every person to deploy their own vocation. However, due to the ecological crisis we can no longer do it the same way as we tried in the past.

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Yet, this is the case; who is going to pay the cost of the transition toward sustainable work? Another problem is that this cannot occur at the expense of the workers. How to promote full employment in a global hyper-technocratic society? There are new problems emerging in the area of work that affect the human person, especially the robotic approach to development and in artificial intelligence; these are all questions that need to be analyzed and taken into account in looking at the role of the economy vis-a-vis the human person.

These labor issues are recurring challenges and we don't have to assume that they are over, but today on top of them we have another dimension—as I mentioned—robotics and artificial intelligence and so forth. This dimension is intimately connected to the issue of work in relation to the economy and the fact that the person has to become the protagonist. You cannot have a solid economy without the respect of the person and you cannot have true development without the person becoming the protagonist of development.

Then, we need to take ecology into account as well. Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, has emphasized the concept of integral ecology. There is a parallel between integral development and integral ecology. Integral ecology means nature has to be respected: taking care of creation, but also the needs and the expectations of the human person. Social problems must be addressed by community networks, and community conversion. We need to become conscious to change some of our attitudes, in order to protect the common home that is the earth. As Pope Francis reminds us, it is not enough to think of different species merely as potential resources to be exploited while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Neither a human person nor creation itself is our instrument or means to something else; they need to be taken into account for what they are. A strategy to study and to understand the role of work, the respect of creation in relation to the economy, is that of a dialogue and a wise government. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of dialogue for integral human development. First, because a dialogical approach is the one that can counter the attitude of dominion that is causing violence. Secondly, because an inclusive dialogue can counter the social exclusion, the foment, the conflict. And thirdly, because when we dialogue, we are forced

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to go beyond our self-interest, encountering the other, and discovering the richness of what we have in common. In a dialogue, the other is not an enemy, but a partner and neighbor. Dialogue, indeed, is a fundamental characteristic of the human person. An economy that has people as its center is an economy in constant dialogue, an economy based on dialogue.

I am aware of the difficulties of dialogue, especially when it is not limited to superficial negotiations and when it addresses the structural causes of conflict. But it is precisely this dialogue through which we may best deploy the idea of integral human development. To promote a human economy, we need to improve—and in some places to change—the dialogue between owners of services and production of work and workers, whether unionized or not. We would also need to support dialogue at the international level, as with Agenda 2030, and to ensure that the weakest voices do not get silenced and that no one gets left behind. Economics is not alien to this process and could help or hinder processes of dialogue worldwide.

Another aspect we need is conversion, so as to promote integral human development, particularly through economics. *Laudato Si'* explains that one of the roots of the problem of the current development model is rapidification. This means a path of developing that prevents us from being attentive to the relationships that enable us to flourish as human beings. A speed of living and working that prevents us from being fully attentive to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. This is also connected to the prevailing short-term mentality particularly dominant in business and politics, to the increasing patterns of consumption which foment a throwaway culture that hinders relationships and hurts the earth, and to the difficulty of integrating a spirituality of care into our lifestyle and ways of working. To decelerate in business, in our consumption habits, to work for long-term goals and in all dimensions of existence: we definitely need a move to a long-term mentality, where consumerism is not cheap and where rapid material growth is not the only parameter when determining if a company is doing well. Including different human dimensions to the economic growth analysis is essential to promote an economy with human beings as its center.

In conclusion, I would like to sum up quickly these scattered thoughts in this way. The gap in the welfare of the human family calls for a change in

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the economic system. The way is to aim for an integral human development; the means to pursue this human development as a correct understanding of work, of time, of integral ecology. Above all, that the human person in the image of God has a unique dignity, and this unique dignity makes the person the protagonist of work and the center of all economic activity. The person is in a relationship with the whole human family. We are kind of hurt by an excessive ideology of individuals. They risk excluding an openness to the community. Therefore, when we talk of the economy, we need to be aware of this dominant feature of our present culture and keep in mind that relating to others is an essential condition for becoming more human. We must work in an economic context for an economic system that looks not just at the interest of one individual in a selfish way, but rather that is at the service of the entire community, in what the social doctrine of the Church calls, “the common good.” Thanks. *[applause]*

Peterson: Mrs. Sievers.

Sarah Sievers: Thank you so much for having me. I have a PowerPoint presentation

[SLIDE: Dignity of the Human Person: The Core of Integral, Sustainable Development]

It’s really an honor and privilege to be here, and also intimidating, I will say. Until about a year and a half ago, I thought the term “integral human development” was a grammar mistake. *[audience laughter]* And the human person? What other kind of person would there be? I am in the intimidating position of sitting next to the gentleman who defines many of the terms we use, but he’s only the second Catholic priest I’ve ever met in my life after I started working at the University of Notre Dame about two years ago. I’m a newcomer to many of these concepts. *[audience applause and laughter]*

Thank you. But once we got past some of the language, it was very interesting for me to realize how many of these concepts resonated far beyond the language with which they had been expressed. I’m from New England and one of the things we do very well in New England is ask, Why? So automatically when I hear, “We have to have integral human

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development; it's very important for all these reasons," there is sort of a spiritual sense that responds, yes, but then the New Englander in me asks, "Why?"

There are lots of ways we could do this. Why is integral human development at the core of all of this? It's an important question to ask, because the more explanations we have, the more information we have to try to answer some of those questions, the more we can do with the resulting information. Also, I think it's an important personal process to go through if these are concepts we feel are sacred in some way. The process of reflection as we try to answer the 'why' questions can sometimes yield great personal growth and surprising results, as it has in my case, as I've been looking at this.

I turn now to the second slide.

[SLIDE 2: Should the Strong Protect the Weak?]

As a rule, in policy discussions, the weak are not identified. Their interests or the impacts on them are not considered. Thus their situation generally is not relevant unless their advocates succeed in representing them in corridors of power, or until they revolt. One of the questions that we are asked frequently is, "Should the strong protect the weak"? I thought I would start by saying that a lot of my background has been working in international development or sustainable development from the perspective of policymakers—in other words strong people in positions of strength, leaders of countries in developing worlds, and people who are setting the policy agenda. One of my reflections as I was considering what to discuss today, was realizing just how infrequently in practice in those places—where these important decisions are being made by the strong—are the weak even ever identified really explicitly.

Who are the weak? Who are the vulnerable? And in the context of a policy that we might be discussing—a development policy or something else—how will what we are discussing affect the people who are the most vulnerable? It suddenly occurred to me that if that question is not even routinely considered, how likely are we to be safeguarding principles of integral human development in whatever language we use? And it leads us

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to ask the questions, “Should that actually be the way things remain, going forward? And what are the likely consequences?”

What I would like to do for a moment is shift from a more conceptual discussion—that I can imagine the economist will have in a couple of minutes—and pause for what’s always a little dangerous in the academy, but which might be an interesting thought experiment to illustrate this point.

[*SLIDE: Africa’s largest population, economy. Map of Africa, with arrow pointing to Nigeria*]

What does it look like in a place where these principles of integral human development aren’t respected by people in power? And how might the results of those perspectives look a little different in practice? A case study might be interesting. Since Nigeria seems to feature prominently in most introductions about me, I thought maybe a few moments on Nigeria might be helpful. As many of you know, Nigeria boasts the largest population in Africa and the largest economy. It’s an incredibly diverse country, with about half the population of the United States living in an area the size of Texas. An oil-based economy for export earnings, so 80-85% of the government’s budget is funded by oil. The economy itself is much more diverse than that. A real federation; lots of different states where governors are super-powerful. We should identify which governors are and are not, or which parts of government are and are not thinking about these principles of integral human development and putting people at the center. There are very big regional differences in terms of development as well. Generally speaking, I thought it would be illustrative to show this: on the slide, darker is more developed and lighter is less developed. This is broken down by state, and you can see there’s a sort of a north-south divide that is reasonably stark.

Some of you may be aware that in addition to what’s going on in Nigeria in general, there’s an insurgency going on in the Northeast. Boko Haram—many of you have heard of Boko Haram.

[*SLIDE: Northeast Socioeconomic Outlook: Absolute Poverty. Absolute Poverty*]

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Level by State From 2009 to 2014]

This is a slide that shows the per capita GDP of the states that are somewhat impacted by Boko Haram in the Northeast. You can see where they fit compared to the Nigerian average and how that changes over time.

So the news isn't great. They make a little bit of progress and then things start falling apart. The time-line: Nigeria during this period—2005 to 2015, 2017—was very focused on achieving the Millennium Development Goals at the national level, and put a lot of energy behind it. But at a practical level, at a local level, it didn't always work out as planned and this was the part of the country that was most severely impacted.

So not great news. Here's a health indicator: sometimes we like to look at not just the whole aggregate—what's going on in development—but at a specific. How many kids under one are immunized? That's something we look at as a proxy for how well the health system is doing. You see again the big regional variations, but here we start seeing some pretty good news from the country as a whole. We see the under-five child survival rate goes up and up and up, so the mortality rate for under five kids goes down, down, down over time.

[SLIDE: Maternal Mortality Ration (Per 100,000 Live Births)]

Maternal mortality goes down, down, down.

[SLIDE: Tale of Two Cities... Abuja (Federal) and Maiduguri (Borno State)]

What's going on in a country where you have one part of a region, one small part of a region exploding, and the country overall actually meeting some pretty interesting development objectives? What I would conjecture is that this is an interesting time for us to consider whether integral human development and the principles associated with it were—or were not—integrated into the leadership practices of those in power in the states in the Northeast, where we saw bad news happen, and in the country as a whole, at the center where we saw a heavy emphasis placed on achieving the Millennium Development Goals. What I would like to propose—and

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we can spend a little more time going into more details—is that without knowing it, at the center the MDG’s office essentially adopted integral human development as its guiding principles. It called itself “pro-poor,” and on all the documentations for the Millennium Development Goals office there were two phrases that were required to be on everything: one was “pro-poor,” and the other, believe it or not, was called “putting people first.” That was the point of it all—putting people first. When you have that simple premise of being “pro poor,” looking out for the most vulnerable, and you require that “putting people first” be on all your documents—imagine the impact. And contrast it with the leadership in the Northeast, which, as we’ll see momentarily, was not particularly interested in treating people as a relevant part of the process. The poor were not generally considered. It was sort of an aristocratic system, and at least for this particular period in time, which preceded the rise of the Boko Haram terrorism in the Northeast, the leaders were perceived as acting out of impunity with complete disregard for the welfare of the people they were meant to be overseeing.

One of the things that is particularly chilling about this is that it wasn’t just the political leaders but also the traditional and religious leaders—who had spiritual credibility, authority, and responsibility—who were perceived as having acted with disregard for the welfare of the people, out of personal self-interest.

We’ll return to this slide in a second, but a little “compare and contrast” might be interesting.

[*SLIDE: Background to North East Insurgency*]

First, a little bit of background. Some of you, of course, may be familiar with Boko Haram and what’s gone on in the Northeast, but just to give you a sense of how devastating this group has been up there, know that it applied for ISIS membership and was denied on the grounds of being too brutal. Now, that’s a pretty tricky thing to pull off, right? How is that possible? When I started working in Nigeria I had heard about Boko Haram; we all knew of it. It was this little group of people who were following a guy named Mohammad Yusuf, who was basically out there in the markets of Maiduguri, the capital city of Borno, the big state where Boko Haram was

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headquartered. He was saying, “This isn’t right that you’re so poor and no one’s paying attention. Government’s not supposed to be doing it this way and your traditional and religious leaders aren’t supposed to be doing it this way, either. Something’s gone wrong and you’re not being treated properly.”

That message really resonated with people, right? Because, of course, he was right. Now, he blamed Western education. He said, “Oh, they go off and they get educated as Westerners and they come back and they become corrupt and poor servants of you, and of God, and of everybody else.” I don’t want to oversell the virtues of the man, but his fundamental points were appealing for reasons that, I think, would be appealing to most anybody. Unlike many terrorist organizations where we don’t see much of a correlation with absolute poverty and with absolute development, with Boko Haram we do. They came from very, very, very, poor places. You saw the poverty numbers in these corners. When I was first going there, we knew that they were following this man, and he had been arrested and was killed in police custody or died mysteriously in police custody along with his brother-in-law. This was around 2007, 2008, and we vaguely knew that there were some protests going on, because people were pretty upset; they wanted justice. They still weren’t out in the streets committing any violence, but they wanted justice because their leader had been killed, and the leadership up there—the governor—said, “We don’t have to pay attention to what you say. Nah. We don’t care that that’s what you want; you don’t matter. We can kill your leader. We’re gonna just ignore what you have to say.”

When people got increasingly upset about this, they started a little campaign of saying, “We’re going to go after the police, and we’re going to target the governor, and we’re going to target a few other people who were directly responsible for killing our voice.” And for several years that’s what Boko Haram was. Then suddenly, out of nowhere, we hear that they’ve blown up the U.N. headquarters building in a way that looks nothing like what we thought. None of us thought it could possibly be Boko Haram, because that’s not the way that they acted. Turns out it was, and they were determined to start a religious war in Nigeria. That was their goal—to set up a kind of a caliphate and start a religious war. There were two men who basically stood there and said, “No, this will not pass,” almost like Gandalf

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on the bridge, if you've seen *Lord of the Rings*. Those two people were the Sultan of Sokoto, who is the top religious leader of the Muslims in the Fulani north; and Cardinal Onaiyekan, whom many of you know. Those two men are credited with having stopped the brutality from spreading into a religious war. But Boko Haram was pretty determined that they were going to make this happen. They ended up getting a lot of help from Gaddafi's weapons and from Al Qaeda in the Maghreb, and they got a lot of internal support from bands of people who were hired, frankly, to foment what should look like Christian-Muslim conflicts in political disputes. They were a little bit unemployed because things had quieted down in the Middle Belt where there had been some of these disputes, so they went up and became the muscle of Boko Haram. These men stopped it from spreading, but what it meant was Boko Haram got more and more and more brutal, to try to force a reaction that these men had stopped. When they realized that no matter how many churches they blew up on a Sunday, they were not going to be able to make this spread, they concentrated their brutality in the places where they could control the land—in Borno State.

I want to pause for a moment and say that, at almost any step along the way, if any of the principles of integral human development had been applied by people in leadership, this thing never would have become the Boko Haram that we know. If the people had been treated with a modicum of dignity and given some access to education and housing and food and things like that, there wouldn't have been cause for the protests in the first place. If the leaders had treated Mohammad Yusuf with a modicum of seriousness, if they hadn't killed him, Boko Haram could not have arisen. It's not just my opinion. I've spoken with the governor there now. We've spoken with lots of leaders and they concur that this was a preventable thing. In fact, it almost took an explicit commitment to destroying the concept of human dignity in every way for this to arise and become what it was.

What does this all mean in terms of impacts? You can see some of the slides, but at a basic level in Borno State—the main state where this happened—there are more than 50,000 orphans. About a third of the housing stocks have been destroyed. A thousand schools have been blown up; thousands of teachers have been killed. The majority of hospitals and health clinics have been destroyed. You can see the internally displaced people—refugees,

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internal refugees—and that’s out of a number of two and a half million, right? So there are about two million people internally displaced. This has been a brutality that’s mind-boggling. The results of this routine ignoring, at so many different stages, of integral human development, are appalling. I don’t want to oversimplify, for there were other things going on. But the point is, there were solutions that presented themselves every step along the way that could have prevented this, and they were not taken. This is what Borno ended up with as a result.

At the same time, in the same country—and sometimes even physically in the same place, because the Northeast was one of the places that was covered—this other office I’ve been describing was adopting the principles of integral human development, though they didn’t call it that. They didn’t know that was the name, but putting people first—that’s what this is, right?

[*SLIDE: At the Same Time...In the Same Country*]

They did exactly the opposite. They said, “We’re gonna put the dignity of the human person at the center of our program and became ‘pro-poor.’” Every time we would have big meetings, there was the question of the dignity of the poorest: Who are the poorest? How are they being affected? How is their dignity being affected? This was front and center in what we were considering. Now, I cannot draw or pretend to draw an academically rigorous cause-and-effect relationship; however, I think this stuff is really quite important. They set up what was called a conditional grant scheme to try to meet the Millennium Development Goals: cut poverty in half, achieve universal primary education, cut child mortality rates in half, and cut maternal mortality rates in half across Nigeria. They set up plans to do that. We used all kinds of fancy instruments. Some of you are thinking, wait: In Nigeria, how is that gonna be possible? How can you get stuff like that done in Nigeria? It’s a tricky place to get stuff done. Well, you’re absolutely right—a *very* tricky place to get stuff done. It’s especially a tricky place to get stuff done at scale. We used some fun technology. This is a land area that’s the equivalent of a county in the United States. They’re called LGAs in Nigeria, and we went and we surveyed every single health facility, education facility, and many community water points. One by one, we used fancy technology to get pictures of them and to be able

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to get information and surveys and have it all on a map, so we could see where we should invest money and where we shouldn't. I won't belabor the details, but essentially what we came up with for each of the Millennium Development Goals was a target: What is the gap that needs to be filled and how do we fill it?

So, what happened with this program?

[*SLIDE: RECAP: CGS in Nigeria*]

As you can see on the slide: exactly the same years, same geography, many of the same states. In a discrete project, we're building a new school or rehabilitating a school, or building a health clinic or rehabilitating a health clinic, or creating a functioning water point across big chunks of Nigeria. This is an ongoing program now. A starkly opposite effect. On the one hand, you end up with a situation in which teachers and schools are being blown up. On the other hand, we built 30,000 new schools and stopped them. On one hand, you have the child immunization basically rounding to zero as everything ground to a halt, and you start seeing child mortality rates going up and up and up and up. It's very sobering to see teeny little coffins—that are totally preventable—lined up one next to the other because of choices that we've made. I want to emphasize this again: you can see the number of children under five dying every year being cut in half from two hundred; from one in five to fewer than one in ten. These are choices. I don't want to oversimplify by suggesting that the only explanation for this is adopting principles of integral human development, human dignity, and respect for the human person; but I *will* tell you that, without a doubt, in one case leadership clearly emphasized it. In another case, they clearly dismissed it, and I believe that this made a pretty big difference clearly seen in the numbers.

Now to the question about why this matters. I mean, instinctively we know that integral human development is a virtue for all kinds of reasons, right? But understanding some of the reasons why, or some of the consequences or potential consequences of disregarding this and the kind of hell on earth that it can lead to—I think it helps us understand a lot more about what our responsibilities might be. Many of the conditions that Mohamed

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Yusuf complained about, including the impunity of local leadership, are still happening across the Sahel, across big swaths of Africa. Will another Boko Haram be allowed to rise, even if called something else? Or will we learn some lessons and start taking some of the principles of human dignity and explain to local leadership why they are important, and what might happen if they disregard them? As we think about programs in a very tricky country, can we figure out how to cut in half the child mortality rate? Are we going to adopt those principles proactively as a global community? Or are we going to take that knowledge and let it sort of wither on the vine? We don't always know for sure the consequences of respecting, and implementing, and loving those learnings. But I think sometimes we get hints. At least for me, I can read a lot of the data and put up lots of aggregate charts—which actually was the first version of this presentation.

I thought maybe I could tell a story to illustrate just how stark the difference can be between putting people at the center of your thinking, in the forefront of your thoughts, and not. I thought I would close with a quote many of you may recognize, and that aptly sums up the principle I am trying to illustrate. If we don't want to look to *Laudato Si'* as one of the sources, then we can look to Matthew 25 and recall Jesus's words to us: remember the least of these; our lives are going to be judged on how well we consider them in all the forms they make themselves known to us in this imperfect but beautiful world.

So, thank you very much for your time, and thank you, sir [*nods to Tomasi*], for the many lessons.

Peterson: Dr. Barrett.

Chris Barrett: Thank you. It's a tall order to follow the preceding two speakers, especially with two seconds left in the session. [*audience laughter*] But it's a great honor to be here. I thank the organizers for inviting me and Holly for your moderating the panel. And thanks to the two of you for really fascinating comments. I'd like to give you a brief version of an economist's perspective on human flourishing. I term this a progressive economic perspective for two reasons, as I'll explain in just a moment. The first is that I'm going to argue—though I doubt it requires much

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argument in this audience—that we need to embrace a preferential option for the poor. What is perhaps a more provocative argument is that a lot of the economics community fully accepts this premise and that it’s a foundational premise of what I term progressive economics. The second part of being progressive, however, is recognizing that we can promote, and need to celebrate, progress where it occurs. And it’s indeed occurring all around us. It’s important to acknowledge and celebrate the progress the world has been enjoying, because it’s a source of hope and confidence that we *can* attack and solve the sorts of problems you’ve just heard described.

Indeed, Sarah gives us a wonderful case study where the problems are not getting solved universally, but it’s feasible to address the very real suffering humans face unnecessarily if we set our minds to it, if we deploy technologies, if we build relationships that make it work. I’m going to emphasize what I term the three Es that are essential to human flourishing: empowering the poor; building their entitlements—by which I mean the concept Archbishop Tomasi invoked earlier; and finally and relatedly, to facilitate exchange. This is where human relationships become so essential and where diversity is so essential. It is only when we are in relationship with people who are different from us that we can enjoy what we economists call “gains from trade.” If everybody is exactly like me, there is no direct gain from trade available; it’s possible only in the diversity of our communities. I’ll show you a simple graphic: this is true in nature and true in society. We need diversity as a source of strength. This endows us with comparative advantage exchange, voluntary exchange through community, through relationship, then becomes a central instrument of human flourishing. Let me start with a slide that explains the economists’ perspective of the preferential option for the poor. This is my favorite sentence in the entire literature of economics. It’s the opening sentence of the Nobel Prize acceptance speech of Ted Schultz back in 1979, and I think it’s important to underscore that the opening sentence of a Nobel Prize acceptance speech tells us something about what is being emphasized.

[*SLIDE: Schultz quote*]

Schultz wrote, “Most of the people in the world are poor, so if we knew the economics of being poor we would know much of the economics that

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really matters.” The highlighted part in red is actually the title of the blog that my graduate students and postdocs run at Cornell: *Economics That Really Matters*. It’s all about the lives and experiences of the poor and what we can do to improve their standards of living.

[*SLIDE: Cornell SC Johnson College of Business: Rapid, Large-Scale Progress in Human Development*]

The second part of being progressive is recognizing and celebrating progress. I’m going to show you a few slides very quickly here, and won’t go into great detail on any of them, commending to you instead the Oxford-based group’s data from which I take every one of these slides. It’s important to recognize that, two hundred years ago, virtually nobody lived with democratic freedoms. Today, the large majority of the world’s population lives with democratic freedoms and virtually nobody is a colonist. Virtually nobody lives under colonial rule of some foreign, distant power; so we see dramatic progress in the political freedoms we enjoy, which are, after all, essential to empowering the least powerful among us, the vulnerable.

Sarah referred to people who are voiceless. Democracy is a deeply imperfect instrument, but as Churchill said, it’s the best of the bad options available to us. We see progress in terms of reduced deaths from conflict. Sarah described a really brutal conflict that has been taking place in Northeast Nigeria and in surrounding areas of neighboring countries, and it is important to recognize and decry and to combat violence in all its forms. But we’re actually seeing progress. We are today, in historic terms, near all-time record lows in rates of violent death from military and civilian conflicts. Just within the lifetimes of many in this audience, we’ve seen remarkable drops in the rates of human death from violence. We see dramatic progress in reducing child mortality; [*indicates the slide*] this plots the distribution across the world of child mortality rates. The top curve in red is the global distribution of child mortality rates in the 1800s, and it’s hard to imagine one out of three children dying, but that was the norm not really so long ago. Indeed, when I was born, the child mortality rate in the United States was exactly the same as today’s child mortality rate in Nepal. We’ve seen remarkable progress worldwide. We still see unnecessarily high child mortality rates and maternal mortality rates in many parts of the

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world, but the progress here is nothing short of remarkable. It is doable. We can reduce child deaths still further. We see rising education around the world, rising literacy rates. We've gone from one in eight people being literate to one in eight people being illiterate in a relatively short time span. We see incredibly rapid increases in life expectancy; notice the curves on the far lower right for places like Ethiopia, which Archbishop Tomasi knows well. We're seeing increases in human longevity that are remarkable and, at a somewhat basic arithmetic level, directly a product of an improved child survival rate. When you survive your preschool years, you're much more likely to have a high longevity. We've seen dramatic reductions in extreme poverty around the world, especially over the last couple of generations. The transition in China is nothing short of remarkable. It doesn't come without its own problems, but the real resolution of grinding poverty, of mass starvation, is something we need to celebrate and that we can replicate. The crucial part of recognizing and celebrating progress is to know we can replicate this.

Let me give you a closing example of progress in reducing deaths from natural disasters.

[*SLIDE: Technological and Institutional Advances Work!*]

I want to flag something in the slide for you. In the 1920s you see that there is a large blue space, representing deaths associated with droughts. And now look at the rightmost bar, the most current data. Basically, nobody dies from drought-related emergencies today. The reasons for that are improvements in institutions. We have private voluntary organizations that have become incredibly effective at humanitarian response, especially to slow-onset disasters, as we term them. Earthquakes and things like that hit very quickly, and we still have a hard time protecting people. With droughts, though, we have advance warning and we've basically solved the most egregious problem of droughts, which is people dying from them the way that Steinbeck described in this country less than a hundred years ago. The progress in institutions and communications and financial instruments to solve drought problems is really remarkable, and it's the sort of thing that encourages us, because we can't stop the rain from not falling, but we can stop people from dying when the rain doesn't fall. That's a really crucial

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bit of progress.

We need to beware of growing complacent. The greatest example of this that I can think of is the complacency in the global food system. Many of you are aware that in the late 1960s, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to, of all people, a plant breeder, Norman Borlaug, who was credited with sparking the Green Revolution: the tremendous scientific revolution in plant genetic material that averted mass starvation in the face of rapid population growth. Borlaug was credited with keeping a billion people alive through better crop production. The successes of the Green Revolution induced governments around the world to dramatically reduce their investments in agricultural research and development and extension. But the thing about an agricultural system as an ecosystem is that the pressures, the pathogens, the pests—are constantly evolving. If you do not keep up the research, you will fall behind. It's essentially a treadmill system: you've got to be running in order to stay in place, and the failure to invest in agricultural research, development, and extension through the 70s and 80s—in the wake of the great successes of the Green Revolution—led to declining productivity rates and, ultimately, to the price spikes that we saw earlier in 2007, 2008, and in 2011, 2012. These led to violence, food riots, and a sharp increase in poverty and malnutrition, ultimately due to complacency about combating the challenge of adequate food production.

Moreover, the challenges we face today are a little bit tougher. It's relatively challenging to take care of places like Sarah just described to you. Nature doesn't treat them well. There's unreliable rainfall, the soils are relatively poor in quality, the state hasn't done a good job, they don't provide good roads, they don't provide reliable police protection; there are a whole host of confluences that combine to mean that where poverty exists today, it's increasingly concentrated in space. We see this primarily today in sub-Saharan Africa. Just twenty-five years ago, only about a quarter of the world's ultra-poor—those who live at half of the extreme poverty line, so ninety cents per person per day—only about a quarter of them lived in Africa. Today, more than eighty percent live in sub-Saharan Africa. This is where we find the world's most pressing, most complex emergencies. I use the term complex emergencies quite intentionally, because violence is a common part of the emergencies we face in extreme poverty. Places

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like northeastern Nigeria, places like Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen—four locations that have been declared in famine or near-famine by the United Nations. This is the first time since the United Nations' creation that we've had four different famine or near-famine conditions in the world. The challenges are increasingly complicated, increasingly spatially concentrated, increasingly remote—but still doable. They're doable when we empower the poor. The core problem is these places are in what we term “poverty traps”—places where the poor have a hard time accelerating their own investment and development, so they become quite tragically and ironically agents of their own poverty. Their own behaviors, which are appropriate behaviors in their context, wind up continuing the immiseration of their families.

There are a lot of different mechanisms behind this. I have an entire book coming out this year on the economics of poverty traps, but the key principle is: it takes money to make money. Very poor people can't afford a good diet for their children, they can't afford to send their children to school, they have to send them off to work instead. They're suffering stress—stress that we know manifests itself in elevated cortisol levels that impede their productivity and their cognitive function. There are a lot of different mechanisms behind this, but the core thing is: poverty begets poverty. We have to enhance the entitlements of the poor, their ability to secure their own and their children's future safely and reliably, and we know from lots of evidence that this actually induces investments and the sorts of rapid exits from poverty we saw in those macro numbers I just showed.

What is the key entitlement people need? It's their labor power. This is why slavery is the most egregious of all sins in human society, because to deny people the ability to control their own time, their labor power, their thought, is to deprive them of the one asset that even the landless have. If you have no bank account, if you have no land, no vehicles, no livestock, but you at least control your own labor power, you have the possibility of being able to work yourself to a better condition. The labor productivity of the poor is the most essential thing that we need to address. This fits very nicely with the integral human development concept, because it's all about education, it's about health, it's about nutrition, it's about relationships. It's about people's ability to be productive because they have the freedoms

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and the talent and the physical and cognitive potential, as well as the relationships to flourish and realize their full God-given potential. We have to promote the poor's access. Once you give them the freedoms in the basic production ability, the basic assets including human capital, to generate a reasonable standard of living for themselves, you have to give them the ability to turn that into something else; to express their desires, to enjoy culture, to express their desire to read books through exchange. None of us can produce everything that we wish to consume, that's why trade is so important. But that requires markets to work effectively and fairly. When markets are controlled by powerful individuals exercising monopoly powers, people cannot get ahead, because all the gains from trade are extracted by the powerful. We need people to be able to exchange across time, through finance. That's what finance is. It's trading savings today for spending tomorrow, or borrowing today for repayment tomorrow, or a premium payment today for an insurance payout. Someday in the future, when something bad happens: finance is giving us the ability to make exchanges across time and across people.

Access to finance, access to technologies like the Green Revolution, technologies for small farmers, access to safety nets that protect them in the event of misfortune—these are the essential things to empower the poor to really flourish. Technology is really at the heart of this. The one quibble I have with *Laudato Si'*, which is a document I love and treasure, is it conveys to people a mistaken fear of technology. But technology is deeply empowering for the poor. I've never met a farmer in rural Africa—most of my work is in remote areas of rural Africa—I've never met a farmer who doesn't want better seed, who wouldn't welcome having some machinery, wouldn't welcome having access to irrigation or other forms of technology. We have good evidence that simple technologies, like mobile banking applications on one's phone—a brilliant study done by economists at MIT in Georgetown last year could put a number on it for us that that one technology, one platform in one place in Kenya, brought nearly two hundred thousand households out of extreme poverty. That's a remarkable number for a single, localized technology. This is doable. Technology is our friend. We have to be careful about the use of technologies and use them appropriately, but we need to promote the access of the poor to technologies that can help them.

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Finally, I want to emphasize the important role of diversity, because exchange is ultimately how people get ahead. We cannot produce everything we need. Diversity is an asset, is a blessing, is a source of productivity in nature. This is a simple graphic from a paper a few of us published in 2016: it shows the relationship between biodiversity, tree species diversity, and the productivity of forests around the world. Notice that this is a steadily increasing function. It is increasing at decreasing rates, but is nevertheless a steadily increasing function of the diversity of a forest. As forests go, so go people. We do better in diverse communities and the key here is community in two different forms. The first is community that integrates us, that allows us to interact with one another; that's important for preventing violence. Some of you may be aware that the Fulbright Scholarship program was named after Bill Fulbright, a former senator from Arkansas, who was so horrified by the ravages of World War II and then Korea, that he set about creating a set of bilateral exchange programs so that leading young people from the United States and other countries can get to know each others' culture. They can build relationships, they can build friendships. His underlying hypothesis was: If we build those relationships, we will never see world war again. That was the fundamental premise of the Fulbright Scholarship.

That's community. Community is also there for gains from trade, from exchange, but it's essential also that it be about solidarity, that we stand with the poor. Archbishop Tomasi referred to robots. Robots will take some people's jobs. We have to make sure that we can credibly commit to protect the well-being of those who might lose from change, whether it's technological change or policy change like trade liberalization, that will put a few people out of work. You have to make sure that they don't suffer, that the aggregate gains truly get shared universally—that's part of community. Immigration, I would argue, is the single biggest example of this. We all stand to benefit from diversity, but we've got to do so in a way that ensures everybody benefits.

Let me just close by remarking that there's been phenomenal progress in the world, in my lifetime. The progress in human flourishing is demonstrable across a lot of different indicators. It's something we need to celebrate, something we need to focus on, because it underscores the potential we

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have to permanently eradicate extreme poverty in all its forms in the world within a generation. This is feasible but not easy, and the places where we have to combat this now are the places where it is hardest to get the job done. But a central piece of combating poverty and its most egregious forms and promoting human flourishing is to promote human relationships and community solidarity, integration exchange and a healthy appreciation for the many benefits we enjoy from diversity. These are foundational concepts in economics, as much as some non-economists might struggle to believe it. These are things that economists celebrate. We celebrate diversity, we celebrate integration, and we do as Ted Schultz articulated in his opening sentence: we believe in a preferential option for the poor. These are tremendous opportunities to advance human flourishing. The sort of community we have here has the opportunity to do so. Thank you very much. [*audience applause*]



The Father: Who is He?

*Being a father, having a father in the experience of **Dominic Aquila**, Provost, University of Saint Thomas; **Camil Martinez**, PhD candidate in Supply Chain and Logistics; and **Paul Vitz**, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at New York University. Moderated by **Steven Brown**, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, Catholic University of America*

Introduction

“One cannot be a father, a generator, if he has no father. Not if ‘he had,’ but if he ‘has’ no father. Because if you have no father, it is not an event, it is not an encounter, it is not a generation. The generation is a present act. You cannot be a generator unless, and to the extent that, you have a father, you are generated. None generates unless he is generated. Having a father means, first, feeling valued. Feeling valued now, now, now! Whoever felt valued, but does not feel valued now, loses the experience of being generated by a father. But in order to feel valued now, one has to sacrifice himself—do you understand?—lose himself. Second, it means having the willingness to depend, affectivity as dependence. Third, it means obeying as the form of creativity. This concept of fatherhood is the most fought by the Enlightenment culture, which originates in the Renaissance and post-Renaissance culture. This is where the religious sense is at stake. Therefore, this is where the possibility of building something new in the world is at stake.”

Luigi Giussani, *Notes from a conversation with a group of consecrated people*, June 1, 1997



Steven Brown: On behalf of the organizers of the New York Encounter, I

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would like to welcome all of you to this session entitled, “The Father: Who is He?” My name is Steve Brown. I’m Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies and a professor of Mechanical Engineering at the Catholic University of America, and I’m also the father of six children who range in age from twenty-two to eleven. If I think back to the time before I had these children, I guess it never occurred to me to ask the question, What is a father? One day I simply woke up and found myself a father. Sitting here today, I asked myself, How is it that I’ve learned to be a father? I think I could have read a book about how to be a father, *Fatherhood for Dummies* or something like that; but it seems to me that would be incomplete and not very helpful. Instead, if I look, what I’ve done through life is look at how other people have been fathers. First of all, I’ve been a son to my own father. Thus, for me, first of all fatherhood means that I must be a son, and to me that means that I have to allow myself to be loved, because without being loved I simply cannot love. Said differently: I can only give that which I first have been given; thus, to love, I have to accept being a creature, accept my creatureliness, and to live my original dependence on God. Or, said differently, I must existentially live the expression from Jeremiah that was so dear to Father Giussani: “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Because it’s to recognize that, in a certain sense, I’m having a thought of God from all eternity, so to speak. That my very life is gift.

Returning once again to the birth of my own children, I guess you could say I was not any different than most fathers and that I naturally desired the best for them. But what I’ve discovered in time is that I do not determine the destiny of the child and perhaps this became most existentially clear to me at the birth of my fourth child, Carlo, who has Down Syndrome. And, while all my children have been incredible gifts, Carlo in a particular way has been an unbelievable gift, and for many reasons, not least of which is that I’ve learned through his life that to be human—that is, to be a father—is to be loved and to love. One could say that in a very mysterious way through my relationship with him, I’ve learned better what it means to love God, my wife, myself, and my other children. What one discovers through a life, particularly if one’s given the gift of a child like Carlo, is that the hopes and plans that one may have for a child tend to be for the most part reductive. That is, the destiny of the child is always greater than whatever hopes and plans I may have for the child, no matter how

good they may be in themselves. So, I've learned that to be a father is to accompany the child and his destiny. Or said differently, to accompany him in living out the plan that God has had for him, in a certain sense, from all eternity. I guess you could say that what I've discovered through the gift of Carlo and all of my children is to ask myself always, Who am I to say how healthy or sick a life may be? How long or how short of life may be? How productive or non-productive—so to speak—a life may be? How rich or how happy one will be? Can I give myself another instant of life? Can I give them another instant of life? Can I make them healthy? Can I make myself healthy? The obvious answer to these questions is no, because life is pure gift. For me, to be a father is to existentially discover and make transparent in my life the truth of this lived experience, and thus, in this way, communicate to the child the truth of this fact also for his life. And so today, me, personally, what I hope from this panel is that I learn more and more what it is to be a father from these three fantastic and illustrious panelists sitting here.

I'm now going to introduce them all together, then we'll have them each individually speak. To my far left and your far right is Dr. Paul Vitz. He's a senior scholar and professor at the Institute for the Psychological Sciences in Arlington, Virginia, and professor emeritus at New York University. He obtained his PhD from Stanford University. He devoted his entire professional life to the integration of Christian theology and Catholic anthropology with psychology. He is the author of numerous books and articles. He's married to Evelyn Birge Vitz, best-known as "Timmie," and they have six grown children. Here it says eighteen, but you told me twenty-one grandchildren, correct? Yeah, twenty-one grandchildren.

And then to my immediate left, Dominic Aquila. He and Diana, his wife of thirty-four years, are proud parents of eleven children and grandparents of three. He's a professor of history at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas, and from 2008 to 2017 he served as the university's provost, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Dean of Graduate Studies. During his thirty-five-year career in higher education, he has also served as a faculty member at a number of other colleges and universities, across a range of disciplines, including: art history, business ethics, great books, history, humanities, management, marketing, music, political

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science, and theater. Before his career in higher education, Dr. Aquila was a professional musician in New York City and held administrative positions in the American Symphony Orchestra, the Rochester Philharmonic, and Garth Fagan's dance theater.

Here in the middle is Camil Martinez. She was born in Puerto Rico and moved to New York City in 2008. She holds an Industrial Engineering degree from Case Western University and has worked as an engineer for Hewlett-Packard and British Petroleum. She has also taught mathematics in high school in New York, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Supply Chain and Logistics at the University of Maryland. I'd like to welcome all three of you.

We're going to begin with Dr. Vitz.

Paul Vitz: Hello everybody. I'd like to thank CL for this invitation, which is both a pleasure and an honor. My talk this morning will be divided into two parts: one focused on the research and psychology relevant to the importance of fathers in the family; and the other will be an address that I haven't tried before, in which I discussed the relevance of fathers and fatherhood to what might be called the identity crisis that so many people in the world today seem to be facing. To begin, I have a lot of research on the importance of fathers, but I can't go into that in detail to talk about the authors, methodologies, and so on. Instead, I'm going to just highlight the major findings. I can do that in roughly ten minutes before I get to the second half. If anyone is really interested in all the references and things of that kind, you can get in touch with me and I will email you more than you probably will like to read. [*audience laughter*]

To begin, I think that most people recognize that in this culture, and in many parts of the world, there is a family crisis. I think most of us understand that a significant part of that family crisis has been the crisis of fatherhood. Namely, the absence of fathers in so many of our families. One of the things that we now need to come to grips with is the clear evidence of the importance of fathers. And fathers and young men need to know about this, to understand their own calling. I think all men are called to be fathers—fathers in some way. That doesn't necessarily mean

natural fathers; you can be called as a mentor, as a leader, as a coach. There are many ways, of course, but men's masculinity reaches its highest form when it's expressed in the loving guidance and attention of a father. I will talk mostly about research concerning biological fatherhood, though one may be a father in many ways. It's probably one of the best-demonstrated empirical findings in social science literature, namely, the importance of fathers for their children. It's also one of the least-known in our culture, and one of the least-known kinds of intelligence and understanding, one of the least-known in our media and popular society.

First, research has overwhelmingly shown that the presence of the father is extraordinarily significant, not only for the mother, but also for the children. What are the major findings? The commonest finding for boys who are raised without fathers is there's a much higher increase of criminal behavior and juvenile delinquency; you get boys ending up in prison and using drugs. Now, the use of drugs and involvement in criminal behavior is found in studies in the United States, studies in Great Britain, studies in South America, studies in Europe, studies in Asia. This is a universal phenomenon.

In the United States we have a very high prison population, so the social cost of boys being raised without fathers is enormous. Not only is it the cost of keeping them in prison every year, which is equivalent to the cost of a private education, but it's the cost of all those blighted lives. Remember that one of the major common findings is that fatherless boys are much more likely to get involved in criminal behavior and in drug use. A second very important finding is that children without fathers are much more vulnerable to emotional illness. This is apparently especially true of daughters; depression is much commoner in daughters who grew up without fathers. It's also mental illness of other kinds, also more common in boys. A second aspect of the absence of the father is the statistical average of greater psychological problems, depression, and so on. A third consequence of being raised without fathers—and for which there's a good deal of research—is lower cognitive skills. The children whose fathers are absent have generally lower IQ scores. They don't do as well in school, they don't graduate as often, they're much more likely to leave school. Children without fathers are four times less likely to succeed at getting a job. It's

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amazing: the absence of the father leads to not just criminal and drug behavior—I haven't gone into all the stuff on drugs, but you can imagine that, and sometimes alcohol—but it also leads to emotional and cognitive deficits.

The research concerning fathers who are present shows essentially the opposite. They show that when fathers are present, the child is much more likely to graduate, much more likely to do well in school, much more likely to get higher cognitive scores, and to get a job. One of the problems today in our society is the presence of young men who are in prison. Some people have called our prisons boarding houses for fatherless children. There's a social cost that goes with that.

Fatherless daughters tend to be sexually active at an earlier age, they seem to look for affirmation from male figures. This fourteen-year-old girl thinks that an eighteen-year-old man is a father figure, and they start getting involved in sexual behavior; she gets pregnant, she gets an abortion, or maybe she raises the child as a single mother, and all sorts of positive futures for her life have been removed. Those are some of the negative effects of not having a father present. One of the other effects found in cultural studies, some fifty or sixty of them all over the world, is that when fathers are present in the family, the mothers do a better job at mothering. Having another parent around helps, right? The morale of mothers is much higher because the fathers agrees that children and in particular *their* children are important; and when their morale is better they do a better job of mothering.

What are the major reasons one might think that fathers make a big difference? Let me summarize them. It turns out that fathers are the primary source of the children's self-regulation. They learn to inhibit bad behavior, and—particularly with boys—they learn to inhibit aggression and sexuality. And the father doesn't have to be some big whiz of a psychologist; he can be your typical truck driver, who says to the son, "Don't talk to your mother like that, she's my wife, or I'll beat you up!" [*audience laughter*] Well, he learns two things from that: to respect his mother and to start inhibiting his aggression. Young men need to learn to inhibit their natural aggressive tendencies. I'll tell a little story about something analogous. An

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experiment happened by accident in South Africa in one of the big national parks. They had a lot of young bull elephants and didn't know what to do with them, so they took the bull elephants who were young and separated them out and put them in a huge area of the park by themselves. In a little while, they noticed that these young bull elephants were extraordinarily aggressive; they started killing rhinos, and rhinos are a protected species. They started digging up and knocking down trees, and fighting with each other, and the authorities didn't know what was going on. One smart ranger said, "Let's go get the old bull elephants and bring about ten or twenty of those and put them in there." And they did that. Just the presence of those older bulls dampened down the aggressive expression of the younger bulls. We don't know how that was communicated in elephantspeak, but it was communicated. Maybe it was, you know, "Don't talk to your mother like that or I'll beat you up!" [*audience laughter*] But self-regulation is extraordinarily important for children to learn. There is now research showing that self-regulation is more important in school success than IQ. More important. So that's one thing fathers do.

Fathers are also a major source of gender identity for boys; that's how they learn to be a man—by looking at their father. They know they're different from their mother, but they don't know who they are unless the father is there, or a father figure to model after. They also help girls; if the father is affectionate and supportive of the daughter, she doesn't have to go looking for some kind of male affirmation when she hits fourteen. Fathers are very important in that way. There are two basic tasks that children of all kinds have. They have to separate and individuate from the mother, and they have to learn their sexual identity. I've already mentioned that the sexual identity is very important in terms of the father's role, but children have to learn to separate from their mother and individuate, and become individuals of a distinct kind. The fathers help very much in this, particularly with daughters who naturally tend to be more merged and connected to their mothers, and so the fathers help the daughters separate from the mother, and in all cases help daughters and sons to deal with the outside world more. They may take them camping, or fishing, to the office, or whatever, but fathers take the child into the outside world and give them a link there.

And finally, fathers are known to be—in the Christian world, at least, but

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perhaps even generally—fathers are known to be the major passers-on of religion, even more than the mothers. Fatherless families lose their religion much more significantly than those that have fathers. That's part of the world that fathers bring to their families.

One of the things a father brings to his children is the identity of the child in the social sense. Who am I? Children want to know who their father was, and who their grandfather was, and what they're part of in terms of a personal family-based identity. They're very important at that, but at present in our culture and in the world, we're having a huge identity crisis. Why is that? One part is the absence of fathers, but there's more. There's an identity crisis because of the disintegration of the family. In some cases, even the mother isn't present. In some cases, because of divorce and things like that, you don't know who your family is. The father isn't there for identity, the family isn't there for identity, other things aren't there for identity. We don't have regional identity. I used to know people who were proud they were from Virginia and others who were prouder still that they were from Louisiana. Those regional identities are gone.

Patriotism is declining. People who are immigrants have an identity problem, and there are lots of immigrants in the world today. They don't know quite yet: Are they part of the new place they're in, or are they still from the old place? We have an enormous identity crisis and this will lead to identity politics. We've all seen the effects of identity politics; it leads one group to be hostile to another. How can we find unity? How can we find the unity that this conference is supposed to promote or to discover? I would say that one way we can discover it is to understand that we are all children of God. We are all children of God, we are all in the same family. And if you don't have a father, then the Church offers you many father figures. Your priests, the saints, St. Joseph, many father figures, and of course, our Lord. We offer other members of the family, too. We offer Our Lady; we offer in her the mother that maybe many people didn't have. This brings us together in the sense of all being part of one family and at the same time we're as diverse as can be. We're speaking different languages, we're from different ethnic groups, different cultures, different histories—but because we're all of one family and have our identity there, we don't have to be engaged in identity politics. My identity is not that I'm

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American, or British, or from Puerto Rico, or Colombia, or wherever. We are part of the single family of God. Thank you. [audience applause]

Dominic Aquila: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for being here. I want to especially express gratitude to Angelo Sala and all those who organized this conference. We do something on a much smaller scale in Houston from time to time, and I know what kind of work goes into this. The amount of attention to detail here and hospitality are truly amazing. Thank you all for that. If there's a theme to what I'm going to say, it comes from a movie you may remember: *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Which is a kind of modern retelling of *The Odyssey*, which is also a kind of metaphor for my life, and of my life together with my wife and children. There's a moment in the film when the George Clooney character, after an enormous amount of frustration, says, "Am I not the damned paterfamilias?" [audience laughter] He had to assert his role. Well, it is what it is, but my kids picked that up and they would play it back to me from time to time, and call me the damn paterfamilias.

In a way, speaking about my experience of fatherhood, I'm an anomalous example. I tend to subscribe to this cliché: the way you do anything is the way you do everything. I do things with great intensity, so even becoming first a husband to my wonderful wife Diane, and then a father, I thought seriously about the role, especially the educative role. And I'm an academic. One of the things that I wanted to do from the outset is make my professional life and my family life as seamless as possible, because as Dr. Vitz said, it's very important for people to see—for sons and daughters to see—their father's work.

I remember how valuable that was to me. My father worked as a civilian for the U.S. Army. How important it was for me to visit his place of work a couple of times a year. It was very important because he goes away for most of the day and then comes back. Where does he go? That was very important, and I wanted to build that into our life. The life of an academic is a privileged life; to reverse Thorstein Veblen's famous book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, I always said, it's the leisure of the theory class. [audience laughter] And so you have a life, a professional life, that enables you to spend more time with your family, but because of the nature of the work

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I was always able to have my family see the kind of work I do. And that had its ups and downs, but was mostly good. When there were frustrations professionally, sometimes my kids took it to heart; but on the other hand, when we talked about those, about how you become resilient, how you respond to those setbacks and challenges in professional life—I tried to be a model for that. As I said, both my strength and my weakness is this intensity with which I tend to do everything. I was a good Catholic boy, a product of Catholic schools in Brooklyn, had wonderful teachers and sisters and brothers all the way through. I was very serious about how a Catholic father ought to raise a family.

Dr. Vitz talked about the absence of fatherhood. I was very aware of the presence of *bad* fatherhood and how damaging that could be. I looked very in-depth at what the Catholic faith could teach me about being a father. Through that kind of conversation with my wife, we decided very early on that we would homeschool our kids. That is kind of anomalous; not everyone can do that. For me and my wife, what that meant was that the education of our children, which the Catholic Church teaches is a primary function of parents, was going to be a serious project. I drew on the Catholic principle of subsidiarity. You may remember that that's a principle that says things are done best at the place closest to the people who are affected by it; you don't go too high to solve a problem if you can solve it lower. Education seemed to me to fall into that category. When we did home schooling back in the 1980s, we started in New York, and nobody knew what to do with homeschooling. They didn't know what to do with us. They sent us books and they said, Okay, just stay away. [*audience laughter*]

Now, of course, if you go on the Internet there's too much. But we looked at the schools and we found that even the most celebrated schools were lacking something. I wanted something as important as education to be grounded in the home. And the principle of subsidiarity meant that, in the home, Diana and I would take care of the education of our children until we couldn't. Each one, each of the eleven, is unique; they are all very, very, different. But we get to see how they develop, what their talents are, what their interests are, and moves them in a direction. Some of them did go to regular school for a little bit; some didn't. It was a very serious

responsibility to be the primary educators. I'm not gonna outsource that responsibility. Instead, I took the responsibility and then, depending on each of my kids' needs, would send them to schools if necessary—or not. My wife wound up developing a number of successful cooperatives, parent cooperatives. This was a great experience because parents who didn't have certain skills could rely on other parents.

Your first example is of your own father. I came from a very tight-knit Italian-American family in a very tight-knit neighborhood, so I got wonderful examples not only of how my father took responsibility for me, but of how other men also were interested in me. And they weren't getting paid to do it. The baseball coach, a man who dedicated his life to just making sure that kids my age—late, early teens—would be able to play the game of baseball, have good sportsmanship, and that's all he cared about. He had a job, but that was his interest. The great priests and brothers that taught me—I saw how they mentored and how serious they were about that.

Drawing on those examples and then being an academic, I read the history of the family and found that it's always been the case that in good families, mothers and fathers—particularly fathers—had to identify other people in the community who would also be invited in to mentor the kids. There's a wonderful book called *The Puritan Family* by a great historian, Edmund Morgan. He makes a big point of saying that in Puritan society, the identification of a child's vocation—and principally that of boys—was so important that, at the age of about thirteen or fourteen, a boy would be sent to another trusted household to make sure and check whether this vocational aspiration the boy had was good or not. From that example, and by observing my own growing up, and then by reading academic literature, I gradually learned how to exercise my fatherhood. The experience of fatherhood for me—and this gets better all the time—is I become a student of my kids. Because they have developed their own interests and have become better at things than I am. One of the greatest joys I have is having them come back and teach me, or talk about me, have them recommend books that I should read, recommend music that I should listen to, or an artist that I should be looking at. That kind of reciprocity. The joy of having your kids come back and take their position as responsible adults in society.

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I can't think of anything more rewarding than that.

My oldest son now is now thirty-three. They all go down in age about every two years, all the way to my youngest daughter, Camela, who is about fourteen. Every time there's a new kid born into the family, things change right? The dynamics. It's a community that was one way yesterday, and tomorrow it'll be something different. The community of friendships is different, and that is an enormous reward.

Finally, I would like to say that I and my wife have always been fortunate to be in supportive communities, and our reliance on the Catholic Church, the faith, has been an enormous help. I really believe that we couldn't have been the mother and father that we are without our deep faith and commitment to our community. We've traveled a lot; the life of an academic is itinerant, and so I dragged my family from New York all the way to Houston, and to all the many stops in the Midwest. But it was the fact that we held together as a family—and homeschooling helped—that made the transition possible. I would say again that my situation, Diane's situation, and my work, are anomalous. Not everyone homeschools. That has been, I think, a very positive development in our life, but now we're at the point of asking, How many others can enjoy the benefits of this if you can't homeschool? What about this notion of subsidiarity? And having parents, especially fathers, take note that the responsibility of education is really a serious one, and you don't mindlessly outsource it to the state or anybody else. It's something you have to constantly be involved in, and not for the sake of just getting ahead, getting into the right schools, but to make sure you get an education that is going to be worthy of a human being. Thank you.

[*audience applause*]

Camil Martinez: I am clearly not a father, so I'm going speak as a daughter. My name is Camil Martinez, and Monsignor Lorenzo Albacete was my father, and I was his favorite. [*audience laughter*] If you're in the audience and you were fathered by him, too, you're probably thinking that's crazy, that you were his favorite, and you'd be right. Because the first thing to know about Lorenzo is that he had such a capacity to love you for who

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you were, that you would feel so preferred, like he made you feel like you were his favorite person in the world. He loved and preferred every single one of us that God gave him to father. And we are so many. Although I had met him before, my relationship with him developed here in New York. I belong to the movement of Communion and Liberation and so did he. I came to New York to follow the path of my vocation. I lived here in New York for four years in a house of people that dedicate their lives to Christ, and he was an authority figure for that house. Therefore, he was an authority figure for my vocation. He called our house the “House of the Virgins in Bronxville,” which we allowed only him to say.

He was often at our house, because more than anything he shared his life with us. We had privileges, like, driving him around, which in my case meant putting him in a panic every time, because I am always lost and he was always afraid I would get him lost. Cooking for him, having dinners with him, going to talks that he was giving, doing confession: we really shared a life with him. From the moment I arrived in New York, he became my father. He loved me from Day One, no questions asked. He didn’t know me but he loved me.

The day that I became his daughter, that one I remember perfectly. I had decided to go to confession with him, because I was struggling with confession and I thought, Well, you know, he’s a priest—he can help me. So I asked him. And then, as I arrived at the moment, I thought, No wait! What was I thinking? Because now he’s gonna see everything, he’s not gonna love me anymore; this is the worst idea I ever had. So I hesitated. As I started my confession, I told him not to look at me. I started listing my sins like, “Oh yeah, I do this, I am like this.” And he said, “Oh yeah, I do that, too!” [*audience laughter*] So, I was covering my eyes because I didn’t want him to look at me, because I was confessing all the evil things that I do, and I was, like, *What?!* And so I kept going: I do this, too, and I do that, and he said, Oh yeah, me, too. By the third time he said it, I raised my gaze and I said, “Look, is this my confession or your confession? [*audience laughter*] Because let me tell you something, absolution is going *this way* [*gestures towards herself*]; there’s nothing I can do for you.” We laughed, and then said, “This is a sacrament, a serious thing—we’re not supposed to be laughing.” [*audience laughter*] When I finished, I felt the weight of

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all my fear lift. You know, to have somebody just see everything. I thought to myself, Why was I so stupid? Instead, his answer was, “Well, now that we have discovered each other as accomplices in sin, let’s pray together so that we can always find each other as accomplices in redemption.” He said this with the most incredibly merciful gaze I have ever seen. This is the gaze that entered my life. The mercy of somebody who sees everything and comes with you—no claim, no scandal—comes with you to discover redemption.

This is the gaze that I would try to describe to you today. Lorenzo was not afraid of anything, even as he was in a panic about everything. He was very easy to put in a panic. He was a hypochondriac, so every other day he was convinced that he had the latest cancer that had been discovered, and that he was suddenly gonna die. But he would never go to the doctor, because, “Why would you go to the doctor? They’re only gonna discover that there’s something wrong with you.” [*audience laughter*] He was obsessed with his own death. He told me once that when he was thirty-three, he spent the whole year thinking that some catastrophic event was gonna happen to him because Jesus died at thirty-three—so of course he would, too. There was no way to make him do an effort he was convinced was unnecessary. Driving him around, he would drive me crazy, because you basically had to put him inside the building he was going to—in Manhattan! I would go nuts.

There was no way to justify any kind of effort—suffering was not right; it was just not. He was obsessed with the weather, so hurricanes were madness. I am convinced that as Hurricane Maria was striking Puerto Rico, he was telling somebody in heaven, “I knew it! I knew it!” There was no way you could make him think that it was okay to suffer; and yet, he was the person who accepted suffering in the freest, most incredible way I have ever seen. If he was convinced that Christ was asking it, he would accept anything. There was absolutely no question. The only reason for suffering was the Cross of Christ; to love Christ. If it made you love Christ, he would do anything. One time I went to him to complain because I was exhausted from the cultural and vocational shock I was experiencing here in New York. I was living with Americans and with Italians, I was doing a job I had never done before—I was just exhausted. I went to him and

complained about everything and everyone, and then at the end I said, “Why do I have to be so problematic? Why can’t I just be easygoing?” And he answered me: “You know, the Church is always going through a conversion from the particular to the universal. God has chosen the flesh, and so everything has to start in a carnal particular way; but then, it has to become Catholic, and to become for everyone, it has to go through a pain in the flesh, too, because you have to let go of what is not essential, and this is always suffered in the flesh.” He said, “What you’re suffering is the universality of the Church; would you do this for Jesus with that gaze again?” When he told me this, it was clear to me that there was no space for “me versus them,” cultural differences—these were all secondary things. The only thing that matters is that you do things for a greater love. The question is always, Who do you love?

Another time, I was reading the life of St. Teresa of Avila—he had suggested it—and when I arrived at the mystical episodes I got really scared. I was like, This woman is kind of crazy. She’s talking to Jesus. Jesus tells her what to do, she does it. So I asked him, “How does the Church know she just wasn’t crazy? I mean, out of all of the crazy people throughout history that have claimed to talk to Jesus, how do you know the true one?” And he said to me, “Your problem is that you think crazy has nothing to do with Christ; that that is an objection.” [*audience laughter*] And he said, “Think about what you’re saying. If Christ cannot win over crazy, then there is a space of the experience of humanity that He cannot conquer and win over, and so sanctity and crazy are not mutually exclusive. For all we know, she could have been crazy, because Jesus can use a certain state of mind to get into a relationship with you. So yeah, she might have been crazy. Who cares?”

Lorenzo was as funny as he was serious and passionate about life, so you have to understand that he was Puerto Rican. We have a certain incapacity to stay serious. I mean, we dance when we suffer, we sing when we weep. It’s enough to watch some videos after Hurricane Maria, where people are dancing on the street as they wait nine hours for two gallons of gas. And he was the most Puerto Rican of us all, so he was really funny but his jokes were always serious. It was the way that he processed things, so the funnier the joke, the deeper he was going, and we were educated as we laughed.

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One day we were at the house and we were waiting to have a meeting, so it was just the two of us in a room. He suddenly, and with his serious face, asked me, “What language do you think that Mary speaks to the Trinity when they talk?” I was like, What? Who thinks of these things and how am I supposed to know?

He said, “Well, she’s human, so they have to communicate in a human way. Humans speak, so what language?” Then he told me he was convinced they spoke in Puerto Rican Spanish [*audience laughter*] and he started what could have been an incredible skit, making episodes for me of Jesus’ childhood and Jesus as a teenager, as Mary was asking him to do errands, speaking like a Puerto Rican mother. I was on the floor laughing, but he would often do that. He had so many Gospel jokes. If you knew him, you have heard his versions of the blind man and the shepherd who left ninety-nine sheep, and my favorite, the Annunciation. But these jokes will make you understand that he was constantly thinking about Jesus, and he was constantly trying to understand: What does He mean that He’s flesh now?

The Incarnation was definitely the fascination of Lorenzo’s life. Lorenzo was a man who had the desire of all things and preferred God above everything. This point is crucial to understand who he was, because there was no moralism in this man, absolutely no moralism. He desired everything. In his obedience, which was his life, was a total preference for God. For him, desire was crucial because he kept discovering in life that God was just more attractive, and this was it.

I have two examples of this. Every year when I was with him he was invited to speak at the Rimini Meeting, and every year he wouldn’t answer if he was going or not, which drove people crazy—also us. So one time, kind of annoyed, I asked him, “Why don’t you answer those poor people? You know you’re in no condition to travel. You know you’re not going, so why don’t you just tell them?” He was sad. I had hurt him. He looked at me and said, “You know, I was somebody. I used to go around the world speaking, and people would listen to what I had to say. Thousands of people would wait for me and would wait to see what I had to say, and I loved it. I really enjoyed it. But what I have come to discover of Christ”—these few years were tough years; he was going through a lot of suffering and couldn’t

travel anymore—“even considering the things that I have lost, I would not change anything, for what I have learned from Christ. I have come to know Him in a particular way, and if this is the price I have to pay, I am happy to never go again. But why won't you let me dream? As long as I don't answer, I keep thinking that maybe I can go.”

That day, I saw a man whose obedience had always been so glad that it had given me the impression that he didn't care about these things. Instead, I now understood that he was letting them go. He was constantly letting go. The last time I saw him, he was in the hospital dying. He was full of desire in the hospital. He kept telling me that we should go dancing, and that we should go to Puerto Rico and eat some pig, and he kept asking me for Puerto Rican candy. He wanted to eat, he wanted to dance, he wanted to go out; he was full of desire, but he was completely aware that he was dying and was at peace with that. It took me a moment. I was confused. I didn't understand how these two things could go together. It was the only time I saw that restless heart at peace. I understood that he did not want to say when he was dying that he was merely waiting for God to come; his waiting was full of life, full of desire. I understood that I want to live the way that I saw him die. But this peace was deep in his heart, his crazy personality was there until the end. He kept telling me in the hospital, “Take me out of here, I have things to do, let's go out.” And I kept saying, “Yeah, let's go.” He kept saying it, and I kept saying it, till at a certain point he got angry at me and said, “Why aren't you doing anything? I'm telling you, get me out of here.” I was holding his hand, which I was often doing. It was the affectionate gesture that I had developed towards him. I was holding his hand and I looked at him, and said, “You know I can't take you out of here.” And he said, “Well, why not?” And I said, “Because you know very well that right now it's your task to be on this bed, and it's my task to be holding this hand, and there's nothing else to do here.” He looked at me in fury and said, “Well, who the hell would want that?” [*audience laughter*] I said, “Yeah, we were always the rebels. Obedience was never a fascination was it? But it is what we do, isn't it?” He looked at me with that incredible gaze again. He never asked me again to get him out. I stayed there holding his hand until it was time for me to go. That was the last time I saw him.

This is who he was, and this is who he taught me to be. We had indeed

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become accomplices in redemption, because that is the way he always treated me. There was a mysterious battle going on inside of Lorenzo, and it was clear to me that Christ was winning. The hardest thing about loving the freedom of somebody is to let them be that intimate relationship with the Mystery. We are not invited to intervene. I saw him: he was suffering, he was dying, and I wished I could make it stop. You wish you can make God change His mind, just to make it stop, but he had taught me to trust God, to respect the freedom of God, and to just let God do what He had to do, because that's where He comes to me. I understood that this was the only thing I had to do with Lorenzo, too.

To finish, I sincerely hope that one day the victory that I saw in those days can shine through my eyes when God wants, because life and death with Lorenzo was the adventure to discover that Christ wins, over and over again. His absolute love for Christ was a love that I participated in, and when you have been part of a love like that, you're free. This is Christianity. The father is the one who teaches you to be truly free. Thank you.



An "Impossible" Beauty

A conversation on the Encounter's theme with Etsuro Sotoo, sculptor at Sagrada Familia, and John Waters, author

Introduction

“A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it, bearing with him the image of a cathedral.”

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Pilote de guerre*, 1942



John Waters: Good afternoon. My name is John Waters. I'm very happy to be here again and I often find it interesting that when the enemies of the Church want to attack the Church, they almost always begin with attacking the beauty that the Church generates in the world. And they demand that the Church relinquish its so-called wealth and its riches, its property; this is where a Church beats its chalices into sausages. I come from a poor family in the West of Ireland, a small town, and we lived, six of us, in two rooms. Very basic conditions: no electricity, no running water, linoleum on the floors. As a child I was embarrassed to bring my friends back to our house; but there was one other house we could enter in town without question and never be asked to leave. And that was St. Patrick Church on Patrick Street. We could walk in there anytime and kneel down or walk around, and nobody would ask, Why are you here? It was our house also. This is the most beautiful building in the town. That's where we learned, that's where I intuited the greatness that I come from. A writer, an Irish writer named John McGahern says the Church was his first book; it was also my first book. It introduced me to the world, but also to what is beyond the world. The Church in Castlerea, my hometown, was

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very ordinary compared to the Sagrada Família, I can assure you, and yet it had the capacity to do that.

Today it is a great honor for me to be here, and to try to facilitate and help in any way I can our great guest this afternoon. To lead us on this journey, to understand where we all came from and what it all means. The Sagrada Família is really all our church. It is the greatest of our churches, you might say, the most beautiful, the most extraordinary, created in the beginning by the great genius Antoni Gaudí. Gaudí was by all accounts an extraordinary man. He was ill from birth—many, many, physical illnesses. He could not walk or run or go to school. He walked ten kilometers a day for many years to combat his illness. He had a painful, lonely life, right up to the end when he couldn't sleep horizontally in a bed. And instead of running as a child, he would look at things intently; at words, at the ivy on the trees, at the flowers. Doing this allowed him to overcome the pain of his sickness. For me, he's a mythical figure who's representing tradition, the being of tradition; the memory that we carry with us is somehow in its purest state in a mind like this. In Barcelona a few years ago, Pope Benedict XVI gave a homily in the Sagrada Família in which he said that, in the Sagrada Família, Gaudí made stones, trees, and human life part of the church, so that all creation might come together in praise of God. But at the same time, for the pope, he brought the sacred images outside, so as to place before people the mystery of God revealed in the birth, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this way, Gaudí had brilliantly helped to build our human consciousness, anchored in the world, yet opened to God, enlightened and sanctified by Christ, and in this he accomplished one of the most important tasks of our times—overcoming the division between human consciousness and Christian consciousness. Between living in this temporal world and being open to eternal life. Between the beauty of things and God as beauty. When I saw the Sagrada Família for the first time in person, I looked up at it in the light in the silhouette. It was like a mountain turned into a cathedral, or a cathedral turning into a mountain, I wasn't sure. [*audience laughter*] It was pretty well advanced in the cathedral stage, I have to say. This place is almost on the frontier between two worlds in our imagination. The world of the sacred from which we come, an idea which was once taken for granted—the meaning of reality was essentially sacred, there was no other meaning—into a future that seems destined

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to be obliterated. Yet, this is the boundary. These two worlds, almost a reality turned inside out but in a good way, so that we can stop again and understand something fundamental to ourselves.

This is the great gift that Gaudí has given us, and which our guest today, Etsuro Sotoo, continues working on, to make this eternal totem of our self-understanding more and more clear to us; more and more visible, bringing out each detail, so that we can comprehend ourselves, comprehend ourselves in this world, in this reality. A friend of mine whom I see here, Donny MacManus, said to me earlier—he's also a sculptor like Etsuro—that art is like the priesthood. The artist is a priest, and his sacrament is beauty. I would like to introduce to you today our priest, a great artist, Etsuro Sotoo.

[*audience applause*]

[*VIDEO*]

Etsuro Sotoo [*through translator*]: Thank you very much for inviting me today, John. I've wanted to know John for a long time. He's the most mysterious man after Gaudí. [*audience laughter*] Since I don't speak English, I need a translator, so my speech will be cut in half, it'll be half as long. [*audience laughter*]

I'm gonna go quickly. Before I went to Barcelona, I thought it was just a fishing town. But it's enormous, it's beautiful. After some time, I began to understand its importance and its beauty. Before coming to Barcelona, I studied at the Fine Arts University of Kyoto. I worked for one year as an art professor, but I kept chiseling away and fighting with my own professor. I was the only person who could beat him chiseling for ten hours straight and take care of and love the tools. That was the only thing that I had that was special.

I wanted to go. I wanted to go try out in that place, in the place where there was the most stone sculpturing going on, and I found a mountain of stone called the Sagrada Família. I have to admit it I didn't care about the Sagrada Família as a church nor about Gaudi. The only thing I wanted to

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do was to chisel. Today, after forty years, I give a name to that inexplicable thing: providence. You just saw the video. In 2015 I finished the gates, the doors that were missing from the facade of the Nativity. Forty years ago, I couldn't even imagine this. All this process is Someone, you can call it the Holy Spirit, who brought me here. This is the last I'm going to speak of this great project in relation to the Holy Spirit.

Today we have roofs on the Sagrada Família. Before, there was no place to hide when it rained. That's me working there. [*audience laughter*] That's me there, too. No, I don't have any safety belts on, no safety harness. I had no health insurance, either. [*audience laughter*] But I was free because each of us has to take care of his own body. I loved it. I used to pray in every single religion possible because when you're sixty meters up, nobody's gonna save you. This is the first work that they assigned to me. A sculptor forty years ago didn't chisel. Thanks to the fact that I didn't speak any Spanish or Catalan, they hired me as a sculptor because the only thing I wanted to do was to chisel. This disciple of Gaudí was thinking to himself, What do I do with this kid, a sculptor who wants to chisel? First, you make him take charge of all the chiseling. This is twenty-two meters by five meters. I had to chisel those huge blocks of stone by myself. That was my first job. It was very hard, because the stone and tools and everything else was different for me, so for that reason I didn't care about climbing up sixty meters without a safety harness. Thanks to this, though, the next job came along.

In 1936, the Spanish Civil War interrupted the work. During the war, in order to safeguard everything, they hid all these things—jewels, stones, and even the plans of Gaudí, for in a war they destroy everything. Later, Gaudí's disciple said with a very sad face that they couldn't find Gaudí's original plans. But, before dying, he said we need to restore everything as it was before and he gave me that responsibility.

There were no tourists at that time, so there was no money. This disciple of Gaudí is a really good man, a tough guy, who forced me to work for two years for a salary of two months. Well, he didn't force me. It was my choice—I wanted to do it.

As I went along working and restoring things, I was discovering the

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importance of this—that this is the testament of Gaudí. It's not only the only interior work in this church that Gaudí finished. Another name for it is temptation. The temptation of money and temptation of power. Gaudí wished that if we fall into temptation, this won't be a church.

This was my second job, but for me it was the greatest and most important study and work that I did in the church. That's why I worked for free—though I wasn't *really* working for free—because this thing would have greater and greater value as time went on. Because the true desire of Gaudí is there.

Then they asked me to finish the fifteen angels of the facade of the Nativity. This is my sculpture of an angel. People don't realize that this harp doesn't have strings. We architects are always arguing back and forth whether to put strings on the harp. Some say you can just put half and some say no, just a little, just a few. My opinion is that you don't have to put any strings, because in order to do a sculpture of strings you have to use a thick metal tube because birds create problems. Who finishes the sculpture? Who finishes the painting? Who finishes a novel? Neither the sculptor nor the author nor the painter finish. The one who finishes it is the one who knows how to observe and to enjoy these works. You are the ones who finish the work. We artists, we try and create art that is alive. To be alive means that each and every person of the millions that will come in contact with it gather its fruit. That's what it means to have a live work of art, a living work of art. It's not a work of art because it was done centuries ago, but because it's something that's always fresh, always alive. Because each and every one of us can gather its fruit. That's what I wanted to express. That's why I didn't want to put the harp chords there—you put them. But don't go up there. [*audience laughter*]

That's how I finished the facade. In each job I discover so many important things. This rosary, and especially *this* rosary, is called the Trisagion, because normally a rosary has ten beads. But the more I studied this rosary, all I could find were nine beads, not ten. This rosary was called the Trisagion rosary, the Trinity that Gaudí always carried with him.

Now we're gonna understand why it had to be a Japanese man at Sagrada

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Família. Nobody understood why Gaudí wanted to put so much fruit up at the top. I asked everyone, and was afraid of putting up Venetian mosaic glass to color the fruit up there. But according to my theory, they had to be colored because these are ripe fruits that represent our soul. Our lives, time, and space are given to ripen our souls; but we all have limited time, so when we're called, we have to offer our mature and fresh souls to heaven. Fruit that makes you want to eat it: that's what I wanted to express. That's why I colored them. For over fifty years, nobody had put any color on the church, so I was afraid of doing it. Thanks to the color, though, the visits by young people grew. Down below there are a lot of leaves. People ask, "Why did you need to put so many leaves down there?" Because when fruit ripens, the leaves fall. This was about observing nature.

You know the phrase, "In the beginning was the Word." In Japanese we write *word* with two kanji signs: speaking leaves. That's what *words* is in Japanese. We also learned from nature, so in order for people to grow and to mature, they need a lot of leaves. Just like fruit in nature. Fruit needs many, many, fresh leaves. It needs the force of them to become energy and ripen the fruit. The same with us: words that are fresh, that are alive, that have truth, that have a meaning from heaven; these words have the energy to make our souls grow. I'm sure that Gaudí never learned Japanese, but the origin in nature is the same. If the origin is the same the outcome can be the same. In the last two decades we've run out of Gaudí's instructions. Therefore I have to invent, so to speak, or think about what Gaudí would have done. For me, that was sheer hell. Even if I had a little piece of Gaudí, I could expand it; but without anything, I couldn't do anything, and that moment was a critical one for me. Gaudí didn't help me. Gaudí was looking at something else. So, I got ready to return to Japan. In that hellish moment, I thought to myself, Gaudí's not looking at me; what is he looking at? I will try and look where Gaudí is looking. In order to see where another person is looking, you need to stand in his place. Where was he? The same place as me—looking at Jesus. I stopped looking at Gaudí in order to look where he was looking. In that moment, without expecting it, without planning it, I felt as if Gaudí entered me and I began to look where Gaudí was looking. From that moment, I lost all fear.

Today, as the veteran, the most experienced older person of the team at

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Sagrada Família, I say to the younger ones, Don't be afraid. Even if we don't have the data or the information, we will always find the intention of Gaudí by looking where he is looking.

[*SLIDE: a scroll*]

Saint John's scroll. You have to take the water that comes down from the rain and send it out via a gutter through the church. I can't make Saint John have water entering in through his rear and coming out his mouth. [*audience laughter*] I have to invent something else. So, before Saint John there were seven books sent to the seven churches. One condition for being the sculptor at Sagrada Família is to never forget your childlike heart, like Gaudí himself. A child would think, What would these seven books look like? Six of the scrolls would be half-open, and the seventh would be rolled up where the water comes out.

This is Saint Matthew, the tax collector. Jesus said to him, From here on you're gonna stop collecting taxes and now collect souls. The person who had to take care of the money—but who at the same time is *not* taking care of it—has a bag that's torn, a purse that's torn. You see that water comes in this way and it comes out with coins. And that tube is there to control the water flow.

Saint Luke appears with all his tools and paint brushes. There's a little stepladder for people to go up. This tool allows the water to go on each side of the stairs. Saint Mark has a golden sheet.

I didn't come here today to sell my works. [*audience laughter*] I wanted to explain it, so you'd know that I made it not because I had instructions, but because God ordained it. Even though it didn't exist beforehand, we can find the answer of what God wants. This is my work.

This is the interior of the door you saw, and there are a lot of stone birds on the outside. Gaudí put many of them there. When you close the door, what is it? You have to hear the birds singing. These pieces are all gold leaves, musical notes of the Catalanian national song, *Song of Jose*. I'm not going to sing it for you. Whoever knows that song can sing it by reading

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the notes there.

This is the Door of Hope. Above it is the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt; and so I put many plants from Egypt there. I put a special plant from Catalunya that's very dry and called *conga*. There are lilies, too. And on the inside, you see that these leaves turn into fish; why? The night before the Holy Family fled to Egypt, the angel awoke Saint Joseph and said, You have to flee to Egypt, or otherwise your son will be killed. There are many fathers who would think, Wow, I don't have a car, I don't have a way to get there, it's midnight, I don't have money, yet I have to cross the desert. What would they think? They would need a lot of courage. In order for courage to come about, we need hope. Imagining the Red Sea of Egypt, Joseph thinks to himself, We will be safe when we get there. He didn't know that for certain, so it was truly hope. By saving that one child, Jesus, many, many Christians were later born. It's full of the Red Sea. This is what I wanted to express. Even a poor man who needs only a slight hope can become the great hope of all of humanity. This is the Door of Hope, of faith. Whoever has faith is the one who has a garden full of flowers within his heart. And this is the inside. It invites you to the door of Saint Joseph and it symbolizes and expresses the Blessed Virgin Mary.

I've finished here and now we're gonna take a short trip to Florence, Italy. The Cathedral of Florence also was unfinished for seven centuries. There were many, many competitions. In the end, I won the job of creating the ambo for the altar, the high altar in the Florence cathedral. Some of you probably know the history of that time period. There were great conflicts—conflicts that still exist.

I want to explain. Pope Francis inaugurated the ambo. For me, this was the greatest aspect of that day, apart from the fact that the pope spoke. After the pope spoke for an hour someone, a priest, went and put a glass of water next to him. This ambo, this lectern here, had been very recently finished, but this priest put a glass of water there, so naturally as if it had been done for centuries. The pope took the glass of water, drank it, and put it back in a completely natural way. It may have seemed that all the popes had done that, but it's brand new. This is what I wanted to do. It needed to be as if it had existed always.

An "Impossible" Beauty

We are always trying to be different from the others, but today we no longer look for a difference. Today is yesterday's morning. But we're not going to be imprisoned in yesterday; today is new. Every day is current, every day comes, every day can have its own miracle. We simply have to seek, to find what God wishes, what God orders.

We can try, and we can achieve it. I always tell my colleagues at the Sagrada Família that we're not doing a work of art, we're not creating a work of art. Be careful here if you want to make a work of art; hide something within your heart that you can't express. We don't create a work of art in order to sell something; we are looking for the answer that has to exist. That's why I'm so happy to see this water glass of the pope.

This is the last slide. I'm now planning the greatest work of my life. We've been in a little bit of a hurry in the Sagrada Família; we're in a little bit of a rush. I've been put in charge of creating the Jesus Tower, the most important tower. It's a single piece that's sixty meters high, and there are no instructions for this one, either. This is gonna be unique in the world. The people entering this tower will feel Jesus. Usually when you enter a church, you see Jesus crucified and you say, There he is. But I want the people who enter the Sagrada Família to perceive Jesus in their heart.

I'm not going explain the details here, but simply, at the top the white color is God's wisdom, everything that God has. Unfortunately, we can't understand even a tiny piece of it. God the Father sent His Son into this world and created this world. This is called the firmament, the heavens. Above, the Father; down below, the Son. And this looks like the Milky Way; it's the Holy Spirit. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; simple. This is the basic idea of the tower. This is the model, not a virtual one, but a real one, a mock-up. I hope that people feel that they're within Jesus, that Jesus is within them. [*audience applause*]

Waters: We just have a few minutes for some questions. When you say that Sagrada Família is not a work of art, I just want to be clear about what you mean, because Gaudí said something similar himself. He said, Love of truth is above any other love. Art is beauty. Beauty is the magnificence of the truth. Art doesn't exist, but rather love of the truth.

An "Impossible" Beauty

Sotoo: Gaudí said that beauty is the splendor, the light of the truth. Do we all know what truth is, what the truth is? Truth and beauty are beyond our ken, outside of our hands, outside of our justice. When I go to Japan, they ask me, What is the key to being a great leader, a great manager? The best leader is the one who knows how to make a decision for beauty. Not the one who says, Okay, we're gonna earn more money this way, or achieve more power this way. It's very difficult to make a beautiful decision but that is the condition for being a leader. Beauty is something that has already been placed within the depths of our heart. The person who knows how to reach that point is a leader. If we go around saying this is beautiful, that isn't, this is beautiful, that isn't, like choosing a phone—that's not beauty. Beauty is something beyond, it's the territory of the above. We simply have to obey and seek the true desire of God for beauty. What path is most beautiful—that's the path of art.

Waters: Yes, and really what we're talking about is a kind of division that we now can see clearly in our world between this kind of art, which is about truth, and a new kind of art, which is not about truth, because truth is not acknowledged.

Sotoo: Art that doesn't know; is that what you're saying?

Waters: Yes, and therefore it is not art. What I'm saying is, Gaudí was an artist, but what he was talking about was not art. [*gestures to slides*] This is the only art.

Sotoo: Unfortunately, we've only managed to reach a level where we understand very little of Gaudí, just a little bit. Gaudí remains largely unknown to us. There's the story of three blind men who wanted to know what an elephant was. One touches the trunk and says, Oh, it's like a snake. One grabs its leg and says, Oh, it's like a tree. So none of them knows what the elephant really is. It's like us: we don't really know what Gaudí was like. For that reason, it's necessary to study Gaudí. I am convinced that Gaudí will bring us to true art, true beauty. Art is not an object of investment. If there is an investment to be made, it's an investment in our heart.

Waters: In a certain sense, we all have it inside. This is the purpose of art,

to educate us about what is already there.

Sotoo: Simply discover it. We have to look at it. For example, in Japan, we wanted to become Westerners in order to compete. I always say that it's not necessary to plaster on somebody else's culture. There is no one who has ever existed, or who will exist, that is the same as you. This is the wealth of richness that has been given to us. The point though, is that none of us knows who he truly is. If we knew what each and every one of us has, even though we are limited, if we really knew one hundred percent—there would be no reason to compete. Today, we're so limited that we can't know anything without making comparisons. What mother is better than the other? Who is the best mother in the world? Or father? We're all number one if we know ourselves truly well. This is the patrimony that God has given, the beauty that God has put in our hearts.

Waters: Thank you. I think we're almost out of time. I just want to say at the end that this, it seems to me, is central to what Don Giussani was talking about when he talked about education as being tradition and freedom. That tradition and freedom are equal qualities in this moment of creation that we are a part of. A tradition needs to be tradition, not traditionalism, because the moment it becomes traditionalism, it hardens. This, it seems to me, is the drama that Etsuro deals with every day in his work, and through it, he has found the unity that we seek, and that is the theme of this encounter. The unity of the person, which he learned from his mentor, Gaudí, and which he has carried on to many people, and carries on to us today. For forty years he has had this certainty. It is there for us, also.

To finish, I would like to read a quote from Charles Peguy, who, it seems to me, says this for all of us. Not so much as artists, but as people—as human beings in the work we do, in the way we behave every day, and the way we engage with the world. In the same way that Etsuro chisels the stone, we chisel out our lives, we chisel out our relationships, we chisel out—not violently, of course—but we chisel out the world, in order to make it reveal to us what is true, and what we know intuitively.

This is Charles Peguy: “To work is to pray. Once workers were not slaves, they worked. They nurtured an honor absolutely as befits an honor. The leg

An "Impossible" Beauty

of a chair had to be well made. It was natural, understood. It was supremacy. It did not need to be well made in order to get paid, or to be made in proportion to how much one was paid. It did not need to be well made for the owner, nor for the experts, nor for the owner's clients. It needed to be well made for itself, in itself, in its own way. A tradition that came from, went back to, the depths of the human race. A history, an absolute, an honor, required that the chair leg be well made, and every part of the chair that was not visible was made with the same perfection as the parts that were visible, according to the same principle as cathedrals."

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank Etsuro Sotoo for coming. It is always a cliché at this moment to mention a guest's busy schedule; but really, he has an extraordinary schedule. He has come hurriedly from Barcelona to be a witness today and we are thrilled beyond words. Thank you. [*audience applause*]



"...Drawn Near to a Hidden Divine Presence" (Tarkovsky)

A face-to-face encounter with physician and inventor Dr. Michael J. Brescia, co-founder and Executive Medical Director of Calvary Hospital, and Dr. Molly Poole, physician, Bay Ridge, Brooklyn

Introduction

“The unity of the ‘I’ is totally generated by the recognition of a presence who loves me and, therefore, makes me, affirms me. Put it in other, simpler, words, the unity of the ‘I’ springs and is established and defined by a ‘you’ that you say. The unity of the ‘I’ is generated by saying ‘you.’ The ‘I’ is discovered again in the ‘you.’ ... Therefore, unity among us comes from unity of the ‘I.’ The two of us cannot be ‘one’ unless you are ‘one’ in yourself. Do you understand? I can be ‘one’ with you, only if I am ‘one’ in myself.”

Luigi Giussani, *Tu (o dell'amicizia)*, Rizzoli



Molly Poole: Welcome everybody. On behalf of the New York Encounter, I'd like to thank you all for coming. I have a script to read and I'm very grateful to introduce to all of you Dr. Michael Brescia—more on him in a second. This event is co-sponsored by the American Association of Medicine and the Person. The AAAMP promotes an interdisciplinary dialogue among medical professionals, physicians, nurses, healthcare administrators, scientists, and students. Its mission is to restore an integral human approach to each patient's care in order to improve medical care. It has also been responsible for the annual Med Conference since 2009.

This is Dr. Michael Brescia. I'm about to read his bio, which is rather impressive. He received his medical degree from Georgetown University

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in 1958. He is co-founder and Executive Medical Director of Calvary Hospital, a fully-accredited acute-care hospital that cares for adult patients who suffer primarily from end-stage cancer. He is the co-inventor of the Brescia-Cimino fistula, an internationally renowned methodology for hemodialysis that represented a milestone in the treatment of kidney disease. Dr. Brescia has received many awards acknowledging his professional work.

I would like to begin, Dr. Brescia, with the scientific aspect of yourself—speak about your invention.

Michael Brescia: I'm really humbled by coming in front of this group to talk. My son, Mark Brescia, is here, and other dear friends. We spoke together and he said, "Dad, where do you find such good people as this?" And I said, "Don't put any more pressure on me, okay?" [*audience laughter*] I don't need any more. Everybody's telling me, Don't forget this, don't forget that, etc., so I'll try not to. I am very honored, and will try to not be too patronizing in any way, because I know all of you are doing phenomenal stuff.

My career goes two ways, Molly. The first half is science. It is the introduction to medicine of renal transplantation. The first time I saw one, I was a student at Georgetown Medical School, and they took a piano crate made out of wood, filled it with cellophane, filled it with a water bath—which I'm not gonna go into it, especially with the solutions; it's a big coil filled with blood, and you turn the crank. My job was to turn the crank. You turned the crank and you took the poisons out of the blood and put it in this water bath and did the procedure, maybe two or three times a week, in an attempt to get the kidneys to work again. Three or four weeks would pass, and if the kidneys did not open up, you were in big trouble. The apparatus that was used was invented by a Dutch doctor, Belding Scribner, who said, "You know what, we're getting a lot of young veterans back from Vietnam. Maybe we could do chronic dialysis: repeatedly dialyze people over many months so that we will be able to keep them alive and able to get a kidney." Of course, it was difficult to get kidneys at that time, and they used what they called "cadaver kidneys": people who had died donated their kidneys, their organs. The problem was with dialysis, Molly, which had existed for

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many, many years. The big problem was being able to get repeated dialysis from the body—drawing blood out, pushing it through this apparatus, and putting it back in purified. The big problem was that you had to use the arteries. You've got four arteries in your wrists, so after four treatments, you were done. This was a big, big, challenge. How were we going to be able to do this? How could it be possible? I had ten veterans upstairs who had to be dialyzed; I couldn't do it, because we had run out of vessels. I was very depressed about that. I went downstairs to the coffee shop and ordered french fries and a hamburger. Sitting there, I heard something over my left shoulder. I like to say it was Gabriel, because he has a big mouth; he talks a lot, Gabriel. Yeah. [*audience laughter*] Somebody said something to me. I put the two french fried potatoes on the dish in front of me, and you know the ketchup that's in little plastic packs? You squeeze it to put it on the hamburger, but I never could open it right and it squirted out between the two french fries. I looked at the two french fried potatoes, and the ketchup in between them, and I said, "This looks like a fistula"—the abnormal connection between an artery and a vein. From there went the investigation. Maybe it was like a light, it was a gift. I thought, Maybe if the blood from the artery goes into the vein because of this abnormal hole, the vein will become an artery...

Poole: ...and then you'll have adequate blood flow.

Brescia: Yes, yes. With the pressure and the oxygenation, the vein will become an artery. By putting a very slight bit of pressure, all the veins will become arteries. We don't have only two now, we have two hundred.

Poole: A whole network.

Brescia: And so we can do dialysis over and over again until a proper match is done. You would think this is the exciting part; it's not. It gets better. With this invention and development, we were able to go ahead and put this in many, many, young veterans. A laboratory called Baxter Labs came and said to me, "This is an opening bid: one billion dollars."

Poole: This was 1960.

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Brescia: That sounded like pretty good money. [audience laughter] I grew up in the Bronx in a tenement. I'm not looking for sorrow, but my major blanket was my father's overcoat. It weighed about forty pounds. I mean, it wasn't that we came with a rich, lucrative background, so with the one billion dollars I went to see dad. And I said, "Dad, I am inventing a fistula for dialysis." And my father said, "I am so proud of you, my son. What did you do?"

I tried to explain it to him. He said, "Hurry, get this out, help all these people." And I said to him, "We have to wait a year till the lab gets all the places set up in Europe and Asia. And they're going to give me a billion dollars." He said, "Oh my god! And now you have to wait a year?" I said, "Yes." He said, "No." The verb in Italian is *lasciali*, which means "give it away." I was confused. "*Lasciali, lasciali*," he said. "God gave you this gift because He doesn't have arms and legs, He gave it to you because you have arms and legs and so you need to *lasciali*, give it away. It's not for you." I said, "No, no, Papa. No, no, I'm not giving it away." By the way, my kids will say, "Couldn't you keep a little so we won't have all these bills?" [audience laughter] My children are kind of venal, you know? I mean, I fell in a ditch and I needed these little braces till the ankles healed, and my daughter Andrea said, "Listen, dad. You gonna patent that thing. Don't start, because nobody's gonna die without those springs on; so you can patent those things there. Forget about worrying people are gonna die without those." [audience laughter] Nevertheless, I told Papa no. And he said, "When you shave in the morning, the faces of children will appear in the mirror, one after another, dead! And when you go eat, leave an empty seat for the mother and father that can't be with you because they're dead; because you required five houses, five cars, five boats. So give it away!"

I knew I was doomed. There was no way I was gonna get out of it. I must confess, I was aggravated.

Pooler: That's quite a father.

Brescia: I wanted the money. I kept having babies and I needed some. I didn't have the babies; *Monica* had the babies. But they kept coming. A lot of Irish twins, you know, a year apart. They just kept coming. [audience

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laughter] But I went out the next day and gave it away, and it was published, it's published now. By the way, Molly, in medicine, you know things don't last long. The Brescia Cimino AV Fistula is over fifty years old. No one has improved on this operation. [*audience applause*] I mean, I was just told that its current value is sixty billion. I don't care how many billions, my total income from the fistula was twenty-six dollars and ten cents for Medicaid. That's what Medicaid paid. All the big hospitals, very important hospitals—Presbyterian, Harvard, Yale, all the rest of them—would never come and look at it. They said it would never work, it was a joke. They couldn't stand that these two Italians in the Bronx, in the VA, invented this thing that they had been working on so hard, so long, so diligently, and that became the cure. [*audience applause*]

I was on my way to school to begin the transplant program and that's when God had different plans. Dr. Cimino begged me to help him in this little place called the House at Calvary. The House at Calvary was a little medical facility that handled the most sick patients, mainly with advanced cancer. They were mostly women, widows. This was the group that he asked me to go see.

Poole: You were just doing shifts, just sort of filling in, helping your friend in this place, right? But you had a job waiting for you in Pennsylvania, you were gonna start this new program and enjoy your meteoric rise to the top. And then what happened?

Brescia: Well, what happened was I went to this little House at Calvary. I finally gave in. The Little Sisters of the Sick Poor were operating the House at Calvary. By this time, they were taking men and children and we also were having AIDS patients, but we didn't know what the illness was yet. Kaposi sarcoma—in all my time in medical school I'd seen only one. There were eight at Calvary. You probably didn't see any, either [*gestures to Molly*] in medical school until the eighties.

Poole: Until the eighties, yeah.

Brescia: I went to Calvary the day after New Year's, 1963, and the nuns were waiting for me with a silver tray. They knew I'd want coffee. They had

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coffee and cookies and they sat me down and made sure I didn't see any of the patients that were too bad. I can remember that one of the nuns had a wisp of beautiful red hair. I said to Sister Gemma, "Sister Gemma, you have that wisp of red hair here. I don't mean to be intrusive, but this is beautiful, beautiful red hair." There's a point to this story: every time I wanted to leave to go back to Pennsylvania, she took off her wimple and there was this beautiful red hair. [*audience laughter*] I think I was being seduced.

The cases that came in were awful. A lot of gangrene, terrible tumors, bleeding, uncontrolled seizures, multiple fractures. There were children that came, AIDS patients with the horrible Kaposi's. Cardinal Connor used to go on Thursday nights to change the wounds of the AIDS patients in St. Clare's Hospital.

By the way, there's something I want to go back to. How my dad, at six years old, was taken out of school and was really an indentured slave.

Poole: Your father?

Brescia: Yes, my father. I want to make sure I get that in. When he was a little boy, he never had much education and only shoveled snow or coal. He ran away several times because he wanted to go to school. But he had no power. You say, "no power," but my father was responsible for the AV fistula that saved millions of lives. From his little chair, wearing his little sweater with a hole in the elbow, making it clear to me that my purpose in life was not to be rich but to serve Him who made me. [*audience applause*]

But about House of Calvary. I thought I was going to get out, but God was laughing. I couldn't. Every time I tried to get out, off came the wimple, and I stayed on.

Poole: Weren't the children pulling you back, too? Weren't the children sort of hanging on your pants legs and...?

Brescia: Say that again? [*audience laughter*]

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Poole: Never mind. You just talk. You've got your story.

Brescia: Anyway, so, the cases were so bad, the nuns could hardly keep up with them, the AIDS and all the other stuff. Within a few days, God sent ten African-American women who had gone through dreadful suffering in the South. They came to Calvary Hospital and developed a program called the Cancer Care Technician program and began to work for us. The patients had tremendous diseases, and these ten women had a certain spirituality and sanctity that was phenomenal. The hospital was paid twelve dollars a day from the city; there was no money. We applied to Jayco to be certified as a hospital so we could apply to Medicare and Medicaid for money. We applied, and the surveyor came in—his name was Dr. Kreuger. He said, "I'm not approving this hospital. You've got flypaper, there's no air conditioner, I don't know why I'm here. I'm not approving this hospital. There's no way—it's not a hospital. I don't know what this is. It's not gonna be approved."

This is why God made me stay. As I'm walking down the hall with Dr. Kreuger, he says, "Your last name is very famous in kidneys, do you know that? You know him?" And I said, "Yes, I do." [*audience laughter*] And he said, "How do you know him?" And I said, "Well, I don't want to sound silly, but it's me." He said, "Oh bull. Brescia's in Pennsylvania. He's not here. If you say that kind of thing, you'll get in big trouble." I said, "Dr. Krueger, I would never lie like that."

We sat down and he started asking me questions. After about twenty minutes, he said, "Indeed, it *is* you! What the hell are you doing here? I thought you were there!" I told him what was going on. He said, "Well, I have to approve this. I'm a nephrologist. I'm a kidney specialist. If I go back saying I found you, then failed you, I'll never be forgiven." Because of that, I'm sure I was made to stay, and Calvary was no longer the House of Calvary but became Calvary Hospital, an acute care hospital that exists to this day, and able to charge the same prices as regular hospitals. Calvary is now financially secure and will exist safely into the future. It is now world-famous, with visitors from all over. We have inpatient/outpatient, we have another one in Manhattan, we have another one in Queens, and we have another one in Brooklyn. It is now world-famous.

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Poole: Tell us what's unique about Calvary. Tell us about the care one gets at Calvary Hospital.

Brescia: The care at Calvary Hospital is tremendous. We have as our model *compassio* with all. *Compassio* means "to suffer with." We have a bronze statue in our lobby called *The Compassio*, which says, "Whatsoever you do for one of these, even the least of my brethren, you do unto me." The statue has the stigmata, which is the absolute final statement on what it is that we do and what we mean. We have a Cancer Care Technician program, in which each patient is considered a gift to us and is the representative of our God. And not just the representative, but truly our Lord.

The care is immaculate. At Calvary Hospital, about eighty percent of the patients are incontinent, but you would never know that because of the care given to the patient. Fingernails, hair, teeth. The staff takes ribbons or flowers that are sent and puts them in the hair and makes bows for the patients. I don't want to make it seem like it's a spa, but we provide whatever is necessary. The food is special. In the Gospel, food is always special, so and food is very special for our patients. We can talk about the medical staff and how pain is controlled. I'm not going to go into the details, but nobody suffers there. And from this we get strength to fight against assisted suicide and euthanasia. Right now, the assisted suicide law has been dropped in New York because of Calvary. [*audience applause*] I went to Albany and saw those senators, the two senators who had written the law, and we had long, long debates. I got them to come to Calvary Hospital for more discussions, and they said, "We're not putting it up for a vote anymore," and so assisted suicide is no longer an option in New York. People are upset over that, but the five judges on the Court of Appeals ruled against it, and cited Calvary Hospital as the reason they voted against it.

Poole: And what do you suppose is the reason for that? I mean, what would be the reason for a physician-assisted suicide law being eliminated by Calvary Hospital? What does Calvary Hospital do?

Brescia: It's the symptom control. I want to think about the nature of human suffering, because I want to get into some of the stuff that we're doing there. I hope I can make you leave with one or two things to think

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about. If you're able to leave with one or two things, I'll be very happy.

How do people suffer? This was the thing I learned from the African-American women who came. Their entire culture, with the Christian belief that it is indeed our Lord in that bed. The young men in there with AIDS: "Why did I get this? Why am I dying? What is the purpose of this? I just opened a little carpet store, I have three children—why am I dying like this? Where do I go? What happens to me?"

There's a tremendous amount of fear. Of course, there is that other group, by the way, that have perfect faith. I only have a couple of those. The perfect faith people help all of us. A patient is vomiting or has a dreadful wound; a terrible boggy wound, grainy, suppurative wound. We go there, maybe ten times a day to try and change the dressing. If it's not changed ten times a day, and the families come in, there's the desire to not live anymore. If Dr. Brescia is in a bed, and he's delirious and uncovered, and Dr. Mark comes in and sees his father that way, well: "This is not him anymore; this is not dad anymore. This is somebody else, it's better he goes away." Those are the things that promote assisted suicide and euthanasia.

The other thing about spiritual suffering has to do with the staff. The staff wears out. Nurses and doctors are there all day, submerged in the nature of suffering and the babies and all the other stuff, and they keep saying, "What am I doing? Why am I doing this and when does this stop?" Spiritually, you've been tortured. Spiritual suffering is real, it's severe, but it's not the key. Those who have the gift of perfect faith, they're going on a picnic when they leave. This is different, though, and those who are different, they help all of us.

We have three major mental syndromes for people. The first is delirium. If mom or dad or whoever is confused, don't say they're pleasantly confused; they have a delirium that can be fixed. It's missed constantly. Delirium: you lose all cognition, you don't know who's in the room, you don't know where you are, you're in a deep hole, you're screaming—all kinds of terror that can be fixed with small amounts of haloperidol and some other different kinds of medication. At Calvary Hospital, eighty-five percent come in with some form of delirium.

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The second major mental syndrome is depression. We have lots of excellent drugs now for depression. About thirteen to fourteen percent of people are depressed. If you're depressed, nothing can get better. Nothing. Everything fails you; you don't eat, you don't sleep, everything is bad if you're depressed. We go actively and treat that. And lastly, panic syndromes. All of a sudden there's dreadful fear: spiders, delusions, hallucinations, all terrible things. This can be controlled with Xanax and different kinds of drugs.

Now we're gonna get to the meat of it. And the meat of it is emotional suffering. What is emotional suffering, and how do we deal with it? Emotional suffering is the absence of love. The absence of love: I'm abandoned, my body has failed me, my family can't do anything, God has left me here in this bed. It's the total absence of love. I'm unloved and I'm unlovable. It's the final farewell of people that you love and people that mean so much to you, it's the final end. It's a pain that is unimaginable. Physical pain is easy compared to emotional pain. It's the final farewell.

How do we love our patients? This is something I spend a lot of time on with our doctors. How do we love? Sometimes, I say we all know how to love. But when we are asked for definitive statements about it, we don't get it. It's very hard for us to say it, although some cultures don't even have a language for it. They don't even have words for it.

The first way to love your patients is to be present. You must be present. Whatever your role, whether you're cleaning the floors, or cleaning a wound, or cleaning the hand—when you say, "I'm coming back," don't come back later and say, "I looked in your room but you were sleeping so I went away." If you say you're coming back, then come back. Never say I'm coming but then don't come back. And if you can't come because you broke your leg out on the front stoop, call. But always come back in one way or the other. You must be present. Second, you must touch. We are tactile creatures. We cannot *not* touch. A baby in its mother's womb puts his head against the placenta so he can hear the buzz of the blood running through the arteries. Twins suck each other's thumbs. We're tactile. You are, and so am I. And so, in the name of touch, I'm touching [*Brescia reaches out and takes Poole's hand, holds it for a minute. Then gestures to the audience*]. Can you touch each other, please? Tell me how that feels. [*audience chatter*]

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Poole: Hmmmm.

Brescia: I'll hold your hand all day.

Poole: You can hold my hand all day. [*audience laughter*]

Brescia: [*looking out at audience*] I don't see you holding yet! [*audience laughter*] You can't go into a room and not touch a patient. The third way you love is to hold. You have to hold one another, you have to hold. [*Brescia gets up with some difficulty*]

Poole: Where are you going?

[*Brescia walks over to Poole, gives her a hug and a kiss on the cheek; audience applauds*]

Brescia: The kiss was my idea. People say, how do I hold? Take the thorns out of the head. Take the chains off the wrists. How do I hold? Can you imagine people saying, "How do I hold?" I give them visions of what to hold. You have to hold your patients, you have to hold that person. And lastly, you have to speak. You cannot love without saying it. "Oh, my husband loves me, he takes out the garbage." Nah, nah, no, no. "I love you. If you can't walk, I'll carry you. I'll be with you because I love you. I can't stand it without you."

I said it before and I'll say it again: if I see a tattoo and a wrist, I'll kiss that arm. If you look at the face of an Auschwitz or Bergen-Belsen survivor, someone who has been tattooed, and you kiss that tattoo, you look at that face and see a glow that is unimaginable because you did it. I tell people, by the way: Christ was Jewish. He was the most Orthodox Jew that there was. I take people down here and show them the statues of Mary and say there was no more super Jew in the world than this woman. At twelve years old she was taken and put in a room and told to sew curtains for the inner sanctum of these synagogues. We shouldn't feel that this is going out of who we are. This *is* who we are. This is where we came from and that's it.

[*Brescia gets up and walks close to the edge of the stage*] I'm not gonna walk

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off of there, don't worry. When you walk into that room, *stop*, and say, "My dear Lord God, my love for You brings me here, because the greatest of Your commandments is to love one another." And then do your work. If you miss doing that every day, it's tragic, especially for the young people. It doesn't only have to be for patients that are dying. It's just saying kind words or something. Stop. Stop and say it. "My love for You brings me here." [*audience applause; Brescia returns to his chair and sits down*]

You know, no patient should ever be tied. Calvary Hospital has no tying of patients. By the way, one of the things that's really bad is what's happened to our clergy; our clergy have been hamstrung. They can't think, they can't do anything anymore. Can't touch, can't say, can't speak. But when I go in the room with the patients, I'm going to hold them, I'm going to talk to them, I'm going to say I love them, and I'm going to hold them. They can't stop that. I'm going to stay in that room, I'm going to tell God I love them.

When you say, "My love for You brings me here," what happens in that room? You think it's a patient's room now? No, it's a sanctuary. He's got to come because He has no option. If you want to make God do what you want, you tell Him you want Him there with you and He must come. He cannot say, "I'm not coming." He cannot *not* do what you ask, and that room then becomes holy, a sanctuary, and you want to be a sanctuary. I had a patient who was restrained, his name was Mr. Bodner. At Calvary, no one is restrained. I was called upstairs because Mr. Bodner fell on the floor and refused to have any restraint put on. I went upstairs. At that time, we put loose belts on. "Oh, it's just a loose belt, it doesn't matter." Mr. Bodner said, "Young man, I was in Bergen-Belsen and a stake was driven in the ground with notches in it, and I was tethered to twelve inches of barbed razor-wire. And the bet was on which of the nine notches I would collapse and cut my throat. You let me die on the floor. If I fall and die on the floor, you let me die on the floor. You put no belts on me. You put nothing on me." I had walked twelve feet out of the room when I stopped, went back, and kissed Mr. Bodner's tattoo. From that point on, we have never put a restraint on anybody. We call it Bodner's Law at Calvary Hospital. The only restraints are arms of love by some of our staff to hold somebody until the symptoms are controlled. We're totally restraint-free. We don't have any restraints here.

... *"Drawn Near to a Hidden Divine Presence" (Tarkovsky)*

When Christ died, where did He go? Anybody want to take a guess? Where did He go? He's dead three days. Well, the great theologians say He went to see the prophets, He went to free these people, He went and looked at the Beatific Vision. How much did He love us, looking at His Father? He could have stayed there but He came back. Who comes back? You nailed Him to the cross, and now He comes back in three days? What? I mean, this is the stuff we hear, "God is love." How was He love?

Billy had a terrible neoplastic tumor on his neck, and I was bringing the foundation visitors around while making rounds. We corn-rowed his hair, put bandages around his neck to make him look as good as possible. When I brought the foundation visitors in to see him, I wanted them to see that we have young patients, too. They looked at him, and Billy was looking at them, and he noticed that they weren't affected by this thing, and so he took his hand and began to unwrap his bandage. I grabbed his hands and said, "You don't have to do that Billy." He said, "Oh, yes I do." He unwrapped it, and the people backed out of that room because he had a horrible embryonic tumor there. Billy said they weren't looking like they were afraid of what could happen to a man; what could happen to someone. "I wanted them to see what could happen to someone else," he said.

Rachel was a dancer in Berlin, and was picked up by the Nazis and taken to a prison camp. Not Auschwitz; I think it was Belsen. She had two children, a little girl and a boy. As soon as she was brought in, the son was taken away and gassed. She tried to hide the little girl with two friends. It was about 1944, and they were escaping from that prison. They had to try to run, because the little baby was crying and they were afraid the guards would get up. When they ran away, they got to the forest. The baby developed meningitis and died. Because the dogs were following them, they buried the baby but swore they would come back for it. I didn't know that when I first met her, because Rachel didn't talk for six weeks. I went into the room one day, and there were two women there who had come from Israel. They told me the story I'm telling you. And I said, "Rachel, I'm so sorry." She didn't say much. And I was so presumptuous, talking and talking, trying to understand why she wouldn't talk to me. And finally she said, "Doctor, doctor..." I said, "Yes, Rachel?" She said, "In the Torah it says that God created thirty-six men"—actually, it's more—"who would carry the sins of

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the world on their shoulders, and when one dies, another replaces him. No one knows each other. For the life I led, God gives me one of the thirty-six as my doctor." When you love your patients, you get gifts like that; when you leave the world of man and enter the world of the divine.

In Italian, the words for *love* and *passion* are the same. The Passion of Christ—think about that. It's the same, or almost the same. The Passion of the Christ. We say that God is love and the author of love. If we reflect, and I don't want to make a speech out of this, but: Why would God make man? And more, why would He make us specifically? When did He get up and say, "I'm gonna make a man"? And, more shockingly, "I'll make him in my image and my likeness"? It's overwhelming, that thought: He makes us in His image. He invents human love. He says, "It's not good for man to be alone." The most incredible part is: He's incarnated. Why does He become man at all? Forget about making one—how could He *become* one? Why did He need perfect expiation? Why did He have to become a man and then be nailed to a cross for us to be forgiven? You think He needed that? If Christ had sent a strong wind and declared all sins forgiven—I've got news for you, that would have been the case. He didn't have to be nailed. The nailing was for us. The nailing was for us. And after the days are up and He has to leave, what does He leave? He leaves the Eucharist. He's not leaving. You think He's leaving? He's not leaving. He leaves the Eucharist.

Poole: You have a few minutes left. I remember you wanted to speak about grief, and you have a reflection to share.

Brescia: I'm not finished with the suffering. [*audience laughter*]

Poole: It's your show. I'm with you.

Brescia: We talked about the emotional suffering. Physical suffering is the easiest part to deal with. Someone asked me today, "Can you get rid of pain?" The answer is yes. All pain? Yes. You have to kill somebody? No. With the proper training, I could teach everybody in this room how to care for the pain and symptoms of advanced cancer. Everybody. It's the emotional aspects and the spiritual aspects that have to be gifted to you. Family sufferings: families are the biggest stress for us. At Calvary

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Hospital, over half the day is spent dealing with families. Families are facing emotional stuff. They don't want the final farewell.

The last way we suffer is grief. I've been married fifty-four years. I take Monica out to a special restaurant and we get something special. She wants spaghetti with the lobster sauce. Then next week, with all the children, we're gonna go out for a big party with friends. Fifty-four years.

"Monica, let's go!" She's in the ladies room, getting made up. She comes out, "I'm coming, Michael!"—and *boom*, she falls down and dies. Ten seconds. Could there be anything worse or more shocking? The grief never goes away. I can cry in a second. You play the right song and I'll be crying. Grief doesn't go away. It stays. You can be in the middle of something important, a birthday party, whatever it is; there's a knock on the front door, and when you open the front door it, there are two gentlemen there in black leather coats. The one says, "My name is Mr. Grief. I saw you eating and I wanted to make a point of saying hello, I'm around. And here's my friend, Mr. Guilt. He's with me, too, in case you feel you did everything right." This is Mr. Guilt. How could it be that she died in ten seconds with all those doctors in the house? How could that be? Grief doesn't go away, but it changes. We were able to deal with it. We will see each other again in another way.

I want to end with a story. I was leaving Calvary Hospital to go to Washington. I had received a call from Metropolitan Hospital in New York, telling me that my friend there was in the ER with a lady who had come in with a big tumor on her back, and it was a mess. He didn't even want to examine her. "Would you take her at Calvary?" he said. "I'm sure it's a tumor." I said okay, all right. Her name was Angela and she came in. We had no other information on her, no family, she didn't speak. I said, "I'll be sure to see her every morning, every time at lunch, and at dinner. I will go make sure I see Angela." It would give me an opportunity to connect in a human way, because I wasn't seeing the patients as much at that time. I was going to Washington a lot, fighting for the right of these people to get treatment. So I did. I felt I was scoring tons of points. How arrogant. How arrogant. How *disgustingly* arrogant. Meanwhile, there was something being planned for me. I came back again in February after a storm, and

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went up to see Angela. I'm going in the room, the lights are out; Angela's dying. She's leaving. I lower the side rails and take off my coat and sit down. I take her hand in mine. I put a hand on my cheek and I stay there. "Angela, were you a little girl once? Were you found in the streets? With a tumor, rotted teeth and chopped hair, broken nails, sexually transmitted disease, hepatitis—what happened to you?" Exactly ninety minutes later, Angela said, faintly, "Dr. Michael?"

I grabbed her and held her tight. "Angela, you're speaking! Say something, Angela."

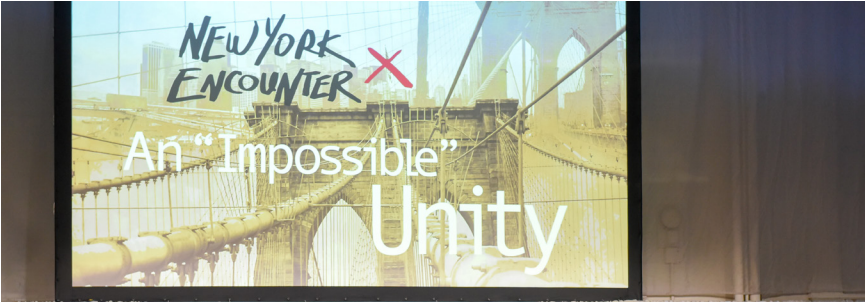
"Dr. Michael, tonight, in a few hours, I'll speak your name to God."

I thought, Who are you, Angela? Angela, who made you say that? Angela, how could you say that? What made you say that? Who are you? You're not who you seem—who are you?

And I said, being Italian, "Say it again." [*audience laughter*] But you get it once. You only get it once.

I want to say that I'm really, truly happy to be here. I'm happy to have Molly as my interrogator. [*audience laughter*] The greatest of all the commandments is to love one another as the Father has loved us. It's the greatest. I didn't say that, He said that. Anyway, thank you so much. It was a pleasure coming in today.

Poolle: Dr. Brescia, thank you so much for sharing your life with us.
[*audience applause*]



Out of Many, One: Really?

*A dialogue on shared bonds and ideals in today's American society with **Amitai Etzioni** University Professor at the George Washington University and author of *Happiness is the Wrong Metric*, and **Mark Lilla**, Professor of Humanities, Columbia University. Moderated by **Anujeet Sareen**, global fixed-income portfolio manager, Brandywine Global Investment Management*

Introduction

“The existence of a people requires a bond between persons created by an event that is perceived as decisive for its historical meaning, for their destiny, and for that of the world. An event gives rise to a people by pointing out a stable bond of belonging between persons who were unrelated up to that moment, just as the event of a child completes the beginning of a family. The life of a people is determined by a common ideal, by a value that makes it worthwhile living, struggling, suffering and even dying for, a common ideal that makes everything worthwhile.

Second, the life of a people is determined by the identification of the suitable instruments and the methods for attaining the acknowledged ideal, for tackling the needs and challenges that gradually arise from the historical circumstances. Third, it is determined by the mutual fidelity in which one helps the other on the journey towards the realization of the ideal. A people exists where there is the memory of a common history that is accepted as a historic task to be carried out.

Therefore, without friendship, that is to say, without gratuitous mutual affirmation of a common destiny, there is no people. The most mysterious thing is that the successful formation of a people inevitably implies the prospect that its own good will be good for the world and for everyone else. This emerges clearly when the people acquire a certain security

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and dignity, and their ideal mature and is affirmed. This is the origin of every civilization, just as its disappearance marks its decline; a civilization declines when it is no longer able to live up to the ideal that generated it.

Luigi Giussani, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, McGill, 2007



Anujeet Sareen: Welcome, my name is Anujeet Sareen. I'm a portfolio manager. I work for an investment firm called Brandywine Global in Philadelphia, and I have the privilege tonight of moderating this discussion between our two distinguished speakers. Before I introduce them both, let me just say a few words about what this event is about. The title of the New York Encounter, and the title of this event, I think, speak to a deep unease we have about our country. There is this sense that we are more divided today, we're more fractious, we're more partisan than we have been in our history, and there are actually data that support this. It is the case that we are more divided today than we have been in the past. One of the most sobering statistics on this is how polarized our politics have become. Our politics haven't been this polarized since just before the Great Depression and World War II. It's sobering to think that it might take a crisis of that magnitude for us to be recalled to who we are as a people, to a discussion about the common good. And that actually brings us to the question, really, that's raised in the title of this event: "Out of Many, One: Really?" It's a question. Is it possible? And the two speakers we have today, I think, will really help us understand how to start thinking about this, how to recall us to our unity.

Let me introduce Amitai Etzioni. He's Professor of International Relations at George Washington University. He served as a Senior Advisor in the Carter White House and taught at Columbia University, Harvard University, and the University of California at Berkeley. A study by Richard Posner ranked him among the top 100 American intellectuals. He is the author of numerous op-eds and his voice is frequently heard in the media. He is the author of many books, including *The Active Society*, *The Moral Dimension*, *The New Golden Rule*, *My Brother's Keeper*, and most recently, *Happiness is the Wrong Metric*, which we'll get into.

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Next is Professor Mark Lilla. Mark was born in Detroit, Michigan, and was educated at the University of Michigan and Harvard University. After holding professorships at New York University and the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, he joined Columbia University in 2007 as Professor of the Humanities. Mark is a frequent contributor to the *New York Review of Books*, the *New York Times*, and publications worldwide. His books have been translated into more than a dozen languages. He lectures widely and has delivered the Weizmann Memorial Lecture in Israel and the Carlyle Lectures at Oxford University. In 2015, Overseas Press Club of America awarded him its prize for Best Commentary on International News in Any Medium.

Okay, let's start with you, Mark. You've written extensively on the fragmentation of our society today, and in your recent book, *The Once and Future Liberal*, I thought it was so interesting that you contend this individualism, which seems so pervasive, is not just a function of the Left versus the Right. You think this is actually something that has co-opted the party you would think represents the common good, or did for much of the 20th century—the party of solidarity, the Democratic Party. This is a cultural problem. Help us understand how we arrived at this point today.

Mark Lilla: Well, all cultural problems are problems in relation to a concrete material reality, so, before you rush to culture you need to talk about the way we live now. The story I tell begins after World War II and the affluence that arose in the United States and in Western Europe as well, that brought with it suburbanization, the liberation of women from a lot of drudge work around homes, and children going to school. You had a new world out on the suburban frontier in the United States. The move to the suburbs broke down communities that had been there before. Ethnic Catholic churches, for example. I grew up in Detroit, and my paternal grandparents lived in a Polish neighborhood. My grandfather went to school with people who were still in the neighborhood and went to church and played on the church basketball team.

Well, that disappeared when everyone moved to the suburbs, and suddenly you were in places where people didn't know each other, where the churches were not old brick buildings that had been there for quite a long time, but

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these new spaceship things that got built back beginning in the 1970s. And suddenly, you're with people you don't know, different ethnicities—not that it mattered—each family with its little plot of land and people driving alone to work. What happened is that people started feeling a sense of atomization. There began a kind of search for meaning in the '50s and '60s, organizations like this one had their parallels in the United States. There was a search for something. On the one hand, you had an atomized society; on the other hand, you had a kind of dissatisfaction with it. How that worked out politically was, we saw two forms or expressions of the individualistic society. Cultural interpretations of our material reality. One was the Reaganite one, which presented a picture that was very different from the one of the Roosevelt epoch, where people belonged to unions and there were thick connections in neighborhoods and churches. Ronald Reagan brought a different picture of a more libertarian America in which families were off on their own. Government was not the solution for common problems—it *was* the problem. There was an idealization of the individual entrepreneur over an idealization of a common effort by labor and business to create something.

We got a kind of right-wing, economic individualism that grew up around the '80s. At the same time, there grew up on the Left a kind of cultural individualism, so what went along with being a single, elementary particle—economically speaking—was a new conception of the self, where we are also elementary particles free to choose how we live, what our sexual lives are like, how we define ourselves and all the rest. It looks like the individualism of the Reagan period on the Right must have been in contradiction with what was going on in the Left. In fact, we got two expressions of our individualism. On the one hand, Republican libertarianism and on the other, a kind of identity politics and an absorption with a politics of individual meaning.

Sareen: Thank you. Amitai, you founded the Communitarian Network, and one of its main principles is that we're members of each other. You use a phrase I find really quite striking. You say the “me” needs a “we” to “be.” Let me say that again. The “me” needs a “we” to “be.” That's a pretty remarkable statement in this day and age. As Mark just described, I think the prevailing idea today is that individual freedom is paramount. That

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anything that requires following is some kind of imposition—sometimes necessary, but an imposition. And I think you're suggesting we're having the wrong conversation; we need to step back and really consider what it means to be human and not to narrowly define it. Help us understand that.

Amitai Etzioni: Well, thank you very much for the introduction and for this Encounter. I thoroughly believe that if you have more meetings like this, we would solve some of the problems, because these are the kinds of situations in which we get together and rebuild—

Sareen: You're coming back next year. [*audience laughter, applause*]

Etzioni: All right, thank you. First of all, there's enough empirical evidence to convince anybody who's open to evidence. That people don't flourish as individuals, but they'll flourish in lasting, meaningful relationships. Just to give one quick reference: a study done in the high-rise buildings in Manhattan, in which many senior citizens live, demonstrated that they often lose the capacity to stay a whole day alone at home. Often, they don't know even the people down the corridor, and when they were studied they found a huge array of not only physical but psychological problems. On the flip side, people who are married or otherwise in lasting, meaningful relationships, live longer, healthier, happier lives. I'm not preaching, I'm just reporting the evidence.

Second, communities are where we make each other better than we otherwise would be. And that needs some explication. Economists had a theory that is still out there. The butcher doesn't sell you meat because he cares about you or cares about morality or the community; he wants to make money. And you don't buy beef because of any other personal considerations, you just want to have dinner. And so, as John Locke put it, these interests are naturally harmonious, so we don't have to worry about anything. Everybody will maximize self-interest: the butcher will want to make money; I want to cook dinner; and that's all we have to do.

Tragically, that's not the way the world functions. If that were the case, there would be no bullying, there would be no sexual harassment, there would be no crime. We all are flawed human beings. So the question is,

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Under what conditions are we better than we would otherwise be? One answer is policing. A lot of police are hired, but that ends up producing all the famous problems of corruption and incarceration. The other idea is to pay people. For awhile, they wanted to pay people to read books, not to get pregnant, and such. A much more humane, a much more effective way, is when we have what's called informal social controls: when people do what's good, we appreciate it; and when we don't, we kind of gently call their attention to it. Now, you may think that's some kind of sociological fantasy, but let me ask you a question. What makes people not smoke in public? I've been traveling a lot across this country. I have not seen yet a single occasion of somebody lighting a cigarette in public, or on an airplane or a train, with the result being somebody threatening to call the police or the manager. At most people say, "Hey," and that's enough.

You have eight children, for instance. You know it's a big job. You take care of them not because the law requires it. There's a moral obligation. We don't tell our spouse, "I'll give you thirty days of healthcare because, when I got sick, you gave *me* thirty days of healthcare"—a kind of exchange theory. Rather we do it because we have a moral obligation to each other and we nurture it. The second reason, then, is that it not only improves our medical and physical and psychological health, but it simply makes us better human beings.

Next, we have the almost sacred moral language of our rights. It's very powerful and something to be proud of—the right to free speech and so on. But there are responsibilities. When young Americans are asked if they have a right to a jury trial if they're charged with a crime, they answer, "Of course, that's one of our rights." But then, when asked to serve on a jury, they say, "I'm very busy; find somebody else." You see the disjunction: on the one hand, people insisting, as they ought to, about their rights; but then not willing to give what it takes to keep those rights. Because if no one's served, there won't be a jury of your peers. That's the much bigger picture here: Americans want more. If you ask them, they want more services, more housing, more education, or free higher education, and on and on. When you ask them to pay taxes, they say, "Somebody else should." This is the same disjunction; it's "Give to me but I don't want to give anything back." Maybe more pernicious, Americans are very proud about when we

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went to Kosovo and stopped ethnic cleansing, when we went to Kuwait, and all about Iraq; but when you ask their children to serve, they very quickly point to somebody else. So, a sufficient, elementary, moral language needs to combine rights with responsibilities.

One more sentence now from what I call a liberal communitarian position. That's a long and complicated conversation for another day, when these two things come into conflict. Because we clearly need to worry about rights and responsibilities, but we also have to be concerned when these two conflict, how we sort them out, what takes priority.

Finally, I want to talk about the sixty million Americans—we can argue about the number—some people consider “white trash” and “rednecks,” and, most unfortunately, “deplorables.” They are bigoted and prejudiced, but are members of our community. I think we should remember they're all redeemable, and I frankly prefer the language of, “They're all God's children.” We should not approach them by dissing and dismissing them, but by treating them as people. We have to engage in conversation and when we do, we will find that they have their prejudices, but we also have some very serious blind spots. Many of our liberal colleagues think that free trade is the Holy Grail and anybody who questions free trade, or who denies climate change, is just one step above a Holocaust denier. Well, there never was free trade. All we have are different levels of administrators. You should start looking below the slogans. We do not allow people to buy drugs in other countries; we are very careful to examine this food that comes from China because they had stuff that killed children; there are things you don't allow to be sold or bought because of security concerns; NAFTA, the most famous free trade agreement, is full of environmental protection provisions. There *is no* free trade; there's just different degrees of administration. Why is that important? Once you acknowledge that, we can have a conversation. These people who feel that free trade is killing their livelihood and say, “Maybe we have to tweak trade”—it was never pure. In short, we need to build community not by dismissing our fellow members of community, but by bringing them in.

Lilla: Can I respond to that? It strikes me that you and I just spoke in somewhat different voices. I was speaking in a declarative voice and you

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were speaking more in an imperative voice, that is, what we ought to do. But it seems to me that before we get to “ought” we need to have a better understanding of where we are, and not only socially but also psychologically when it comes to community. As you were talking, it struck me that there are at least three ways that one can think about where we are in our relation to our feelings about communal ties. One is that we say we don’t want communal ties and we simply want to have rights without obligations. We want to be able to flit off whenever we want without having a thick social life, but it’s a mistake on our part because it’s making us unhappy. That’s not the metric, though, so let’s say “unhealthy,” okay? One is that we don’t know we have a problem, so we need people to be woke and for them to realize that they’re unhealthy, unhappy, and that requires a kind of enlightenment about it—and then perhaps they’ll turn to community. Second, one possibility is that people are already ill, and they know they’re unhappy like this, and so what’s missing there is not convincing them that they need more ties, but rather, providing the possibility for those ties either to redevelop, and prevent ties that exist from dissolving, right? That would lead us in a very different language of imperative voice. The third—which came in relation to what you said about rights and obligations—is that we contradict ourselves. We say we want things from the common, we want there to be a jury of our peers, but we don’t want to serve; so then the task would seem to be to make people realize that they’re contradicting themselves, and if they want to have the things they say they want, they also have to have this other thing.

Etzioni: I very much agree with you. I think we should allow the moderator to move on because, otherwise, I wish to repeat what you said. I very much agree that we need to take into account the three different situations you describe and will have to hone them differently.

Lilla: Do you think people are not yearning for community but they ought to? Or are they yearning for community but can’t get it? Or is it that they want some of the things of community but not the other things—the obligations that come with it?

Etzioni: In part it is the individualism we described, in its two forms: the expressive psychological form, where we’re encouraged to let it all

hang out; and the other is the instrumental form. You make more money than the other person. In part, they've been sold an ideology of selfishness and they've bought into it. We need to show them that there are other belief systems. In part, and that's something we haven't gotten into, some of them have very strong communities but have congealed along values which are antisocial. One of the mistakes of communitarians is to assume that a community is necessarily benign. A community is essential in terms because it provides social bonding. What we find in some parts of countries is not so much that they lack community, but that their communities have congealed on the wrong set of values.

Sareen: Maybe you could go a little bit deeper into your particular critique of identity politics as it is seen today. You talk about how we've become more narcissistic, right? There's such an incredible focus on the self that there isn't a possibility for people to think about the common good. And part of your response to that is that we need to start dialoguing with people who are different than we are. That makes a lot of sense, but I'm curious to know from where this originates? What needs to happen for me to see the other is good and worth engaging?

Lilla: That's a large question. We need to distinguish between interest politics and identity politics. Now, interest group politics may congeal around certain identities that we share with other people; we share a common destiny, we share a common history, we share common adversaries, right? So, you can have a kind of communal politics of African-American identity, a communal politics of women, and a communal politics of gays and lesbians, where the idea is that we have a common problem, we participate in a common political program, which means we recognize there are other political ends that we want to meet. We're willing to make trade-offs because we have to make trade-offs, and so all of that can contribute in a positive way to a politics where we are engaging with each other because we recognize something larger than ourselves, beginning with the group that we belong to. But what developed in the '80s and '90s was a different kind of identity politics that's focused on the very self. Your inner self. This picture of the self is not that you're bound to other things, but there's a special "homunculus" within you—the "you" within you; the little man or woman who has various characteristics, be they sexual or ethnic or whatever,

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and those things can be very, very, fluid. Your focus on yourself and how you think of yourself, and what you're seeking then in politics are two different things. You're seeking meaning because you're looking for your politics to be an expression, somehow, of what you are, rather than a position that could be right or wrong, but it's not you. The other is that you're looking for recognition, and that's a very powerful thing. I mean, Hegel's whole philosophy, his political philosophy is based on the notion that human beings want recognition from each other. It's not something politics can provide, actually, you know? I mean in society we find ways of doing it, but democratic politics is not about that; it's about achieving common ends. So what happened from, I think, the '60s and '70s to the '80s and '90s, is there was a shift from this group politic, this interest group politics around these identities, to a sense of looking for meaning. One of the reasons is that a sense of politics can be seen as an emanation of myself. I think this helps explain what otherwise remains inexplicable, which is why college students today are unbelievably sensitive and find it difficult to engage with others in order to debate political things or listen to each other. If, for example, my position on... I don't know, my position on interest rates has nothing to do with how I define myself as an individual, but your interest in politics is an emanation of your very self, and there's no gap between you and your opinions, then anyone who questions your opinions is questioning your sense of yourself. That's a very deep and shocking thing. That is the way so many young people think of themselves and of politics today. The range of their interest extends as far as their self-definitions and things affecting that, and they can't distance arguments from themselves. And when you can't even do that, can't distance an argument from yourself, you certainly can't engage with other people, right? And that just isolates you more.

Sareen: I like the way you describe it. "I'm X, you're not X, therefore you have nothing to say to me." There's no conversation possible.

Amitai, I want to get to your book that's coming out. It's a provocative title. I think most in this room would say that all that matters *is* our happiness, and that we ought to value, then, above all else, the free pursuit of our self-interest, at least towards happiness. You're suggesting we need to think a little differently. Help us understand.

Etzioni: Well, the one good place to start is a concept you'll find in all

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three major Abrahamic religions, and that is that we are flawed human beings. We know what's right, we know what's good, and we aspire to do it, which often means serving others in the common good—our children, our family, our country, protecting the environment. But we have also a debased side, urges that keep breaking through, and we are condemned to a life of struggle. The question, “What is a good life?” asks under what conditions can we get closer to the values we are aspiring to, and under what conditions are we failing more? Historically, most people accepted these religious prescriptions and, depending on the religion, they followed somewhat different courses but all tried to live up to what was defined by the religion as a better life, which was certainly not just “Make me happy.” Secularism set in, and social science, and social science pooh-poohed this idea, and said they have a much better explanation of human nature and a good life. Again, the economists are the leading sinners here, because they start with what is basically hedonistic materialism; the measure of how much you consumed, how much you bought, how many offerings you had. The idea is that the more goods and services you buy, the happier you're going to be. When people started piling up data upon data to show that people are willing to sacrifice material goods for other purposes, they said, Oh well, then you do it for your prestige. So, there's another form of happiness—you make yourself feel better. And then, by the way, there is a recent idea—certainly not Marx's—that if it gives you meaning, it's good. But we are told to disregard the substance of the meaning. If I join a gang and kill a lot of people, and it gives me a lot of meaning, then this philosophy says it's okay.

It's not simply a question of what makes you happy, or what gives you meaning; it is what the moral content of these things are. Now, it's not surprising that the social sciences shy away from this question, because frankly, the next step is to ask, “What is moral and what is not?” and that requires a moral judgment that they professionally don't want to make. But I don't think you can answer the question, “What is a good life, what is a life well lived?” without asking what is a morally preferred position and what's a morally inferior position. This reductionism, as it's called, is really far-reaching. There have been studies done, for instance, of people who, during WWII, risked their lives to save Jews. You would think that's got to be altruistic behavior, but no, the psychologists went and showed

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that really it was satisfying some mother complex people have. In all those studies they succeeded in somehow finding a way that, in the end, argued that altruism is a myth, and that everything is self-serving. The economists asked a question: Why would a soldier, when the hand grenade is soaring into the bunker, throw himself on the grenade to absorb the fragments and save his fellow soldiers? And the economists said—I'm not making this up—that the soldier calculated that, if he didn't throw himself on the grenade, he would be so horribly embarrassed that death would be preferable. I'm sorry, but that is unadulterated bullshit. The only reason you get that day in, day out, is because we don't want to allow the category in which people make sacrifices, major sacrifices, and give up their happiness for something they believe in. People die for their country not to get glory; how much glory do you have after you die?

To drive that point home let me tell you about a personal experience I had. One of my colleagues had a very bad stroke that left him unable to speak, and so weak that he had a hard time getting out of bed. His wife took care of him with some help, but she basically was wasting away, because it is a tremendous, difficult thing to do. I said, "Gladys, why don't you go for the weekend? I'll take care of him." And I tell you, it was one of the most difficult weekends I have ever experienced. Twice I wanted to call and say, "Come back, I can't do it!" Spending forty-eight hours with somebody and helping them, and talking to them, and they cannot respond at all—I found this very, very difficult. Now, was I happy after that weekend? That's an absurd notion, if by happiness you mean I had a great bottle of wine, or I saw a terrific movie. I felt I had lived up to my duty. And I think it's essential for good social science, and for good moral analysis, to distinguish the sense we have when we live up to our obligations and the sense we have when we have fun and serve our own narrowly defined needs. I'm not talking about a life of altruism. I don't say we should never have fun. I don't think people should never be happy. In fact, it's one mistake many of the counter-cultural reform movements make, going to the opposite extreme of people denying everything else only to sacrifice themselves for service. That may also be a bridge too far, but I think it makes a difference if you leaven and combine the pursuit of your self-interest and happiness with this service to others. A social worker, a nurse, a police officer—they can do both. But if you try to become somebody who manipulates the

stock market and you get happy in that way, it does not combine well with discharging your moral duties. And if you take or buy a drug that already has been developed, and you increase the price by five thousand times and laugh all the way to the bank, it may make you happy, but it will not serve the other part of you. I think the conversation has to start by realizing there *is* an inherent tension between our aspiration to be good persons and to be happy, and we should not reduce those two categories, because it makes for poor analysis and makes for a less good life.

Sareen: I'm really curious to go to the big question that comes out of this, which is: How do we recover this sense of "we"; we as a people? In your book, you go towards the idea that maybe we can start from our shared citizenship as Americans. My impression from the book—and correct me if I'm wrong—is that it's a possible starting point, but you spoke almost in mystical terms about what actually galvanizes us. What is it that calls us back to this awareness of our dependence on others, that we are a people? We're not just a bunch of individuals. What is it that recalls us to our unity? How does that happen?

Lilla: Given where we are now, the thing that most immediately does that is crisis. It's in moments of crisis that something comes out of us, right? After 9/11, after a hurricane, after a flood, something like that—something comes out of us and we discover, "Wow, there's been something growing inside that we had forgotten about." It comes out and then it seems to disappear again. Unless you have the moral equivalent of war all the time, you're not going to be able to induce people to you. You're not going to be able to flip that switch because we've ceased raising people to do this naturally, right? That's where you can argue that you can have a sense of community and shared obligation when it never occurs to people that there's a difference between their individual happiness and everyone else's happiness. They aren't faced with this dramatic choice to jump on the hand grenade or not. We don't live in that world anymore. If we really want to address this, we have to be very realistic about the way we are now. I mean, you go into politics, you go into history with the country you have, not the country you might wish for. We have to begin with a realistic portrait of ourselves—what are we like now? And the reason I talk about citizenship at the end of my book as a possible bond that we can appeal to

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in politics is that it's a fact. It's not an aspiration. In fact, we are all citizens and I think that you can begin building something morally and socially on a fact and only on a fact. You have to begin with something that's actually there in society, actually there in people's heads and not simply dream that one day people going to wake up and suddenly they're gonna feel things for other people. You have to begin there and maybe even begin with self-interest if that's where people are right now. You know, self-interest properly understood: it's possible to help people interpret their own self-interest in such a way that they start helping others. If in fact we are all citizens, then we can start saying that we are going to share a destiny whether we like it or not, because someone's going to be elected president and that president is going to make certain decisions that will determine our lives and the lives of our children and grandchildren, so we are all in this together. I'm not appealing to you, I'm telling you—we are all in this together. Given that, how do we work together? How do we develop a sense of an awareness about that so people enter into their political lives with that awakened?

History did the job for us in the twentieth century in this country. This was certainly not a very civic country prior to the 1930s. Civic in the local sense, perhaps, but it was a frontier, people were going off on their own. The combined effects of the depression and the war made it clear to everyone that we're in this together as citizens. We're going to face economic disaster if we don't come together and our way of life will be threatened by fascism. That stimulated a sense of civic liberalism, for lack of a better term, that blasted us from the '30s into the '70s, when it kind of petered out under the individualistic forces that I talked about earlier. I don't think we start addressing this problem simply by preaching about how nice it would be if we all started caring about each other and became more moral if people aren't there. You're not going to catch them. If you're serious about it, you have to begin where we are. That's why I don't think we can really be serious about reestablishing some of these connections unless we're willing to be really honest and clear-headed with ourselves about what kind of human beings we have become.

Sareen: We have to start with the facts in front of us. [*looks at Etzioni*] That's what you talk about, right? What is factual about us as human beings, perhaps culturally in a particular era, but also who we are. We are

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human beings and so for you, the same question: How do we recover it? I'm particularly interested in your answer because you've lived through some pretty traumatic times. As I mentioned earlier, I worry a little that we need a crisis, perhaps, to kind of wake us up to the fact that we do depend; that we have a common good. What do you think calls us to a "we"?

Etzioni: Often when I go to meetings or informal gatherings, people ask me, Oh you're a sociologist; explain to me drug addiction, explain to me crime waves and such, or economic development. And I always have to say it's complicated, because I don't believe that social science has a complete answer. Most people want a silver bullet, but I really believe there are often four or five causes involved. I'm happy about this question because, in this case, I believe there is a single thing that can make a huge difference and I call it "moral dialogues." We tend to have conversations about redefining what is right and what our purpose ought to be. It's very easy for us to conceive such a conversation at a dinner table or maybe in a town hall meeting, but it's very difficult for us to think about it with a million people, or that our nation can have a moral dialogue, unless you start thinking about what happened historically. What happened again and again is that somebody comes and raises an issue. Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring*, which triggered a billion-hour conversation, out of which came a new, shared commitment to the environment. I want to make this clear: in the 1950s, nobody felt anything morally about environment. People were tossing things out of their vehicles or apartments into lakes, and didn't think about it anymore. It's different now. Rachel Carson didn't make it happen. She was the triggering event that led to this conversation. Everyone can spend six hours asking why the ground was ripe, but the fact is that this moral conversation led not only to a shared, new moral obligation, but to policies and laws. Betty Friedan, meanwhile, wrote *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 and started the feminist conversation. But let me not go that far back. Let me talk about what's happening this week. We have a moral conversation about sexual harassment and it's not going to be an idle conversation. It's not going to end up with, "That's never going to happen again." Come and look at it two years from now, and you'll see there have been changes in attitudes, changes in laws, and changes in your behavior—significant ones.

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One last example. Very recently we had a conversation about gay marriage. Just to remind you how recent that is, it was President Clinton who signed the Family Defense Act, which twenty years ago defined marriage as being solely between a man and a woman. Eleven years ago, when President Obama moved into the White House, he didn't want to talk about gay marriage. A few years later, the Roberts Court legalized gay marriage and the public moved from a minority to a majority who supported it because we'd had a moral conversation. A moral conversation doesn't mean that everybody lines up. It's a nature of all conversation that not everybody joins, but it was enough to change what is considered the proper culture and was supported by attitude and below. We need now a moral conversation about what kind of nation we want. I very much agree with Mark's point about a citizen, but a nation is not simply a bunch of citizens. A nation for me is defined as a community invested in a state. There are many states that don't have communities. Afghanistan is a state but not a community. We have a nation, and most Americans feel some kind of moral involvement in their nation. When the globalist comments in this nation, and makes nationalism sound like a retarded position, they cut into the essence of the bond we still have; there can be bad and good nationalism, but to dismiss patriotism as standing in the way of progress is first of all sociologically mistaken. Patriotism is very much alive; it cuts across all these groups and therefore, in addition to building on citizenship, I think we have to build on the fact that most of us are still patriotic Americans. We have to have a moral dialogue—with all that means and wherever it takes us.

Sareen: Thank you. We have few minutes left for maybe one last question. Again I'll turn to you, Mark, but really the question is for both of you. You are both professors at universities. Mark, you've been critical of the universities in particular for not doing a great job of educating to this dialogue you mentioned earlier, promoting this conversation between people of different views. You referenced it earlier on, so I'm curious: in your own experience as a professor at Columbia—is it changing? What do you think needs to happen and what are you doing, perhaps, to help facilitate that change?

Lilla: Well, I'm very lucky at Columbia, because I teach in the core curriculum, which means I get to teach the Great Books. I always teach

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in the fall term, eighteen-year-olds, because they still believe that a book can change their lives. By spring semester, if they don't have me, they don't believe that anymore. [*audience laughter*] So the lucky ones come away with a sense that books can change their lives. The ambient feeling is we are there to serve the students, but that's understood by me in a very peculiar way. So much of what students will be studying is so they can get what they want. I'm there to get them to think about what's worth wanting and that means getting outside of yourself. It's not about anything reflecting your identity, but rather laying out possibilities for you to shape yourself in the future. At that age you're facing a great intellectual and spiritual adventure in your life—if you choose to take it. I find that if you talk to eighteen-year-olds that way, they are thirsty for it. That's what they came to college for, but that's not the atmosphere. There's a kind of cynicism; on the one hand, universities have become these ocean liners that are about so many other things—they're real estate firms, they're trained professionals in various ways, and the original notion of the university and even more just the college as a small thing—it's just kind of embedded there. It's like you're trying to pitch a tent on an ocean liner and you're trying to have this smaller experience. On the other hand, in the post-sixties intellectual environment, there is a kind of cynicism and narrow suspicion about higher things, but also about the notion that you actually can choose to become something, and that it's an adventure. And so, after you have a couple of generations of professors who don't think that way, have never been taught that way, have not taught other people that way, the habit dies out, you know? You try to do what you can in the classroom.

Is there something in us that is just bursting to seek a meaningful life connection with others, a thicker human relationship, and we're just being blocked by certain things that need to be removed? Sometimes, when I teach my eighteen-year-olds, I feel, Boy, this is easy. Just get out of their way and they do it. Other times, though, you sense that, no, they're lost, and it's no longer there. So I have my optimistic and pessimistic days.

Sareen: Amitai, I don't know if you have anything to add to that.

Etzioni: I'm sorry your asset is the last question, because I don't have good news. I think universities, which used to be part of the solution, have

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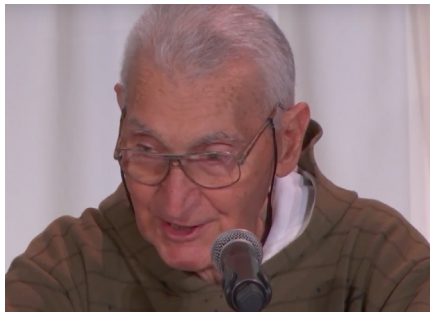
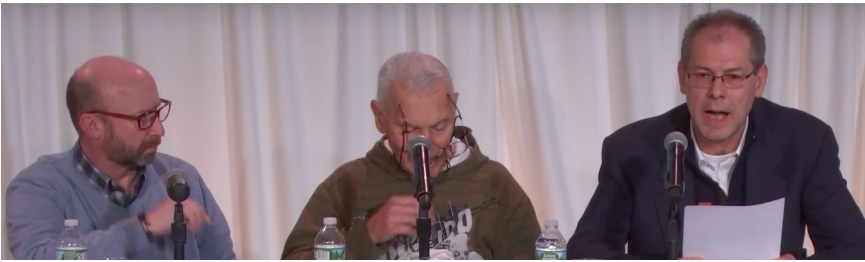
become part of the problem. And we have in major universities now a kind of identity politics driven to such extremes that dialogue has really become almost impossible. The notion that people get attacked for their viewpoints, attacked on free speech, that they are told that you cannot raise certain subjects because somebody may fall apart—all these notions are compartmentalizing us. In addition, there is this notion some people have that we have already arrived at 2050. The idea—at least as some Democrats hold it—is that demographic trends are naturally such that they can forget about all the white people, because from now on we're going to have a majority of minorities and so who has to be bothered? With these working-class people, all you have to do is align each one according to identity—gay, Latino, whatever. That's exactly what we did, missing the common ground and the normative foundation. There is room for diversity, and in diversity there is a richness that has to be diversity within unity, and not diversity that eliminates unity. I don't find that concept on campus. On the contrary, it's being attacked as a white construction to keep minorities down. Actually, a few weeks ago, there was an article in one of our major newspapers that said civility is a white trick to keep black people from talking. These kinds of lines reflect a much profounder issue: the notion that people are willing to push the identity differences to the *nth* degree. But it's particularly striking in the current political context, because if you're a progressive person—doesn't matter if you're Latino or black or Asian or gay or transgender—there is this one tsunami that hits all of these people, an enormous force known as Donald Trump and his partners. From a progressive viewpoint, you would think the first thing you want to do is worry about coalition building—getting together everybody who is in any way willing to line up with you against this guy appointing more Supreme Court judges, passing more legislation, etc. Instead, people are willing to tell white people, “Check your privilege” and drive them out. This is a sign that universities are part of the problem and not part of solution, and it's why we need you. That's why we need meetings that are not necessarily campus-based but community-based, so you can find someplace to have a civilized conversation.

Sareen: Thank you. I had the privilege of reading publications by both of these gentlemen and also listen to them. One thing I took from both of you is that there's this challenge. It's really a challenge to me, a challenge

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to all of us. We really need to step back and look at the human being with all of the factors that make us human, right? But we've got to get out of this dialogue we have at the moment, which is reduced: reductive happiness is the wrong metric. Meaning matters, service, responsibilities. Our belonging, our communal good, are things that are not just something that comes after we enshrine individual rights, but in fact are something intrinsic to who we are. I think that's a really compelling challenge for all of us. And then from you, Mark, the challenge that I took from this was to see the other as a good. This engagement with the other, dialogue with the other, whether it's in the universities or in the political sphere, whether it's for coalition-building as you described—the other is good. It's not just a politic, it's not just an exercise in power, that in order to engage the other I have to be convinced it's worthwhile. No, it's worthwhile. If I engage with the other, and the other is good, then it must be the case that I don't have a monopoly on truth, right? That I'm willing to converse with the other and through that discover what's true and good for me and society. The language that both of you use is so striking. You talk about our unity as need, but that it's not just that—we're all individuals and can't we all just get along, right? That's not the point. The point is that we have a need for unity that's intrinsic to who we are as human beings, so it's something we've got to start factoring in. Otherwise, we diminish ourselves as individuals and as a society.

What I get from this each and every day is the opportunity to do right. The opportunity to do right. God's so great. He's never given me what I deserve. Never. It's always been about His grace. I remember leaving New York in 1993. I'm gonna tell you folks, I couldn't dream of the journey He was gonna have me go on. What I want for men and women is the opportunity to enjoy the same ride. I've come to the conclusion that God determines who walks into our life, but it's on us to determine who stays. And they're not going anywhere. I thank you. [*audience applause*]



A Human Gaze, A History

*Presentation of The Life of Luigi Giussani by Alberto Savorana (McGill-Queens University Press, 2018), through eyewitness accounts of **Fr. Pigi Bernareggi**, missionary priest in Belo Horizonte, Brazil; **Pier Alberto Bertazzi**, former director of the Department of Clinical Sciences and Community Health, State University of Milan; **Rose Busynge**, founder of the International Meeting Point in Kampala, Uganda; **Jonathan Fields**, musician and composer; and **Shodo Habukawa** (via telecast) professor at Koyasan University, Japan. Introduced by **Fr. Julián Carrón**, President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, and moderated by **Alberto Savorana**, author of the biography*

Introduction

“Luigi Giussani considered Christianity to be a fact, a real event in human life, which takes the form of an encounter, inviting anyone and everyone to verify its relevance to life’s needs. This is what happened for so many people all over the world who recognized in this priest and leader, with his rough and captivating voice, not only a teacher to learn from, but above all a man to compare oneself with.

‘What is man that you are mindful of him, and a son of man that you care for him?’ (Psalm 8). No other question in life has struck me more than this one. There has been only one man on earth who could answer it for me, and he did it by asking a new question: ‘What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself? Or what can one give in exchange for himself?’ (Matthew 16:26, Mark 8:36, Luke 9:25). I have never felt implicated in this way by another question, leaving me breathless, like this question of Christ’s! Only Christ takes my entire humanity to heart. It is the wonder of Dionysius the Areopagite (in the fifth century): ‘Who will ever be able to speak to us of the love for man proper to Christ, overflowing with peace?’ I have repeated these words to myself for more than fifty years!

Sunday, January 14, 2018

A Human Gaze, A History

“Everything happened to me in a completely ordinary way, and the things that happened, as they happened, inspired wonder in me, because it was God who brought them about, weaving from them a history that was happening—and is still happening—in front of my eyes.”

The Life of Luigi Giussani, by Alberto Savorana, McGill, 2018



Alberto Savorana: Good morning and welcome, everybody, to this event on the occasion of the publication of the English edition of *The Life of Luigi Giussani*.

First of all, I want to thank Philip Cercone, Executive Director of McGill-Queen’s University Press, who published this book; and Chris Bacich and Mariangela Sullivan, who did the tremendous job of translating this daunting volume. Be careful: if you fly, you will have to check this in as an extra bag. But I also want to warmly thank Fr. Julián Carrón, because without his proposal in 2008, this book would not exist.

Many of you know that Fr. Carrón was chosen by Fr. Giussani to share in the leadership of Communion and Liberation, and that, after Giussani’s death, Carrón was appointed President of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation. Thus, we are grateful, very grateful, that Fr. Carrón could be with us in these days. I would like to invite him to make some opening remarks. Thanks. Fr. Carrón.

Julián Carrón: I am very pleased that finally we have the English edition of *The Life of Luigi Giussani*, because it’s a good opportunity for more English-speaking people to come to know him. The method used by Alberto Savorana is very important for meeting the figure of Giussani. As an educator, Giussani often spoke of himself, of his own experience, of what he learned, of his own history. What Savorana has done is to allow Giussani himself to speak. There are not many authors who can do this, but with Giussani it is possible because he returned many times to particular episodes of his life, and he shared with us in the Movement everything that he was learning along the way.

What we can see in these pages is the figure of someone who is totally won over by Christ. And we can see the level of richness and fulfillment life can attain when we are so attracted by Christ and we accept being attracted by Him. This is why reading this book is interesting. We can see a human existence with a level of intensity, of fulfillment, a plenitude, that many of us cannot even imagine. We can touch and see a person who is constantly reawakened in his vision, in his freedom, in his affection, by the presence of Christ. This is particularly important in this moment of history. Otherwise, why would Americans, people living in English-speaking countries, be interested in getting to know a priest, an Italian priest, of the last century? What could be the interest?

Last weekend I was in London. One of the participants of the meeting said, “In the past few months I had very few things to complain about. Both I and my wife got new jobs that we love, that give us stability and comfort. We are expecting our third child, and we’re very happy about it. We might even move to a better house. Everything fits. However, despite this superabundance of gifts, I often find myself bored and apathetic. For instance, I compare the awe and amazement with which I awaited the birth of my first child to the lack of surprise and general nonchalance with which, instead, I look at the birth of my third one. I can’t believe it.” Here is someone who is living a particularly successful moment in his life, and yet he is bored and apathetic.

A few days ago, a friend of ours spoke to me about a new book, *It’s Complicated* by Danah Boyd. She did in-depth research about social media and teenagers. The author was interviewed about the book. After she described the situation, how young people are trapped in social media, the interviewer asked her, “So, what can we do?” And she answered, “What we need is a reawakening. We need to ask ourselves what makes us happy—not what makes us happy in the moment, but what gives us joy in the long run—and follow that.”

The French writer Peguy—we are honored by the presence here of Archbishop Pierre—in *Veronique* says, “The entire problem for a genius is that everything is in learning...acquiring a skill. What kind of skill? To be in wonder.” The real problem is losing wonder and newness, losing our

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capacity for being surprised by reality. What counts is wonder, because without wonder we can have everything without being surprised.

This is the interesting thing that Giussani can offer us. In no other moment in history have we accumulated so many things; we have all the possibilities. We can do whatever we want, but, at the same time, we have lost our capacity for wonder.

Who can reawaken the 'I'? This is the challenge that Giussani faced in his own life. And his proposal is that only the presence of Christ can reawaken the 'I.' But what kind of Christ? Not only a set of rules or a set of lectures about Christ. Only the presence of Christ in a new humanity is able to reawaken our 'I,' to make us able to wonder again, to renew the possibility of wonder. Otherwise, life is boring and apathetic.

So, reading this book can give us some hints, some suggestions, for the most important interests that we have in life: to be happy, to be fulfilled, to recognize what is right, to rediscover the nature of Christianity, who Christ really is. And Luigi Giussani is a witness to this, a witness to something that was not only good for his own experience, but for everybody in this particular moment in history. He started in the mid-century to face the question that he met in the faces of the students at the beginning of the 1950s. We can see someone who offers us the richness of his journey. Instead of devoting his life to an ecclesiastical career, he decided to accompany people to this fulfillment. This is the book that we are presenting this morning.

Savorana: Thank you, Julián. As you said, the life of Father Giussani is a path; it is a witness. Let's take a moment to better understand this witness through this short video on the life of Father Giussani.

[*VIDEO*]

Savorana: During his homily this morning, Cardinal O'Malley talked about the culture of encounter that the pope invites us to live. In 2015, Pope Francis addressed Communion and Liberation during an audience in St. Peter's Square in Rome, and he said, "You know how the experience

of the encounter was important to Fr. Giussani, the encounter not with an idea but with a person, with Jesus Christ. Thus, he educated in freedom, leading to the encounter with Christ, because Christ gives us true freedom...Everything in our life today, as in the time of Jesus, begins with an encounter. An encounter with this Man, the carpenter from Nazareth, a man like all men and at the same time different. Let us consider the Gospel of John, where it tells of the disciples' first encounter with Jesus. Andrew, John, Simon; they feel themselves being looked at to their very core, intimately known, and this generates surprise in them, an astonishment, which immediately makes them feel bonded to Him."

That is the reason why the life of Fr. Giussani is a historical journey of self-awareness. As Carrón said, he learned so much as time went by that he once said, "For me, history is everything. I learn from history." His life and vocation were made up of thousands and thousands of events and encounters.

Among those who had the pleasure to encounter Giussani are some of our panelists today. In fact, we have a panel of speakers who met Fr. Giussani at different times of his life, from Milan to Japan, from Uganda to New York. Giussani claimed that Christianity is an event that has the form of an encounter with a different humanity. Our speakers will tell us what that meant for each of them, meeting Christianity not as an idea, a doctrine, or an ethics, but in a person, a concrete presence in daily life.

We begin with Fr. Pigi Bernareggi, who has been a missionary priest in Belo Horizonte in Brazil since 1964. He met Father Giussani in October 1954. Giussani reminisced, "I remember it like it was yesterday. The Berchet classical high school at nine in the morning on the first day of school in October 1954. I remember the feeling I had as I climbed those few steps up to the entrance of the school with my heart brimming with the thought that Christ is everything for the life of man, that truth has to reach those young people in order to be active."

And Giussani declared his intention to his students from the first lesson. "I'm not here so you can take my ideas as your own. I'm here to teach you a true method that you can use to judge the things I will tell you."

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And he clearly pointed to the goal of this method: “to show how faith could be relevant to life’s needs. Only a faith arising from life experience, and confirmed by it, could be strong enough to survive in a world where everything is pointing in the opposite direction. The pertinence of faith to life’s needs means that faith corresponds to the fundamental, original need that all men and women feel in their hearts.”

Pigi Bernareggi: I’m thankful for this invitation, which was completely unexpected for me, because for me to come here to speak about the years that I lived with Don Giussani is an immense joy. Therefore, I don’t even feel worthy of this meeting.

The backdrop of the presentation I’m going to give is the Italian city of Milan between 1954 and 1964. Only a decade. I met Father Luigi Giussani in October of 1954. I was a student in the public high school Giovanni Berchet, which was the most prestigious classical high school in the city. I was fifteen years old, and it was the first year that Father Giussani, then thirty years old, taught religion in the public high school. At that time, Italian public schools were the subject of the most ferocious invasion of what was called laicism or secularism, which consisted of showing that only a culture that was absolute, absolutely atheist, scientific, and capitalist, was worthy of the economic boom that had taken place in Europe in the postwar years.

So we had twenty-four hours per week of classes, and only one of those was religion. The rest was a secularism that was pure and battle-hardened. But, that one weekly hour of class with Don Giussani was worth more in terms of human and spiritual formation than all the others put together. In my class, called “First E,” immediately, two opposite tribes or bands were created. Two parties were created: those who were either for or against Fr. Giussani, or Fr. “Gius,” as we all started to call him at that time. My deskmate was Dino Quartana, who had a strong Christian formation because his brother, Pino, was one of the leaders of the Focolare movement founded by Chiara Lubich. He was one of those who immediately declared himself for Don Giussani, together with another student named Achille Lega, who was a Europeanist following the example of the great leaders of the united Europe, like Schuman and Alcide De Gasperi, great Christian

statesmen. But I decided to follow Don Giussani because he was the only one who gave value to my most profound certainties, that God existed and that He is a Father to me.

During my three years in classical high school, a friendship with Don Giussani grew among us. He used to invite us over to his house in Viale Lazio, and, later on, in Via Valmaggia, for conversations about everything that could be interesting and helpful to us. He played classical music for us as a way of showing human genius as expressed through art. I was particularly struck by the choral songs of the Red Army choir, the Russian army choir, because they expressed a very clear sentiment of communion and fraternity amongst the people, the opposite of what was in Italy at the time.

He opened our eyes. Fr. Giussani opened our eyes to the presence of God in everything: life, the world, peoples, civilizations. Thus God became ever more the center, the meaning, and the attractiveness of everything—the very heart of our lives. And the Church became the common home for all of us. Our parents wanted to meet with Fr. Giussani. They invited him to our house, and he became a family friend of all of us. And, with him, even our families began to flourish again, fascinated by his humanity and by his brotherly embrace.

Fr. Giussani's creativity was limitless. And he involved us in it, provoking us to accompany him along this path of boundless creativity. For instance, the meetings that we had in the office in Via Statuto, which right away began to be called "Radius"; the meetings at the sea in Varigotti; summer and winter vacations in the mountains; city-wide conferences about the most important issues of our time. These were all the main initiatives that defined our lived-together Christian life, culture, charity, and mission. There were the retreats that we had at the Hermitage of San Salvatore and at Villa of Gazzada; the beginning of Christian communities even in universities and in the working world; the meetings we had in Subiaco at the Hermitage of Saint Benedict. And then there were the countless important people that Fr. Giussani invited to dialogue with us: Father Aime' Duval; or Raul Follereau, the apostle of the lepers; or Father Cocagnac, the Dominican, who carried away my best friend Dino Quartana to the Dominican Order;

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or Father Romano Scalfi, who founded the Christian Russia movement with his extremely dangerous trips behind the Iron Curtain: he used to bring suitcases full of Bibles behind the Iron Curtain at that time, which was very dangerous; or the great American action painter William Congdon, who decided to live definitively with us; or Father Werenfried van Straaten, who was called the “Bacon Priest,” because he collected food for the starving peoples in the time after World War II. And so many others.

In our first group of boys and girls, we were all about eighteen years old. And yet Fr. Giussani would send us to create and to follow Christian communities in schools all over Italy, throughout Italy, depositing in us his most sincere trust and causing us to grow in the exalting experience of generating Christian communities wherever we might be sent.

For me, a fundamental thing was what we called the “Monday Group,” which later came to be called Grupo Adulto, and today, *Memores Domini*. It was created to help people verify their vocation to virginity for Christ in all its possible forms. And it is thanks to the Monday Group that, in 1964, I and some companions, classmates, crossed the Atlantic and came to the Americas, to Brazil. I became a diocesan priest, as I still am, with great joy in the service of the Church. And, following the words of Pope Pius XII, which were the theme of one of our first student gatherings in Milan, I began “living the dimensions of the world.”

I carry with me always my living experience of Fr. Giussani, of a true fatherhood that makes me always feel him to be present in everything I do and in everything that happens to me—as you can see from this little card, this note that he sent me when I became very sick in Brazil in 1999:

Dearest Pigi,

I believed that God had struck only me, so that I might offer my life for all those whom he chose with me and caused to walk with me. Instead, I have come to understand that he has also struck you. I beg the Lord who loves you, as Christ loves now and loved then his apostles, first of all, that He may never fade away in your memory—not a recalling, but memory. Secondly, that He may cause you to understand that the cross is the condition for the resurrection. And third, that

to you, who have been faithful in little things with yourself and therefore with all of being and with all beings, He may cause to experience that greatness that man's heart, although still in the valley of tears, is already called to experience, because heaven has a subtle beginning in this life. I am extremely grateful to you. You are for me at the highest horizon of my existence. Thank you, above all, for what you have given to all mankind in the name of and for the love of Christ. I hope that you will get well soon, right away, and that you are able to carry out your task with patience. I embrace you.

Don Gius

March 9, 1999

Thank you very much.

Savorana: Thank you, Father Pigi.

Bernareggi: Amazing grace.

Savorana: We now turn to Pier Alberto Bertazzi. He is the former director of the Department of Clinical Science and Community at the State University of Milan. Pier Alberto met Giussani at the beginning of the sixties and remained tied to him during 1968, when thousands of young people abandoned Giussani's movement to join social and political protests. He was at the origin of the name "Communion and Liberation," which was the title of a flyer that Pier Alberto wrote in 1969 and distributed at the State University of Milan. While many chose to depart from the Movement, Bertazzi decided to remain and not to follow the protest. And, for me, it was impressive to hear the reason he gave: "For me, staying in 1968 was a matter of pure affection." Pier Alberto.

Pier Alberto Bertazzi: Thank you very much. Father Giussani used to say that the most important things were the ones he was telling us in public, not privately. This might sound strange to some of you or to many of you, but if you read the book about his life, you realize why he used to say so. And the point is that what he wanted was not to communicate a list of instructions on how to become good Christians. What he desired, instead, was to make us, each of us, aware of a Presence—with a capital *P* by the way—and everything else would follow.

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What I intend to do in the next few minutes is to share a few moments in my life when this became particularly clear to me.

I met Father Giussani for the first time not in the high school, as Pigi, but during the 1962 Christmas holidays in my high school, when I accepted the invitation of some classmates to a vacation in the Alps. I went with them skiing, but what I met was something I didn't even know existed: not an amazing vacation, but life, an everyday life, real and full of meaning, something I realized I was longing for but without being aware of it. At that time, I was, so to speak, an average Catholic boy, attending Mass on Sunday and participating in some parish activities. Yet, during that vacation, when I attended for the first time the Mass celebrated by Father Giussani and the short evening prayer in front of the beautiful Dolomites painted pink by the sunset light, it was a completely unanticipated and new experience.

Previously, the moments of Mass and prayers had been like putting life on pause, so to speak. Here instead, those same moments, guided by that young and skinny priest, Fr. Gius, were giving the proper place to all the pieces that made up my day and my life.

A few years later, in 1967, the youth rebellion that had exploded at many university campuses worldwide reached Milan. It was the moment—in the words of Father Giussani—when the experience of the movement underwent the biggest jolt. To me, it also was probably the moment when I took the most important and determinant step in my life.

What happened was that, for many in the movement, the social issues that emerged with the youth protest seemed not to find a response in the experience we were living. For them, the fight for justice, equality, and authenticity, both in public and personal life, required a political struggle that completely rejected the past in order to build up a new world. This was, in essence, what my closest friend told me one morning following the Sunday Mass of the Movement at the Santo Stefano Church in the center of Milan, just a few blocks from the Duomo. Eventually, they told me, “We need to get involved in this rising revolution. Let’s go! Will you come with us?” I don’t know how, but my answer, immediate and somehow

surprising to me, too, was “No! I will not come. Exactly because of what I’ve learned while staying with you. Exactly because of what I’ve learned by staying with you!” That companionship, the most beautiful and, in my mind, the most unshakable thing I’d ever met was actually fading away. Yet what the companionship had introduced me to was still there, still real and fascinating as the most decisive factor for my life and for the entire world.

In the following months, the Movement, which at that time was called GS, “Student Youth,” found itself deserted by probably the majority of its members, including many leaders, as Pigi already mentioned. In the realm of public opinion, it had essentially disappeared. Yet, as a matter of fact, it was not so. Sure, the organization was not there as before any longer, but—and here is the secret—there were still people around. A bunch of friends at the Milan universities got together, as many others did in other settings. We got together to continue the experience we had begun in high school. And so the decision to create something to express and propose our experience came naturally. The result was, as Alberto mentioned, a full-page bulletin titled “Communion and Liberation.” Why? Because we intended to communicate that liberation was the need we all shared and, at the same time, to make know that we had met an experience, communion, that was responding, corresponding, exactly to that need. Other students started to call us “those of Communion and Liberation,” but only in the sense of “those who are printing the ‘Communion and Liberation’ bulletin,” noticing, by the way, and with great dismay, that the Movement was still around and alive.

This was in late 1969. The Movement at that time started to gather once again around Father Giussani. And during a meeting, a copy of the bulletin hanging on a wall caught Father Giussani’s eye. “There it is!” he exclaimed, looking at it. “Because we are the name the university students gave themselves”—which we didn’t; actually, it was just a bulletin. “Because communion is liberation.” This is the way CL became the official name of the Movement.

In the following years, a real flourishing of the Movement took place in many, many, universities all over Italy. In March 1973, a crowd of over 5,000 university students from all over Italy—and from Switzerland too—

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crammed into the Palalido, the stadium of the Milan basketball team—not a major one, but a good one. The media were dumbfounded. CL was supposed to have disbanded, dispersed. Father Giussani did not come to the meeting until lunchtime. He spent the morning in a monastery praying the rosary because he felt that there could be violence on the part of other groups. Instead, as he said, it went off well, even convincingly. Everybody was extremely happy.

However, Fr. Giussani took note also of something equivocal, which he later pointed out in this way. The success of the meeting at the Palalido was paradoxically at the origin of a misinterpretation that for some time affected in a non-positive way the life and the development of the Movement. Oh my God! With all the work we did, the passion we put into it night and day, we thought we had really done well. He acknowledged our good intention to act according to the experience of the Movement. But he also noted that we were playing on the field that others had set, and we wanted to demonstrate, in some way, that we could do better. The issue instead, as he noted, is not so much about organizing ourselves to do something, to think up or save some structure; but rather, it is an event inside ourselves. If that is in place, then adult people will go on to create structures as the work of their hands.

In 1978 I came to study in the United States for a couple years, and it was a very productive and positive time. At that time, I was already in *Memores Domini*, or “Grupo Adulto,” and I was here alone. My contact with Italy was only via “snail mail”: I received letters and small envelopes with recorded audiotapes of *Memores Domini* retreats three to four times during the year. Despite this, I should say, I never felt so close to Father Giussani, united with him even though I’d never been so far away for such a long period of time. A strange presence, but real. I think that Cardinal Ratzinger clearly expressed the reason for this in his homily for Father Giussani’s funeral. He said, “Fr. Giussani has truly become the father of many, and, by guiding people not to himself, but to Christ, he has truly conquered hearts. He has helped make the world better. He has helped open up the doors of the world to heaven.” In other words—I think I can say—he made the impossible become experience. Thank you.

Savorana: Thank you, Pier. Our next speaker is Shodo Habukawa, Master of the Buddhist Temple in Mount Koya and professor at Koyasan University in Japan. He met Father Giussani in 1987 during Giussani's trip to Japan. Now we will listen to Habukawa recounting his encounter with Giussani in an interview recorded by Maurizio Maniscalco last August in Italy.

[*VIDEO*]

Maurizio Maniscalco: We are here at the Rimini Meeting in Italy, and we have the joy of being with Master Habukawa, who had a personal encounter with Father Giussani. We would like to ask him a few questions about that. On what occasion, and why, did you get to meet Father Giussani? How did the relationship unfold throughout the years?

Shodo Habukawa: I met Fr. Giussani in 1987. It was June 27 in the afternoon. I remember very well when he arrived at Mount Koya. He approached us from the east like a great light that was coming up, or the rising sun; that was my impression. I remember he said, "My name is Luigi Giussani" as he came over and embraced me strongly. It was one of those scenes you never forget, and indeed I will remember it forever. That same day, later in the afternoon, we had a beautiful meeting: myself; Mr. Takagi, the former rector of Koyasan University, the University of Mount Koya; and Father Giussani. I was impressed because Father Giussani knew a lot about Japan and Kobo Daishi, the founder of Shingon Buddhism, who lived in the ninth century. I was impressed he came prepared to that meeting. I was moved by his attention.

One thing that I remember very well is how Father Giussani spoke about our world today, saying that we were becoming more and more dependent on money and on the economy, but that this does not work. He said to us that in spite of how different we were, we had to work together to recover man's religious sense, and he asked me to help him in this, to walk together with him in the search for truth.

Maniscalco: And what did this encounter mean for your life and faith through all these years?

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Habukawa: Fr. Giussani and I were friends for thirty years, and I always felt him present at my side walking with me. I still perceive his presence with me today. He is in paradise, yet he is with me.

Maniscalco: Beautiful! We hope to have you at some point in New York with us, and I'm sure that Fr. Giussani would rejoice.

Savorana: This mysterious relationship between Father Giussani and Habukawa, it seems to me, was the most amazing example of his gaze on man. In the biography, Father Stefano Alberto recalls one of the first meetings between Habukawa and Fr. Giussani in Milan:

It was a sweltering summer morning. Professor Habukawa went out and then down the stairs and into the car to leave the courtyard. He rolled down the rear window of the car and turned his entire upper body outward, keeping his hands pressed together. As the car pulled away, he never broke eye contact with Father Giussani, who kept waving from the bottom of the stairs. Then, at a certain point, Father Stefano recalls, Giussani began to cry, and he told us: "If that man had lived 2,000 years ago, if he had met Christ, he would be one of the Apostles."

This is an example of this gaze on human experience. And we find yet another unlikely encounter in Rose Busingye. She is a founder of the International Meeting Point in Kampala, Uganda. Father Giussani first learned of her through a letter she wrote to a friend when Rose was only seventeen years old. He talked about this letter in 1984 during a meeting with the university students in Milan. He asked to read it "as an example of the most divine thing Christ brought to earth, a letter that was written by a seventeen-year-old girl from Uganda who knew Father Tiboni, the responsible of Communion and Liberation at that time in Uganda." "After Rose met the Movement in Uganda," Father Giussani said, "it was like she was reborn. It was a whole other world; a whole other world lived in this world."

Rose Busynge: I greet everybody. I was born in a Catholic church, in a Catholic family. I grew up knowing who God was. I knew that God exists, but I thought He had nothing to do with my life because, when my mother

used to pray the rosary with all my brothers, I would sleep. And they woke me up when they were on the “Hail Mary,” and I would say the “Our Father.” When my mother would go out of the house, she would kneel down and say, “Hi, Jesus, I’m going out. You will be the one to bring me back to my house.” So I thought, “I will never manage those things.” I thought that God had no space for me in His heart. I thought that God wants the people who are pure, like my mother, who can finish the rosary, and my brothers. I thought that I was unworthy of God.

When I was twelve years old I met a priest, a Combonian Father, and he gave me the books of Father Giussani. They were so strange that the only thing that I got from them was that God became flesh. I remember that I went back to Father Tiboni and I asked him, “Does this flesh that God became have something to do with mine?” He told me, “Yes, God came for you and for me, who are incapable and nothing. If we were able, we would have been God’s slaves, and God would not have come.” So, God began to be interesting. I found the Movement without knowing what it really was, but I wanted to know this God who embraces the whole of my humanity.

Then, I personally met Father Giussani in a mountain town in Italy called Corvara. I found this priest moving around, praying the rosary, and at a certain moment he entered the same elevator I entered. And he looked at me and asked me, “Are you Rose?” Since I had only ever seen Father Giussani in photocopies of his photo, I didn’t know who he was. So, I asked him whether he was Father Giussani, and he hugged me while the elevator doors were opening and closing. No one was pressing the button.

That gaze, a man who didn’t know me, a human being with that gaze... I thought, “God may be behind this.” Then he gave me an appointment to see him. I went to see him and that was the beginning of my life.

It was the beginning of my world and, I think, the end of slavery. Another way of living. We were talking, and his gaze was always as if he were telling me, “You are mine. I want to stay with you. You have an infinite value.” I thought he did not understand who I was. I was explaining about my sins, my nothingness. I told him, “I don’t even know how to pray the rosary.” And he told me, “You see, Rose, even if you were the only human being

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on earth, God could have come for you.” Then he corrected himself. “No, He came for you, because God doesn’t come to earth for a gang of men. In front of God, every human being is unique, like the only child. He came for you, He died for you, so that your nothingness may not be lost. And he will be always with you until the end of time.”

Here it was as if my world was turned upside-down. What I knew turned upside down. My life gained a value, a destiny, a beauty—that beauty that he was always talking about, with a capital *B*. Father Giussani did not know me. I was wondering what he could see in me, because it was evident that in that moment I was still nothing. But I felt desired and embraced. It was as if God were telling me “You are mine.”

From this gaze, everything was born. In this gaze, I discovered that I was not defined by my limits and sins, but by that personal relationship with which God makes me be and constitutes me as an infinite desire of His. In that gaze, my belonging to Christ became an experience of a bond that defines me forever. In that gaze, I discovered that Christ is in me, that he loves me so much, that he keeps me, that His heart vibrates for me, that He calls me, He chooses me. I discovered that through this relationship I can enter into a free relationship with other things. Through this fullness of Him, I can enter into a free relationship with others.

From that gaze I began to live; I began to foresee a meaning for my life. It’s as if light dawned on everything. I began to discover the truth of my life. From here, I began to develop a tenderness for my own life and the life of others. From Father Giussani I began to live truly, because I discovered how to respond concretely to the question “Who am I?” When this “Who am I?” became a precise face that had a name, I became free. Paradoxically, I became free by belonging, that is, by having a bond.

When you are free, finally, you can stay in front of everything without fear. You can stay in front of everything because you know of whom you are. The one who is free does not claim anything from others, because he has everything. I discovered that the work of life is in everything I do, in everything I touch, be it eating or crying—even crying!—but crying to everybody that Christ is everything and has to do with life. I was crying

to everybody that life has a meaning, that life is important, that life has a value.

And I remember that for Father Giussani there was nothing that was banal. Even eating with him, holding a glass of wine—it was as if it were something important for the whole of his life. In fact, many times I also used to hold it, and I don't even drink. It was because of wine, wine! It was as if it were something so beautiful. Staying with him at the table, even if there were a hundred people, you felt as if you were the only one. And when I asked everybody, they used to say "Yes, it is the same for me." I felt that if you are in front of Father Giussani, it is as if you are the only one. For him, everything on the table was precious. I could tell you many stories. For example, once there was a small type of bread on the table, a kind of breadstick that in Italy is called *grissino*. And when he grabbed this *grissino* in his hands, he explained how it was made. It was as if it were something of another world, something so precious.

I'm sure that every time I sat with Father Giussani I asked myself, "But, if a human being can be like this, if a human being can really treat me like this, what about God?" You wouldn't come out from a room where Father Giussani was without going back to God.

At a certain point I read about *Memores Domini*, those who live the presence of Christ in all aspects of their lives. So I thought, "Yeah, even my nothingness." So, I went to Father Tiboni, and I said, "Who are these *Memores Domini*?" And he told me, "No, no, you cannot make it." He added, "You cry in front of all the problems. Those people of *Memores Domini* are called the 'Grupo Adulto,' that is, people who are responsible about their destiny. And, moreover, you are still young. No, you are not fit for them." So, I asked him, "Can I go to ask Father Giussani?" He said yes and I went to Father Giussani. And while I was staying in a *Memores Domini* house I was told, "You are young, you will spend twenty years in the novitiate." And, as you may know, in *Memores Domini* there is only a first year of novitiate, "A," and then a first year of novitiate, "B."

So, I went to Father Giussani, all the while saying to Christ, "You see? What I only want is You. What is really necessary to stay with You? Even

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if I cry, I want to cry with You.” So, I went to Father Giussani asking him not to make me do twenty years of novitiate! And, at a certain moment, I even thought to add more years to my age, so that he could make me do it immediately. When I arrived, he didn’t ask me anything. He told me that all the members of *Memores Domini’s* governing board agreed that I could make the definitive promise in *Memores Domini*. Then I said, “But some were telling me ‘so and so’ and others ‘so and so.’” And I asked him, “Father Giussani, do you know how old I am?” He said, “Don’t worry! Even if you were five, I was going to make you enter.”

Then I told him, “Father Giussani, you know, I don’t even know what these *Memores Domini* are. I only read an interview in a newspaper.” So, he asked me, “Do you love Christ?” I said, “Yes, Yes!” “Do you want to give Him your life?” I said, “No!” So, he asked me why and I told him, “Well, you know, Father Giussani, I don’t have anything in my life that is important enough to give to Christ, but I want that He would take this nothingness that I feel.” And he got up and he hit the table with his fist and told me, “Tell everybody, always, tell everybody! Because many want to have something important to give to Christ, so that they, for their entire lives, wait for a reward. It is He that prefers what is nothing and saves it.”

I was shocked, because I couldn’t understand what was happening. It was as if, in that moment, the Mystery really got me, and I was staggering. There would be so many things to say

Every time you looked at him, you would really wish to see God. You would not fear to see God. And every time I went out of his house after visiting him, I felt as if I could be a protagonist, and even fire would not burn me. And it is something that moves me up to now, that is real. I thought that, growing up, I would gain something important to give to Christ, but, as I go ahead, I have found that it is my nothingness that goes ahead of me. And I am moved that, even in this moment, even now, He gets me, He gets this nothingness that I am and saves it. Thank you.

Savorana: Thank you, Rose. Next up is Jonathan Fields. I will never forget Jonathan’s call that I received on the evening of September 11th, just after another call. It was afternoon in Milan, and Maurizio Maniscalco had

called me from Brooklyn, where it was nine o'clock in the morning. He was at the barber, and he said, "Alberto, turn on the TV." I did. The Twin Towers were under terrorist attack. I immediately warned Father Giussani, and suddenly Giussani called Jonathan, who was at that time leader of the CL community. Jonathan took notes on Giussani's comments and spread his words throughout the American communities.

Jonathan Fields: Well, I don't speak Italian, so I didn't exactly get the direct call, but I remember that day very well. Riro was on his way to Houston to visit a community, and he was going to get a haircut before. I was on my way to work in downtown Manhattan, David Horowitz Music Associates, which is where I worked, on 23rd and Park South. On the train—the train was slow as usual—and it was a Tuesday, and I remember thinking, "Oh, I'm going to be late." And as the train slowly emerged onto the bridge, the Manhattan Bridge, the car became silent. Now, I don't look when I hear that silence. I don't look out because, in New York, it could be anything. You don't look. But this was really silent. The person next to me touched my hand and said, "Hey buddy, you should look at this." And I looked out, and the two towers—we had been underground during the two planes attacking—were on fire. And they just kept the train there, and we were just watching. Silence. Finally, we go under, and we come out at 14th Street. Fortunately, the towers are about half a mile away. We come out on 14th Street, and cell phones are blocked; you can't call. And we're looking, and we see the first tower fall; we watch it fall. There's an exodus of people coming up Park Avenue with ashes. Now, this is, you know, this is New York City. I mean, other places in the world, I think, have a lot of instability and are used to poverty, used to situations like this. This is the center of the world. This is the place that claims to control the destiny of the world, New York City. And its symbols of power, the one I saw, fell to the ground, with the smoke billowing out. It was just—shock. It looked like one of those zombie movies. All those movies about zombies, I think, are just us replaying that moment. So, I finally got to the DHMA and that's when I received a call from, I think, Maria Teresa Landi or Riro—I forget who—but they were tidbits of things: "Say this, Don Giussani is saying this. Don Giussani's saying this."

I wanted to just read what he said, because I really don't remember. I had

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been in the Movement a number of years and I'd been Catholic for a number of years; I'll go back to that in a minute. But the impact of that destruction was unspeakable. To this day, the wound is strong. It was like New York was reduced to nothingness, not just me. And all of civilization was being reduced to nothingness.

So, the impact was huge, and out of this a voice came, translated by Maria Teresa. Here's the desperation of a father, I think, for his children, for the world, for history, for everything. And basically he said, he wanted this message to go to all the people of the community of the U.S.

"We must remain steadfast in our judgment to compare everything with what has happened to us"—the encounter we've had, this embrace of our nothingness—"in this tremendous and grave moment." This blew me away, this I remember: "We must repeat this judgment to ourselves, first of all." Now, he's calling me to try to counter this. I wanted to run, I had no faith, nothing could stand in front of what was happening. And he says this: "The moment is at least as serious as the destruction of Jerusalem." So he's putting it within faith history, a journey context. "It is entirely within God's Mystery. Everything is a sign." These messages were coming in one call after the other, because he was so moved, and it was just very dramatic. "Everything is a sign. Let us pray to Our Lady. The ultimate definition of reality is that it is positive!" And I saw the tower fall. We were in the room with my boss, and I heard her scream. Thousands of people were dying in those moments in New York City! "Let us pray to Our Lady. The ultimate definition of reality is that it is positive. And God's mercy is the greatest in the world. This is certain. We must remain steadfast in hope. Thank you, everyone, one by one by one, for being there."

And then she said to me, "He needs to know every one of us is safe." So, we were on the phone all day locating every person in the community, and in Washington, too, where planes also hit.

I think what I want to talk about is from those words, because I'm one born out of time. I really did not meet Father Giussani in the flesh until later. I had seen him, but not had a personal encounter. Where did I encounter Father Giussani, that gaze? I encountered it first in the friends I met when

I encountered the Movement. Then, in his words.

But I want to digress just a little bit, to when the book, *The Religious Sense*, was published. I have a friendship with my boss. I'm a composer, and I compose commercial music. My boss, David Horowitz, is an amazing composer, an amazing artist with a huge heart and passion for beauty. He was my mentor. I was a young apprentice with him at twenty-four, and we would compose music all day. At night he would play music for me and educate me, and he would talk to me about his encounters with Miles Davis and Gil Evans and try to communicate the history of the tradition of music through hard work, through the craft.

Watching him compose for eight hours, sweating over the smallest detail to make beauty more beautiful—we would talk about beauty. He knew I converted—he's Jewish also—and he wasn't scandalized by that, because he knew Catholicism had something to do with the encounter with beauty.

So, when I gave him *The Religious Sense*, it was like Don Giussani became part of our little friendship, because Giussani clarified that beauty has a capital *B*. And this is what David said when he was at the United Nations, and this is from *The Religious Sense*. His attention was drawn to a line that said, "The attraction of beauty follows a paradoxical trajectory: the more something is beautiful, the more it refers one on to something else. The greater the art (let us think of music..." This is Don Giussani, this is in the book, so David was reading this. We were like those two disciples waiting for the Messiah. You know, I think having this love of beauty, that comes maybe from our tradition, our Hebrew tradition, we were waiting for the clarity of what this passion was. And in that book the clarity came. Because, Giussani says, "The greater the art (let us think of music), the more it flings wide open, does not confine desire. It is a sign of something else." And David said, "The Other is exactly what I want to express, recognize, and search for in every aspect of my life. It is what I saw as a child in the synagogue in Brooklyn, in the mystery of old men reciting prayers, and in Rimini."

David went to Rimini. David actually met Father Giussani way before I did. And, thinking about the gaze and of what Father Giussani said about

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David—David has beautiful eyes that seem to be peering out to the infinite always, and Father Giussani recognized that immediately. I remember his wife saying, “Yeah, Father Giussani said something about David’s eyes.” So the gaze, the affirmation of this was what David was searching for, the humanity of what David was searching for.

Here is David: “In Rimini I met a great Rabbi, David Rosen, who came from Jerusalem to experience the energy and enthusiasm of the Meeting. The path to return to myself seems clearer than before.” And he said—this is what David’s definition of the religious sense for him was, something similar to this journey—“It is the path of discovery.”

So now, in front of this positivity, the buildings fall. Giussani’s voice is crackling, coming over the waves, like we’re in war, and you can’t quite hear. I mean, you’re trying to grab onto these words and you know you’re passing them on.

The following years were very, very, very, difficult. I don’t think I even remembered the words of Father Giussani. The words of the Movement, the words of hope became an echo of an echo of an echo of an echo. The challenges that happened with my job, with my family, real life, and the voice of nothingness trying to reclaim everything, historically, and in me, and in my belonging.

What happens? I, for some reason, stayed close to these friends. There’s a sense that there’s a voice deeper than all these other voices. I can’t quite call it “You,” I can’t quite call it “Jesus,” I can’t quite... but it’s there and I can’t deny its sound. Somehow, each friend or each new work from Giussani, or each step along the Fraternity Exercises, or what Father Carrón said—all these things keep this voice alive, constantly calling my nothingness.

It’s funny. I think my nothingness is my enemy—you know, my craziness, my manic-depressive nature. And yet, it is this need I have for Being that is crying out. It is only an enemy if I stop crying out. It is not an enemy if there is a certainty that there’s a someone I cry out to. That has really been this beautiful history of the embrace of Father Giussani, not through his physical accompaniment, but through his spirit and through the physical

accompaniment of people going along in history with me.

There's one thing I want to close with. There's a beautiful chapel up in Tarrytown and it's like the Giotto chapel in Padua. It's our version, the American version. And it has Chagall, six stained-glass Chagall windows of all the prophets. And then there is this beautiful stained-glass of the crucifixion of Christ. And then there's a Matisse rose window that's illuminating all of it. It's in Tarrytown, you can go visit it. It's beautiful. So I went up there. We went up with a small group of friends. You can see each of the prophets. You have Jeremiah, who is the prophet of the destruction of Jerusalem, and you see the way Chagall colors him is with the sky beneath the feet and the earth above the head. Everything is disoriented, and he is hugging himself, and he is in complete sorrow, totally within himself. And then there's Elijah, and then there's Isaiah—all different aspects of experiences of life, your depressions, your exaltations, your hopes—everything in all those six windows. Chagall's genius of using glass with light brings out these things. And what I think I learned in looking at those windows, what I've learned in my belonging to the Movement, in the voice of Giussani—the voice of Giussani I heard over the phone in Italian, so I'm not sure what he said—was like all those Old Testament kinds of moments of encounter with God. And there's still that fear. But over the years that fear has decreased, and I've become more aware that inside of all these experiences that I have in my human journey, there is someone. There is someone always there who is stronger than all the other things that try to eliminate me. And from this, my life has been born.

I live a full life with a family and children and friends, and I can work. I left working in advertising many years ago, but I'm still compelled to look for Him in music, in this beauty, committing time to it, and effort. Creation is hard. Work is hard. You have to know the meaning of work, that something lies underneath it all.

And I guess, somehow, it's like what Father Carrón said: it's Christ happening, and my—somehow, in some mysterious way—accepting Him over and over and over again. Sometimes falling back. Sometimes the Twin Towers are falling. Sometimes it's elation.

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But the main sense is that there's a voice, a history, a texture, greater than that, more beautiful than that, which is always willing to call me back and help me to say yes, even if I can't say yes—but helping me, helping me. I don't know how, it's to His glory that I can even say "Yes."

Savorana: Thank you, Jonathan. I now invite to the podium Margaret, one of the many university students who worked on the Father Giussani exhibit.

Margaret Stokman: I wanted to share with you a bit about my experience doing this work on the life of Father Giussani, and how even those of us that didn't get to encounter him are still changed by him today and fathered by him.

I want to share one of these experiences from my own life with the proposal that Father Giussani made to us about charitable work. It was a Saturday morning at school and I was on my way to meet my friends for charitable work, and this man washing the windows of a shop started asking me where I was going. He asked me, "Are you going to the football game?" "No." "Are you going to study?" "No, I'm actually going to sing with my friends at a nursing home." And he put down his squeegee. "What? What do you sing?" And I told him about how we go and sing together, and that we leave happier, and so we go and stay with these people.

At a certain point in our conversation, the man began to tell me about his life and his story. And he began to tell me about how his wife had died and how he was afraid to die. And at first, I started thinking, "Oh, what do I tell this guy? I need to tell him everything's going to be okay."

But then I noticed his eyes and, like Jonathan was saying about the eyes of his friend, this man had those same eyes, these beautiful blue eyes. And I saw a man that was like myself, someone that desired to live forever and didn't want to be alone, that didn't want to grow old and die.

So I just listened to this man. It was a beautiful exchange between this man and me, and I knew a unity with him. I knew, yes, someone that was like

me, and so I asked the man his name. His name was Bruce. I told him my name. Then the light turned green and I had to cross the street, and he said, "Wait! Hearing that you and your friends go to sing makes me less afraid to die. Thank you." And then I walked, and I crossed the street.

Immediately after this encounter, I was so grateful for the life of Father Giussani, because I knew that because I was on my way to charitable work, which is something that Father Giussani proposes to us so seriously, there was a different attention in front of reality, a different openness to the person, and that the other person was for me. That I had a unity with the other person because I had the same heart. And so I didn't meet Father Giussani, but I can say with no doubt in my heart that he, Father Giussani, is my father, and that he loves my destiny.

I want to invite you all to come to the exhibit on the ground floor right over here because this is what I and my friends have been working on, and you can come hear our stories and how we have encountered Father Giussani and encountered Christ today, as university students. Thank you.

Savorana: He's present; He's always present. I would like to read one last thing to conclude these impressive testimonies concerning the life of Father Giussani, just to stress that his life is possible for anybody, wherever you are.

In 1965, the 9th of July, Giussani was alone in a very, very small parish in San Antonio, Texas, and from that place he wrote to a friend of his:

I measure thoughts and actions. Moods and reactions. Days and nights. But profound company and complete witness are another presence. This is a long journey that we must take together. This is a real adventure: the discovery of that Presence in our blood and bones; the immersion of our being within that Presence that is holiness, which is the true social endeavor, too. Because of this, Paolo, we need to follow with courage and faithfulness the symptoms provided by the complex of condition, the circumstances in which we could find our service. We have no need of anything else because we are chosen by this great Presence.

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In March 1986, Giussani was here in New York, encountering the small community of the Movement, and he concluded his talk with these words: “When I got started, I and four kids at Berchet school in Milan, our last thoughts were that our relationship would spread throughout the world—this is up to God.”

I thank you for inviting me to this encounter. I thank again Father Carrón, for his paternity and the invitation to write this book that was an unbelievable adventure for me. Overall, I thank you for your patience. Enjoy the final events of the New York Encounter. Thank you.



On Pilgrimage Toward Unity

*The life of Dorothy Day with **Tom Cornell**, Associate Director of the Catholic Worker; **Timothy Cardinal Dolan**, Archbishop of New York; and **Margaret Laracy**, clinical psychologist and co-curator of the Encounter exhibit. Moderated by **Paige Sanchez**, Associate Superintendent for Mission Effectiveness, Archdiocese of New York*

Introduction

“The first thing to do to engage with the world ‘is not to do or to build, but to accept this involvement that God has made with us,’ according to the Biblical rule: ‘It wasn’t the most capable people who built, who took on projects and adventures, and enterprises; it was obedience to the word of Yahweh.’ This is the paradox of Christianity: ‘That it already achieves—at least a little bit—the experience of the unimaginable; it makes that unimaginable an experience.’ Precisely for this reason, according to Giussani, the Christian cannot help but be ‘a sign of contradiction when he wants to bring the world beyond the confines envisioned by his politics and his philosophy. Therefore, the shape of Christian action in the world is this: witness.’”

The Life of Luigi Giussani, by Alberto Savorana, McGill, 2018



Paige Sanchez: On behalf of the New York Encounter, I am delighted to welcome you to this panel discussion entitled, “On Pilgrimage Towards Unity: The Life of Dorothy Day.” My name is Paige Sanchez and I work as the Associate Superintendent for Mission Effectiveness in the Catholic school’s office of the Archdiocese of New York.

Sunday, January 14, 2018

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I am pleased to introduce to you our speakers. First, we have Cardinal Timothy Michael Dolan. He was named Archbishop of New York by Pope Benedict XVI on February 23rd, 2009. He was installed as Archbishop of New York on April 15th, 2009. He had served as Archbishop of Milwaukee since named by Pope John Paul II on June 25th, 2002. Archbishop Dolan was ordained to the priesthood on June 19th, 1976. In 1979, he began studies for a Doctorate in American Church History at the Catholic University of America. In 1994, he was appointed Rector of the Pontifical North American College in Rome, where he served until June 2001. The work of the archbishop in the area of seminary education has influenced the life and ministry of a great number of priests of the new millennium. He is currently a member of the board of trustees of the Catholic University of America. He is also a member of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization. [*audience applause*]

Tom Cornell is the Associate Editor of the *Catholic Worker*. He is a deacon in the Catholic Church. He is retired and living at the Peter Maurin Farm, Marlboro, New York. He is a co-founder of the Catholic Peace Fellowship and Pax Christi USA. A former member of the executive staff of Fellowship of Reconciliation, an executive committee of Pax Christi USA, and the War Registers League, and the Workers Defense League. Welcome. [*audience applause*]

Margaret Laracy is a Clinical Psychologist licensed in Maryland. She works with individuals, couples, and groups at a practice in Frederick, Maryland. She has taught psychology at several graduate institutions. Dr. Laracy is among the curators of the exhibit at this year's New York Encounter called "A Catholic Paradox: The Life and Works of Dorothy Day." [*audience applause*]

Your Eminence, I believe you're first.

Cardinal Dolan: Thank you, Paige, and it's an honor to be here with Margaret and Tom. Thank you very much. Paige, this was described as a conversation, so you just want me to chat about my love for Dorothy? [*Sanchez nods*] Be honored to.

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All right. First, can I say how delighted I am to be with you. I think in my nine years as Archbishop of New York, I've been able to make most of the Encounters and I've come to consider them highlights. This is a good time for me to let you know how much I admire and how much I appreciate your charism, and how delighted I am to detect such a strong presence here in the Archdiocese of New York. So, thank you very much.

Let me just begin with a little anecdote. When Pope Francis came, it was September of 2015, remember? And when Pope Francis came, you remember the day before he came to New York, he spoke to Congress. And you might remember—it's the first time a pope has ever done that—you might remember that he held up four Americans he thought would model the Gospel. Two of them happened to be from New York: Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day. Now, when he came to New York after his opening visit, his first stop was St. Patrick's Cathedral—appropriately—and so when we were getting back into the car for him to go home, and I was squeezed into that tiny Fiat with my knees in my mouth in the back seat, I said, "You know, Holy Father, we were so grateful that you mentioned four towering Americans and two of them were New Yorkers." I said, "I don't know if you knew, but the cause of Dorothy Day is alive." Now, when I say the cause, I mean to become a saint. And he said, "Yes, I am aware of that." "Well," I continued, "would you be embarrassed if tomorrow night at the massive Madison Square Garden I would ask you publicly to declare her venerable?" Which he could easily do. He said to me, "I would like to do that, but would you allow me to first consult with the Curia?" And I said, "Well, when did you start doing that?" [*audience laughter*]

But anyway, then I'll be darned, the next morning when I went to pick him up at the residence of the Nuncio to the United Nations, where he was residing, he called me in and was sitting by himself in a little room with a glass of tea, and he said, "I did consult. You know, I was told it is still a diocesan cause, and has yet to be sent to the Holy See, to the Vatican. I think it may be imprudent for me to do that." I said, "Well, I trust your judgment." And by the way, now we have sent it to Rome. But then he said to me, "I love her, and one day I would like to beatify her." So, please God, that day will come, everybody. The beatification of Dorothy Day.

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You know her story, and people like Deacon Cornell know it much better than I, but let me mention a couple things that have always appealed to me about Dorothy. First of all, her very life is a sense of journey, it's a real odyssey. It's a religious odyssey and journey that would equal that of St. Augustine; that would equal that of Saint Ignatius Loyola. It was constant conversion of heart that she was never finished with. She reached a decisive moment in 1928 when she entered the Catholic faith, baptized down on Staten Island, but her whole life would be a conversion of heart. She lived a rather promiscuous life. She dabbled with communism and socialism and radical causes in streets not very far from here. She carried a child out of wedlock and her partner at the time insisted that she abort the baby, which she did, to her lifelong regret and sense of contrition. And then of course she gradually, gradually, gradually became convinced of the wisdom of the Catholic faith.

So that's number one, her continual conversion, always on the move, always on a journey that was never over. Dorothy couldn't read enough books, she couldn't talk to enough people, she couldn't listen to enough viewpoints, she was always learning, she was always open, and that's number one: lifelong conversion. Secondly, you and I usually think of her as a great social activist and indeed she was, and that teaches us a lot. First and foremost, she was a disciple of Jesus Christ and her interior faith and piety were extraordinarily important to her. The time when I was Archbishop of Milwaukee, I visited the Catholic Worker house there and they told me a great story. When Dorothy visited Milwaukee in 1968—you remember 1968? As I look around at this young audience, which is, by the way, another reason I enjoy coming here—your youth. I've never seen so many strollers in my life. You have traffic jams with baby carriages and I love that. [*audience laughter*] Anyway, 1968 was an extraordinarily tumultuous year: the assassination of Martin Luther King, the assassination of Robert Kennedy, the height of what became our defeat in Vietnam—and when Dorothy arrived in Milwaukee to visit the Catholic Worker house, of course, she always traveled by Greyhound buses. She had been traveling for like, eighteen hours, and when they met her at the Greyhound bus station, they said, “Dorothy, you'll be so happy to learn that you're just in time to address the peace march. We have about 30,000 people here protesting the Vietnam War, and they are excited about you addressing them.” And Dorothy said,

“I would be honored to address them, but first I must get to Mass. She said, “I haven’t been to Mass yet today, and I have to go to Mass.” They found an evening Mass at Marquette University—which, by the way, is where they house her papers in the archives. She went to Mass and then to the rally. I only tell you that to illustrate the second point that has always moved me about Dorothy, and that’s her interior piety. She was a deeply religious woman. She would be the first to say she wasn’t a saint, which is usually a good mark of one who is; but her prayer and her love of the Mass and the Holy Eucharist, her love of confession—you know, she wrote that *Life of the Little Flower* didn’t she, Tom? She said it was her worst book. I don’t think it was, but in any case, we usually think of her, you know, on the front lines of protest and indeed she was. And how much we admire her for that. But she was a remarkably spiritual woman and her faith gave rise to what she did.

And finally, the third point that has always fascinated me about Dorothy is her kind of holistic approach to things. Once again, you got the spiritual aspect, her conversion of heart and her intimacy with Jesus in and through prayer and the sacraments. Number two would be her insistence upon teaching and learning. She depended on Peter Maurin for that; his Christian personalism that would be made famous in our day through Pope Saint John Paul II. But during the Depression, when the homeless and unemployed men would gather at Union Square around the barrels to warm themselves, and Dorothy would hold little classes to teach them? It was mostly the social justice teachings of the Church.

Number three, her houses of hospitality. We have one here in the Archdiocese of New York, I’m honored to say. These are places, sort of like Christian flop houses, where anybody is welcome; where you can get a cup of coffee and a bowl of soup any time. Where there’s always company and camaraderie; where you’re free to stay one night, two nights, the rest of your life; where there’s some sense of community and prayer and communal vision. And she had farms. There aren’t many left. Tom lives on one of them, but in many ways it was due to Peter Maurin, she kind of was an agrarian anarchist. Now, when we say anarchist, we usually mean bomb throwers. I’m speaking of an anarchist philosophically—people getting back to the land. We’re talking about people like Chesterton and Eric Gill,

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we're talking about people like Thomas Jefferson; if people could get back to the land, and if they could plant, and if they could live, and if they could cultivate the land, and live in community, and if people from the cities could come there and live, they would be spiritually, physically, and economically refreshed.

I'd have to say, Tom, with some examples, the farms didn't work too well, did they? I hope you're able to contradict me, but, well, she envisioned a chain of them throughout the country and not many of them have persevered. But the idea is magnificent and the ones that have persevered are brilliant.

So that, Paige, those three points are kind of at the core of my esteem for Dorothy Day. Thank you. *[audience applause]*

Cornell: Dorothy could—I will contradict you on the farms.

Dolan: Dorothy would be proud.

Tom Cornell: The third plank of Peter Maurin's program, the agrarian universities of the farms, communal farms, was the weakest throughout the first and second periods of the Catholic Worker movement, but we found a revival. Now that people are more aware of the threat to the ecology, to the biosphere, to the land, air, and the water, we have a burst of new energy in the Catholic Worker in our farms across the country. I forget how many there are, not very many of them, but they're really quite active and optimistic and fruitful. I think I'd like to start by telling a little story about Dorothy that shows something of the way she viewed the world.

Dolan: Did you know her, Tom?

Cornell: Boy, I knew her quite well. I was her editor from 1962 to 1964. The first job she gave me was managing editor of the *Catholic Worker* paper.

Dolan: That never made money.

Cornell: But I was deeply involved in the peace movement with AJ Muste, whom she deeply admired, whose name is probably unknown to most

people here. He was the most prominent pacifist of the 20th century and the link between the labor movement, the religious community, and the academy. He trained many of the principal labor leaders in the United States. Martin Luther King could not raise the money to organize the 1963 march on Washington. I know who organized it—Bayard Rustin—and how he did it. He got on the phone to Walter and Victor Reuther of the Auto Workers Union. I know how Cesar Chavez financed his campaigns—again, Walter and Victor Reuther, who were trained by AJ Muste. But let me get down to more mundane things.

A lady came in with a contribution, a diamond ring. What are we gonna do with a diamond ring? Well, Katherine came in, and she was a dreadful woman, frankly; she's very demanding. We paid her rent, we gave her the food that was required for her and her crippled son, and she always wanted more, more, more. And Dorothy gave her the diamond ring, and the people around her said, "What did you do that for? You could have taken that ring to the diamond exchange, got enough money to pay several months rent, maybe more than a year, you could buy food, to go with this that and the other thing." And Dorothy said, "Do you suppose that God created diamonds only for rich people? Let her do what she wants with it. She can sell it herself or she can keep it and simply admire it." That was Dorothy.

I first met her, attracted to the Catholic Worker by reading *The Long Loneliness* that was published in 1952. It was hot off the presses. I was so taken with Dorothy; she was living such an adventuresome life. She was hobnobbing, socializing with and working with the primary literary people of the day, and she's nineteen, twenty years old. I was nineteen, twenty years old, and what was I doing? I was a freshman at Fairfield University studying English literature, and Dorothy was helping to make it. Well, I had to meet her. The story of the life on the Bowery, all that stuff; I met some people who had met at the Catholic Worker and married there; they were now a middle-aged couple with eleven kids. We studied together. We would read Peter Maurin's essays, we would read the classics, R.H. Tawney. I told him how much I wanted to go down to the Bowery and check it out. Well, I was almost five-foot-eleven, weighing 115 pounds. I was frail, you might even say delicate. And they said, "Don't worry, Tom, if you can't take it. I mean, it's not for everybody. Don't worry if it's too much for you, just

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come home.”

I went walking down the Bowery, Third Avenue, south of 14th Street. The Third Avenue elevator train was still running, and it caused quite a clamor, of course, and grit and grimy stuff, and falling down and rising up from the street, and the traffic weaving in and out of the pillars that held the subway tracks up and the people—hundreds, thousands of people milling around. Many of them, obviously, substance-affected in some way. Many of them sitting on a sidewalk, their backs to the wall, some were sprawled out. And the odor: the odor was a mixture of everything that comes out of the human body, changing a little bit every yard or so, and the smell of rotting lungs, a smell I knew only too well. My father had died of tuberculosis and I had nursed him.

I got around to the Catholic Worker, a block east of the Bowery, Christi street. Entered. The Friday night meeting was already commenced. All the seats were taken; people were standing by the wall, some were sitting on the floor. I stood, and I saw a lady in that corner [*he gestures*]. She was on the floor knitting and her needles clattered when she didn't like what she heard.

Dolan: Was she smoking?

Cornell: No, no, no, she was waiting for—I don't remember who the speaker was. I don't remember what the topic was, but there was a question and answer period afterwards, and somebody got up and said, “We're Catholic Christians. We all believe in the right to life. If you believe in the right to life, you must believe in the right to the means of life. The means of life to live: food, clothing, shelter, healthcare.” Well, that's a question that's still being debated in the United States today, but it was beyond debate at the Catholic Worker even at that time. I'm talking about 1953. Dorothy put her needles down. As she stood up, she said, “You're talking about security. People should have security that their needs will be met. I don't want to hear about security, security anymore. There are young people here tonight and they don't need to hear about security. There are great things that need to be done, and who will do them but the young? The young have open, generous hearts and they yearn for adventure. How will

they do the great things that need to be done if all they're thinking about is their own security?" And then she started stringing the Bible quotes together: consider not the morrow, the morrow can take care of itself; don't be concerned about what you're going to eat and what you're going to put on, consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, not Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these; your Father has care of you. Then she ended with: unless the seed fall into the ground and die it remains alone, but if the seed falls to the ground and dies it bears a great harvest.

By then I knew she had me. Well, I didn't know how I was gonna serve the Catholic Worker movement, but I stayed in school even though I wanted to quit right away. I wanted to be of some use, so I got to know the people, leaders in the peace movement, and I found that as a representative of the Catholic Worker movement I had easy access to the leadership of all the rest of the peace movement. Pretty soon I got to know everybody and they knew me. I wanted to do great things. After spending three years teaching public high school in order to gain credentials, so at last I could marry and support a family, I resigned as soon as I had permanent certification and went to the Worker to do great things. And what did I find I was doing? Peeling potatoes, scraping carrots, serving soup, giving men a change of clothing in our clothing room, taking them to the flop houses at night and paying them in. But in the interstices we did accomplish some great things because of Dorothy's encouragement. We helped to dismantle the legal structures of racial segregation in this country. We weren't the leaders, that was not for us; but when the black people called us, we answered, we came. I was a marshal at Selma. That was a high point in my career and when I talk to high school or college students about it, I sometimes burst into tears. Even when I'm alone at my typewriter, recalling those days and writing, I find the tears pouring down my face and my throat chokes. We now know that we held the Pentagon's hands from nuclear war. The Pentagon urged President Lyndon Johnson to use nuclear weapons on North Vietnam at least three times and he refused. Pointing out the window of the White House to us across the street, he said couldn't get away with it.

Another great thing that we did was because we adhered closely to the classical theory and practice of non-violence. We helped the civil rights movement to reintroduce the theory and practice of non-violence into the

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mainstream of both Catholic and Protestant moral theology. Up to this time, it had been relegated to groups like the Quakers, the Mennonites, Anabaptists—and God bless ‘em, they’ve taught us a great deal. But because of the civil rights movement, and because we in the Vietnam movement adhered to classical non-violence, it became a serious study once again and this is borne out by Pope Francis’ peace message this year for Peace Day, and by his November 10th statement that the maintenance and possession of nuclear weapons is now morally unjustifiable. Unjustifiable: what does that mean? Catholic people should know this. They should know the logical consequence. We should be working for a series of unilateral initiatives for nuclear disarmament. That should be a religious duty laid upon every Catholic Christian from the pulpit. [*audience applause*]

When Dorothy died, Isidor Feinstein Stone, I.F. Stone, came to her funeral from Washington D.C. He was an independent journalist. He never made much money in his life, he was a minimally observant Jew, so why does he come up in his old age and his poverty by bus to Dorothy’s funeral? One of the guys asked him after the funeral Mass, and he said, “Of all the journalists of our generation, she wrote the best.”

I want to read this to you—the postscript from *The Long Loneliness*:

We were just sitting there talking when Peter Maurin came in.

We were just sitting there talking when lines of people began to form, saying, “We need bread.” We could not say, “Go, be thou filled.” If there were six small loaves and a few fishes, we had to divide them. There was always bread.

We were just sitting there talking and people moved in on us. Let those who can take it, take it. Some moved out and that made room for more. And somehow the walls expanded.

We were just sitting there talking and someone said, “Let’s all go live on a farm.”

It was as casual as all that, I often think. It just came about. It just happened.

I found myself, a barren woman, the joyful mother of children. It is not always

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easy to be joyful, to keep in mind the duty of delight.

The most significant thing about The Catholic Worker is poverty, some say.

The most significant thing is community, others say. We are not alone anymore.

But the final word is love. At times it has been, in the words of Father Zossima, a harsh and dreadful thing, and our very faith in love has been tried through fire.

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is community.

We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.

It all happened while we sat there talking, and it is still going on.

She wrote that when the Worker was only eighteen or nineteen years old; we're eighty-five now, we're on the brink of it, and it is still going on.

Dorothy taught along with Peter the primacy of the spiritual. Everything she did began in prayer was sustained by prayer and came to fulfillment in prayer. Without a strenuous, disciplined prayer life, you cannot do this kind of thing. The poor resent those who help them. It often happens, you find this out. And yet, it's renewed time after time after time and somehow or other, we stay young. I'm so glad there are so many young people here today. It's the most startling thing. I go to a meeting as large as this, I expect to a sea of shining pates, white and blue hair. [audience laughter] It's so good to see you. So glad to have you, Cardinal Dolan, we're so grateful to you for all you've done for the cause of Dorothy Day. And Margaret, grateful to you for all you've done in that absolutely marvelous exhibit up on the fifth floor. I want to thank all of the Communion and Liberation people who have made such a marvelous adventure, such a success of this event. Thank you very much and God bless. [audience applause]

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Margaret Laracy: I was struck listening to Tom read the postscript of *The Long Loneliness*—we have that as the last panel of our exhibit upstairs, and I wanted it there. I find it so impressive. It also speaks of the journey, of a piece of the journey, at least, that Cardinal Dolan was speaking of. So, as Paige said, I along with some friends curated an exhibit that's upstairs about Dorothy Day. And I wanted to start by saying a bit about this exhibit, how it came to be.

Actually, last year at the Encounter, one of the speakers on this stage brought up Dorothy Day; it was David Brooks, the *New York Times* columnist. He said that in a class he teaches at Yale, he assigns the students a number of different books in the semester, and then they have a final paper to write at the end of the semester; and far and away the person the students want to write about is Dorothy Day. I also read *The Long Loneliness* in college. I was fascinated by Dorothy Day, so it was beautiful for me to hear that that's how Tom first encountered Dorothy Day—through that book. I also came to know about Dorothy Day in my childhood. My parents, who are also here, were inspired by her, and she was kind of a figure in the ethos, the backdrop of our upbringing. The sense of hospitality to the poor, and simplicity of life. When I heard her brought up again last year, I thought, I want to get to know her more. I felt like she was like an old friend who I kind of got to know but then lost track of over the years. I thought it would be beautiful for her to be here. This was her city, and she has a lot to say to us. I thought she has a lot to say to me and she has a lot to say to all of us. In light of this year's theme—"An 'Impossible' Unity"—we thought that she was perfect for this year's Encounter.

Hers was a complex life, full of tensions and apparent contradictions. Her activism was a part of her youth, and it persisted through her life. It became so deeply rooted in her life of prayer, the sacraments. I mean, my experience as an American Catholic is that we often see Catholics committed to the cause of justice over here, and Catholics who love the liturgy over there. For her, though, it's clear that we need the capacity to be "both/and," not "either/or." That's why we've called the exhibit a "Catholic Paradox."

I want to share with you three points of unity in Dorothy's life that have made a big impression on me—there's so much. I never met her as Tom

did, or lived with her, but just getting to know her through her writings and through the Catholic Worker movement—just a little bit of encounter with the Catholic Worker movement—there’s so much that could be shared. But I want to share three things. First, her friendship with Peter Maurin, who was the co-founder of the Catholic Worker; second, her solidarity and unity with the poor; and third, her affection for St. Thérèse.

First, Peter Maurin.

Peter Maurin gave Dorothy the inspiration for the Catholic Worker. She said, “He is most truly the founder of the Catholic Worker movement.” His entrance into her life came as a total surprise and an answer to fervent prayer. By 1932, she had already been a Catholic for several years and didn’t know one Catholic layman. She knew priests and religious but no Catholic laymen. She was working for *Commonweal* and was covering a hunger march in Washington D.C. that was organized by the Communist Party. She felt a division. She wanted to be in solidarity with the workers, but felt a sense of distance. She hadn’t yet discovered a way to live her Christian life in a way that put her in the kind of unity and solidarity with workers and with the poor that she so deeply desired. She recounts in *The Long Loneliness* how she went to pray at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception for unity, a synthesis. You know—unity of life. Upon her return to New York, Peter Maurin came to her door. It’s incredible the way she describes this. He showed up at her house, telling her that an editor at *Commonweal* and a redheaded communist he met at Union Square both had told him he should meet her; that they think alike. And he had a program. She said she was good at criticizing the social order but didn’t have a positive vision; Peter gave her this vision. Starting a newspaper and having roundtable discussions for the clarification of thought, opening houses of hospitality, and returning to the land by living on farms like the one that Tom lives on. The beautiful thing is how much their meeting wasn’t this unforeseen event, but really the response to a need that she had. It wasn’t a likely friendship. Peter Maurin was an unusual man. In *Loaves & Fishes*, the story of the Catholic Worker, she says this: “I was sure of Peter. Sure he was a saint and a great teacher, although to be perfectly honest, I wondered if I really liked Peter sometimes. He was twenty years older than I, he spoke

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with an accent so thick it was hard to penetrate to the thought beneath.” He had a one-track mind. Apparently, he would just talk and talk, and she said he wanted to indoctrinate people. He didn’t like music, which she loved. He didn’t read Dickens or Dostoevsky, also, which she loved, and he did not bathe. [audience laughter] She’s very honest in her writing. “I am sensitive about writing these,” she says, “but I feel I must point out that it was no natural liking that made me hold Peter in reverent esteem and gave me confidence that all I learned from him was sound and that the program he laid down for us was the right one for our time.” I think their friendship speaks of the impossible unity we have as a theme this year. She is this fierce, independent, able American woman who follows this older Frenchman who many might dismiss. Many of the things that he did might seem kind of crazy, unusual, but I think her acute awareness of her own longing and need made her so open to Peter and able to recognize his genius. He really educated her a lot in the faith, showed her the link between the finite and the infinite; between her Christian faith and her passion for justice. He would say to her—and I guess to others, too, she quotes him as saying this frequently—when something seemed to be a failure, like one of the farms didn’t work out, he would say, “At least it will arouse the conscience.” At least it will arouse the conscience. It wasn’t about success according to our usual standards.

Very much like Peter, Dorothy lived a kind of solidarity with the poor that’s rare, that Tom lives and knows very much about: living not just for the poor, but with the poor. Living a radical, very concrete poverty. One of the things that really strikes me about her way of living in solidarity with the poor was that there was nothing generic about it, that the poor were particular people. She said there’s so much more to the Catholic Worker movement than labor and capital. It is the people who are important, not the masses. She said she almost wished she had named their publication *The People* instead of *The Catholic Worker*. I can’t imagine how many people she encountered, how many destitute and poor people, mentally ill and addicted people, how many people in turmoil. But the way she writes about particular people is very striking. There’s a chapter in her book, *Loaves & Fishes*, called: “Whatever Happened to Anna.” She describes Anna as a short, shuffling woman with a broad flat face, a big smiling mouth, and little tufts of hair growing out of her chin. Usually she wore several dresses

and several coats. Anna's vanities showed only in her style of headdress. She always wore winding, strange pieces of silk of many colors around her head in fantastic turbans. She smiled continually. Her two favorite topics of conversation were marriage and the benign spirits that surrounded her. Anna was someone many people would pretty quickly dismiss, and she was also a woman who didn't readily receive hospitality. And what most strikes me about this whole episode, and really marks the charisma of the Catholic Worker, is the way they received Anna, in a way that she could receive it. Dorothy describes how they invited her to stay with them. First, she wouldn't, then she said, "Okay, I'll stay, but I won't take a bed. I haven't slept in a bed in 30 years." So she slept in the hallway on the floor.

Dorothy said when she tried to put a blanket on Anna, she pushed it away, she wouldn't take it; but if they left the blanket nearby, she would go and pick it up. Dorothy said that in this way, Anna stayed with them. Anna's freedom, her own way, her unique way, was respected. Dorothy said, "Our aim is to make people happy. We certainly succeeded with Anna in the end, but it took years before she made herself at home with us."

I'm a psychologist. I work as a therapist. Even though this episode might seem very far from my work, for me it's very provoking because the way of each person is distinct. When I read something like this, I want to receive people with that kind of patience and that kind of attention and the willingness to wait and receive them in a way that they can be received. In the context of the Catholic Worker, there have always been many tasks to be done. Write the newspaper articles, peeling potatoes and carrots, cooking meals, serving soup. In preparation for this exhibit, a few friends and I who were preparing it visited Pat and Kathleen Jordan, who met at the Catholic Worker, and they recounted for us many beautiful episodes about Dorothy Day. One really struck me. Pat said that Dorothy would always look for a place for people, a task that they could do, some way to plug them in, and then she said to him, "Don't be too efficient." Don't be too efficient. It really struck me. Don't allow getting things done to interfere with attending to each person. I imagine many poor people, many people who haven't had a lot of opportunities might need more time to learn how to do something, or to plug in and find a place. Certainly, Dorothy couldn't have kept track of all the people that she met over the years, but

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what's clear when she recounts a story about someone like Anna is that she perceived their belonging to each other. For her, she and Anna were both part of the Mystical Body of Christ; they were sisters. And now that I'm getting to know Dorothy better, I can't get away from this. I mean, I see someone standing on the street corner, and I'm provoked. I think reading her helps me to start to see people more through her eyes, which I think is through the eyes of Christ.

Finally, I wanted to say a little bit about the affection that she developed for St. Thérèse of Lisieux. I think that this also speaks about the journey that she was on, that Cardinal Dolan spoke about, because even after her conversion she didn't appreciate St. Thérèse initially. In fact, when she was first given *Story of a Soul* to read by Father Zachary, her confessor at the time, she was offended. She said—this is what she wrote about it: “She was very young, and her writing seemed to me like that of a school girl. I wasn't looking for anything so simple, and felt slightly aggrieved at Father Zachary, men, and priests, too, who were very insulting to women, I thought, handing out what they felt suited their intelligence; in other words, pious pap.”

This was her first impression of St. Thérèse. She wrote about this in the preface to the biography. She said she couldn't see what Thérèse had to do with living, “in the time of world revolution amidst world conflict.” She was more attracted to Joan of Arc and Teresa of Ávila, but I think the way that she grew an affection for Thérèse, to the point that she wanted to write a biography of her, speaks also to the change in Dorothy, and the recognition in Dorothy of what really was at the heart of all of her activism. How different the lives of these two women: Thérèse dying at twenty-four of tuberculosis, a very Catholic upbringing, protected in so many ways from so much of what Dorothy went through—experiences of poverty, tumultuous love affairs, an abortion, meeting many, many, people after her conversion, traveling around on buses, and being jailed multiple times for civil disobedience. But Dorothy recognized that it's not our actions that make our lives great. A woman who acted so much, right? And I think, coming to love Thérèse and the affection that she had for her really expresses this, that what was at the heart of the matter for both of them was a love; a love that didn't come from them. A cruciform love.

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In a diary entry from 1944, Dorothy wrote this about Thérèse: “From that year I spent away from the work”—there was a time she spent some time away from the Catholic Worker—“I began to understand the greatness of the Little Flower, St. Thérèse of Lisieux. By doing nothing she did everything. She let loose powers, consolations, a stream of faith, hope, and love that will never cease to flow. How much richer we are because of her.”

And I think, like Thérèse, how much richer we are because of Dorothy, and for me it's very striking because I think the same thing that bound Thérèse to Dorothy binds me to her. I haven't been called to the Catholic Worker. I'm not in a cloister, but I want for the heart of my life to be the same thing that was at the heart of the lives of these two beautiful women. So, that's it. If any of you are interested in more, we have this exhibit upstairs, so come and learn more about her. Thank you. [*audience applause*]



Abraham and the Birth of the "I"

Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim perspectives with Sayyid Mohammad Baqir al-Kashmiri, Vice-chairman of Imam Mahdi Marjavea Association; Arch. Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the U.S.; and Joseph Weiler, Joseph Straus Professor of Law, New York University. Moderated by John McCarthy, Dean of the School of Philosophy at Catholic University of America

Introduction

“Without Abraham, if Abraham had never been, then we would not be here now. So that we cannot understand what the ‘I’ is, the ‘I’ who weeps, laughs, commits himself, the ‘I’ who lives or dies, a man cannot understand himself, nor can he love others as himself, except through God of whom he is born. Otherwise the shape of the event falls apart, blurring its sharpness. We cannot understand the ‘I’ if we do not start from Abraham. God called Abraham. What does this story teach us? That the ‘I’ is vocation, a choice as preference. So that, from the day of that call onwards, the ‘I’ is understood as an event within history. An event of dependence on God and of belonging to God. History is the ‘I’ revealing itself in this vocation, which becomes belonging and dependence. The ‘I’ is understood in time, in this relationship with God that is a history.”

Luigi Giussani, *Notes from a talk*, January 2001



John McCarthy: As one of only three English words spelled with the single letter, it should, one might suppose, be extremely easy to say. Should be easy to say, especially because it concerns, nay, it gives intimate voice to, the one single thing in the entire universe about which each one of us here is, as it were, the world’s leading expert; or so we might suppose.

Sunday, January 14, 2018

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I mean, one's very self—the incarnate seat of awareness of thoughts and memories and plans of bodily appetites and spiritual yearnings of boundless freedom and of humbling limitations that is me: myself. I say a lot but mean, simply, "I." Aha! You will say. You've just fallen into an embarrassing, an embarrassingly flagrant self-contradiction. Pressing your case, you continue, "Any idiot can say I," as you yourself have just proven. [*audience laughter*]

My point does not have to do with the vocalization of the sound, *I*, or with the vague or unthinking use of that common word. By way of clarification, let me recall a piece of history. On April 21st, 1986, there was an explosion in the number four reactor of the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, Ukraine. What many had dreaded for a long time finally happened: a catastrophic nuclear meltdown at a cost to human life and health that is still being reckoned. Not long thereafter, a thoughtful priest from Desio, Italy, observed that a still greater disaster was taking place, still taking place, and is still taking place now, that was scarcely noticed, much less understood. The priest, Father Luigi Giussani, coined the phrase "Chernobyl effect" to describe a gravely debilitating atrophy; a spiritual radiation sickness, if you will, of the human person. Here are two pieces of evidence attesting to the accuracy of his diagnosis. In 2016, the most recent year for which we have accurate data, over forty-six thousand people in the United States alone died from an overdose of narcotics. That's more than twenty times the number who died on 9/11. What is death by overdose but a truly dreadful stupefaction enfeeblement of the "I"? Or, consider the quite alarming drop in the marriage rate that has occurred in Western countries over the last decades. More and more people are unwilling or unable to join the one-letter word "I" to the two-letter word "do." What was for generations before us the most obvious thing in the world, that a man and woman who loved one another should get married and have children, is becoming for us progressively more unusual an undertaking ever more beyond, we think, our powers. It turns out that it's not so easy to say "I," and really mean it; to say "I" when it counts. Father Giussani's talk about the Chernobyl effect did not arise from a clinician's interest in spiritual pathology. What really interested him was that which St. Irenaeus of Lyon, a Frenchman, called the glory of God. Namely, the human being who is fully alive and, therefore, the human being who is truly able to say

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with energy, affection, freely and knowingly, and joyfully, "I."

To help us understand how such a thing was possible, how such a thing could be possible for us, even now, Fr. Giussani made what might seem a very strange suggestion. He urged us to go back in time. "We cannot understand the 'I,'" he said, "if we do not start from Abraham, that mysterious figure from Mesopotamia who walked the earth four millennia ago, a man whose name means father of multitudes." For those who hold the Bible to be a record of God's direct involvement in human destiny, Abraham is our father. It is Fr. Giussani's claim that were it not for him, and for the history that he set in motion, we could not really say, "I." To help us make sense of that remarkable claim, we've invited the three men before you to speak today.

Professor Joseph Weiler, when he's not being a photographer, is a university professor at NYU Law School and senior fellow at Harvard Center for European studies. Until recently, he also served as President of the European University Institute in Florence. Professor Weiler is editor-in-chief of two law journals. He holds a PhD in European law and honorary doctorates from various European and American universities, including an honorary doctorate in theology from no less than my own university, the Catholic University of America. He is the author of several books and many articles in the field of European integration, international economic law, and comparative constitutional law.

Sayyid Mohammad Baqir al-Kashmiri completed most of his studies in Iran under the guidance of some of the most prominent teachers in the Muslim world. He represents his Eminence Ayatollah al-Sistani and all juridical matters pertaining to Shiite Muslims in North America. In the year 2000, he founded the Imam Mahdi association, Marjaeya, to support the Shia community in North America. Sayyid Kashmiri has given numerous speeches and published many articles on various subjects, including history, Quran interpretation, Islamic principles, religion, and secularism. Sayyid Kashmiri is currently serving Northern Virginia in the newest imam location, where he lives with his wife and four children.

Archbishop Christophe Pierre was born on January 30th, 1946, in

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McLennan, France. He was ordained a priest on April 5, 1970. He's the only one here who wants you to know his birthday. [*audience laughter*] Next year, remember. After completing his studies at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy in Rome, he was appointed to the Pontifical Representation in New Zealand and the islands of the Pacific Ocean. Subsequently, he served in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Cuba, Brazil, and at the permanent mission of the Holy See to the United Nations in Geneva. He was then appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Haiti, Uganda, Mexico. For the past two years, he's been with us in the United States.

Please join me in a very warm welcome for our three speakers. [*audience applause*] We'll begin with Professor Weiler, and then Dr. Kashmiri, and then our Archbishop Pierre.

Joseph Weiler: Thank you very much. It's a pleasure and an honor to be here. Thanks for inviting me. And as you see, the idea was that there will be a Christian and a Muslim and a Jew, but I don't speak for Judaism. When you have three Jews in the room, you have four opinions [*audience laughter*] and five political parties. So, I speak for myself. I want to make two points that I think are fundamental to understanding the three Abrahamic religions. I think they're fundamental; maybe the other speakers will disagree with me. I'm deliberately avoiding the binding of Isaac, because every time I think about it, I say, "Abraham, how could you have done that?" So perhaps it's better to avoid it.

But here is my first point. There's a certain movement in the story of Abraham. In the first encounter between God and Abraham, God appears and says—I'm reading from the King James—"The Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show you." And Abraham gets up and moves, because the Lord has spoken, and he obeys. But then comes, in my view, a dramatic moment that redefines the way we understand the relationship between men and God, and it's the idea of the covenant. I think that our religions are covenantal religions, so very shortly afterwards we have the first expression of a covenant between God and mankind. It's the covenant of the divided parts, but it's the idea of the covenant that counts, and I want to impress upon you the importance of that idea.

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It starts with Abraham. Let's fast forward because it's easier for me to explain a second covenantal moment, which is the giving of the Ten Commandments. Imagine the following conversation between God and the Israelites, who have just come out of Egypt. God says, "Hear O Israel; I offer you this covenant. Please enter into this covenant with me." And the Israelite says—in my imaginary conversation—"We don't need a covenant. You are the King of Kings. You speak, we obey. You say frog, we jump." And God says, "No, no, no. That's not what I want. I really want the covenant. I Am on the one hand, and you on the other hand, we covenant together." And they say, "But you're the King of Kings. You—you're God; you're the Almighty, you're the creator of heaven and earth. Everything you say we will do." And God says, "What am I gonna do with these people? I'm offering you a covenant; I want a covenant."

Why is the idea of the covenant so important? Why does the Almighty insist on a covenantal relationship? I see in it many aspects, but I will just mention two. The first one: a covenant is between sovereigns. Man is sovereign. The gift of God is an offer you can accept or you can reject. That's why, when in our liberal societies we insist on freedom from religion—not only freedom *of* religion—the only convincing explanation is that it's the religious imperative; because a coerced religion is invalid in the eyes of God. If you force somebody to believe, if you force somebody to say yes, that yes is invalid. It's only the human ability to say "no" to God that makes the "yes" to God meaningful and acceptable and desirable in the eyes of God. So, the covenant is the expression of that. It's an offer that you human beings, as mature moral agents with responsibility for your lives, can say yes to, we accept; or you can say no, we reject, face the consequences; but it's not me, it's the King of Kings imposing it on you. It's me offering it to you. And you, with full sovereignty as the moral agents that I created, are there to say yes or no. It totally revolutionized religion. There, up to that point, religion was understood in a very different way. And the covenantal relationship between God and mankind remains one of the great contributions of the Abrahamic religions, and it starts with the figure of Abraham.

The second aspect of the covenant: it's enduring. In other words, like a treaty. Today, when we use a covenant, it's usually a treaty between States, etc. When there's a covenant, you cannot say, "I was not there." It

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emphasizes the collectivity. The people of God are always the people of God. It's a community that accepts the covenant. It's a community that has responsibility towards each other. It's a community that endures in time; it's not a covenant that has to be renewed every day, it's a covenant that is there. One can reject it, one can accept it; but once it's given, it's there to be profited from, it's there to adhere to, it's there to be loyal to, or to betray, but it endures over time. In other words, the covenantal moment—because it's covenantal—is not only a moment of sovereignty, but an enduring moment between God and a people; the people of God defined in different ways.

So that's one of the major contributions of the Abrahamic moment. The second one is what I would call "the Copernican moment" in our understanding of justice. You know what the Copernican moment is: it's the moment when we can prove and realize that it's not the sun that is surrounding the earth, but it's the earth that is surrounding the sun. It's a Galilean idea, but it was Copernicus who really was able to demonstrate it. We call it a Copernican moment when we turn things on their head and understand them in a different way. Here comes the Copernican moment in our understanding of justice. God hears the iniquities of Sodom and Gomorrah and decides to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and then He says, I will not hide this from my servant Abraham. And he goes to Abraham, and he says to Abraham, "I heard the iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their cry has come up to heaven and I will destroy them." And then Abraham does the unthinkable. He turns to God and says, "But what if there are fifty innocent people in Sodom and Gomorrah? Far be it from thee to kill the guilty and the innocent together. Will the Justice of the whole earth, not Himself do justice?" And God answers it, and says, "Okay, if there are fifty people I will save the city." Then Abraham goes down on his knees and says, "Forgive me. What if there are forty people?" And God smiles and says, "Okay, if there are forty people I will also save the city." Then Abraham says, "What if there are thirty, what if there are twenty, what if there are ten?" And finally it becomes clear that God will not destroy the cities if it means killing the innocent with the guilty.

Why do I call it the Copernican moment for our understanding of justice? Because until that time—and for some people even since that time—if God speaks it must be just, even if we don't understand it; we say God

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understands better. But Abraham did not accept this. In his eyes there was no justification. How could the Justice of all earth Himself not do justice by destroying the innocent with the guilty? From that moment of Abraham, instead of saying, "If God speaks it must be just," we say, "If it's unjust it cannot be God." And that is a dramatic Copernican moment. If it's unjust it cannot be from God, and from that moment onwards the relationship between man and God and justice has changed forever. Thank you. [*audience applause*]

Sayyid Mohammad Baqir al-Kashmiri: In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent—good afternoon everyone. I am delighted and honored to attend such an inspiring social, educational, and religious gathering alongside these esteemed panelists, in particular His Eminence Archbishop Christophe Pierre. I would like to thank the organizers, especially Angelo Sala, for inviting me to speak; I feel privileged to be in such hallowed company. Today, I will present to you Islam's view on our common and distinct identities from the Abrahamic perspective. I hope you enjoy it, and in case you have any questions or comments, I will be available and at your service afterward. Allow me to begin with an example. A recent study confirmed that all citrus trees on Earth today originate from a single common ancestor; these citrus trees occur in three main branches: the oranges, limes, and lemons. This remarkable diversity, which began in one part of the world and spread to almost every corner, is an example of "impossible" unity through the "I."

In fact, those three main branches were born from one tree. Almighty God used the word "tree" in a fabulous example in the Holy Quran. He states: "Consider how God compares the blessed word to that of a blessed tree which has firm roots and branches rising-up into the sky. And yields fruits in every season by the permission of its Lord! God sets forth parables for people so that they may take heed." I would like to use this parable from the Holy Quran as a symbol of the Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This seemingly "impossible" unity is a part of us, as in the words of Father Luigi Giussani: "Without Abraham, if Abraham had never been, then we would not be here now."

Hence, what is our common responsibility in helping such an Abrahamic

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tree to be fruitful? Remember, the trunk of the tree obviously needs water, sunlight, and fertile soil.

To answer this important question, we need to first acknowledge the elements that we all share. As Abrahamic religions, just like the branches of a citrus tree, we share many common roots, such as: 1) *Fundamental creed*: belief in the oneness of God, prophethood, and the hereafter; 2) *Lofty moral values*: mercy, generosity, self-sacrifice, dignity, compassion, patience, and most of all love; 3) *Noble purposes*—in both worlds: in this world, submitting to the will of God, and striving for justice and peace; in the hereafter, earning God’s satisfaction and pleasure.

Thus, we must adhere to unity while bearing in mind and fully accepting that we are unique and distinct in our religious identities! If we agree on these tenets, then each of us will have two duties that need to be continuously fulfilled, otherwise the bond that binds us together will progressively wither away. These are 1) the duty among the Abrahamic religions towards each other; and 2) the duty upon us towards our fellow human beings of the non-Abrahamic communities.

The duty of the Abrahamic religions towards each other can be expressed thusly: 1) Examine and understand the commonalities, differences, and disagreements. This will help each of us to foster dialogue and cooperation while maintaining our religious identity. We live in a very complicated world that mixes-up different rainbow colors of cultures, ideas, beliefs, diversity, and so on. In fact, even in such circumstances we have no more than two choices: either being a distinct and identifiable part of a salad bowl, or an unrecognizable component of a true melting-pot. The former is the right choice according to the Holy Quran when God states: “O mankind! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of God is the most Godway [pious] among you. Indeed God is all-knowing, all-aware,” but with the caveat that those who are distinguished “in the sight of God are the most Godway among you.” If we neglect to learn about each other and foster a culture of inclusiveness, then we will be opening the door for those with heinous motives to hijack our religions and divert the discourse towards hatred

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and intolerance. Then, extremism, stereotypes, and narrow-mindedness will dictate our perceptions of each other and how we interact.

2) Maintain the sanctity of religion: our religions are founded on pure and noble goals such as relationship with God, spirituality, respecting the rights of others, and fulfilling obligations to maintain justice and fairness. These lofty values must remain unsullied by avoiding political influences, private interests, ethnocentrism, and tribalism of any kind. The Holy Quran says about our ancestor father: "Verily, Abraham was a nation, obedient to God, upright, and he joined not [any associates] with God." In these polarizing times, we must *not* compromise the sanctity of religion and Godly morals for anything, and although it is the essence of everything in our lives, we must consciously preserve it from becoming embroiled in divisive matters.

3) Cooperate, collaborate, and support each other through a variety of human and religious services and projects. For example: *Interfaith dialogue*. Not just related to theology, but community service, unity of purpose, peace and fighting against extremism. Pope Francis said: "I wish to emphasize once more the great importance of dialogue and cooperation among believers, in particular, Christians and Muslims, and the need for it to be enhanced."

Mutual human empathy. Like solving society's problems together, hand-in-hand easing people's suffering, and repairing social deficits for those who have been neglected. Giving a smile and special care for those who are in despair. Let's pay attention to the following two great examples: During his homily and foot-washing ritual, Pope Francis washed the feet of two women and two Muslims, Hindu, Catholic and Coptic Christians, who were migrants and refugees from Mali, Eritrea, Syria, and Pakistan. Similarly, Shia Muslim religious authority, Grand Ayatullah Sayyid Ali al-Sistani, welcomed and served thousands of Christian refugees from Mosul and northern areas of Iraq, who had been terrorized and displaced due to ISIS in 2014.

Attending each other's gatherings, and seeking harmony and solidarity. I would like to point out two amazing examples from across the world: 1) A group of Muslims who attended a church to show their solidarity with Christians

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in France when a Christian priest was killed by an extremist; and 2) hundreds of Christians, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Muslims, commemorated the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, when around twenty million people visited him in Karbala. I recommend you experience it at least once because it is an unparalleled experience.

Visiting and meeting community leaders and clergy for the sake of social and community cohesion.

Focus on family. We must emphasize the importance and the benefits of family, and the foundation of learning, integrity, and citizenship that it provides to a person. Our religious authorities advise the following:

a) Pope Paul VI: “The well-being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and family.”

b) Grand Ayatullah al-Sistani: “Give importance to starting a family by getting married and having children... Having a family is a source of pleasure and affability, a motive for hard work, a cause for sobriety and being responsible, an investment of energy for the future, and a defense against forbidden and lowly deeds.”

Focus on our youth and the new generations: There is no doubt that most parents have concerns about their children. Our youth today are tomorrow’s future. Let us pay attention to the advice of two of the greatest worldwide religious authorities in this regard:

a) Pope Francis: “Have you thought about the talents that God has given you? Do not bury your talents! Set your stakes on great ideals, the ideals that enlarge the heart... Life is not given to us to be jealously guarded for ourselves, but is given to us so that we may give it in turn. Dear young people, have a deep spirit!”

b) Grand Ayatullah al-Sistani: “[Dear youth] try to learn a professional trade and acquire a specialty, and exert yourself and work hard

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in its pursuit. This is a blessed endeavor because it allows you to occupy a portion of your free time, support yourself and your family, benefit society, perform good deeds using the money you earn, sharpen your mind, and broaden your experience.”

Our duty towards the non-Abrahamic religions—our fellow brothers and sisters in humanity—can be expressed as follows: We the followers of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad—peace and blessings be upon them—have a particular duty given the serious challenges we are facing today. It is highly important for us to work on them:

1) Imperative efforts to address worrying social trends: our world is at a crucial crossroads where readily available information, sometimes from questionable sources, and ease of access are molding the way people think. Therefore, our duty as the followers of Abraham is to:

- a) Address and counter the growing atheist and agnostic sentiments in our country by spreading the love of the Supreme God;
- b) Repel the corrupting effects of materialism, greed, lust, and hunger for power;
- c) Educate people about the true meaning of humanism under God’s code and not as a license to be hedonistic; and
- d) Ensure that the voices of Jews, Christians, and Muslims are heard equally, and with complete fidelity to the religions and their true messages.

2) Incentivize ourselves to present the Abrahamic religions as noble schools that offer joy, contentment, love, harmony, family beyond one’s kin, and a means to a fulfilled life. Data show clearly that the percentage of people with depression, anxiety, divorce, drug use, and many other painful and negative issues across the world is less among the faithful. This is due to the belief in God and the values that emanate from it being firmly rooted in a believer’s heart. We have to be compassionate and wise in relating these blessed values to others so that they may grasp the lifeline of God and ultimately find salvation.

Dear brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers—if we consider ourselves true proponents of our respective religions, then we have to cooperate and

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support each other in all Godly matters and adopt the qualities of mercy, generosity, justice and compassion which He is infinitely known for. Then, we can say that the “impossible” unity which began from the Abrahamic “I”-tree will actually be possible and tangible, and we will see the fruit from all three branches. Once again, as God said: “Consider how God compares the blessed Word to that of a blessed tree which has firm roots and branches rising up into the sky. And, yields fruits in every season by the permission of its Lord! God sets forth parables for people so that they may take heed.”

Thank you, and God bless you all. [*audience applause*]

Christophe Pierre: It is an honor to speak at this New York Encounter and be able to engage such respected persons as Joseph Weiler and Sayyid Muhammad Baquir al-Kashmiri. It is only through a culture of encounter and dialogue, rooted in mutual respect and understanding, rooted in the truth, that we can begin to discover what is possible in the face of a seemingly impossible unity.

Unity is certainly a daunting task, given the fragmented world in which we live. The Aparecida document said it, and Pope Francis never ceases to repeat it: we live not so much in an epoch of change but in a change of epoch. We are living through a period of tremendous change, marked by rapid advances in communication and technology; a great movement and interaction of peoples; and an evermore pluralistic society. Despite great advances in communication, a new Babel is emerging in which we can scarcely engage each other and in which man and woman are being reduced to a series of reactions to external stimuli, driven by the media, the market, or by political ideologies.

The unity among peoples and nations is seemingly disintegrating. The political situation in this country indicates a growing polarization among peoples, often rooted in ideologies, which makes dialogue more difficult and challenging. Even faith, which once united people, is becoming more difficult to transmit to subsequent generations. More than ten years ago, the Latin American bishops noted: “Our cultural traditions are no longer handed on from one generation to the next with the same ease as in the

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past. This even affects that deepest core of each culture, constituted by religious experience, which is now likewise difficult to hand on through education and the beauty of cultural expressions. It even reaches into the family itself, which, as a place of dialogue and intergenerational solidarity, had been one of the most important vehicles for handing on the faith."

Father Carrón, in the first chapter of *Disarming Beauty*, speaks about this fragmentation. His focus is principally on Europe and the loss of its Christian roots. In the attempt to use pure reason to develop ethical systems, the Enlightenment rejected, by and large, the role of faith; thus, its reason is anti-historical, uprooted from the tradition and culture which gave rise to its fundamental values. In a pluralistic society, it tends to protect values and rights in law and seeks to liberate freedom from tradition and cultural norms. This view lives in tension with the Christian view, which is open to that which is reasonable, but also understands the human and person and the world in light of faith. Carrón sees a great risk in the movement for "new rights" proposed by the former, because it reduces man to his ability to reason, to his rights defined by law, to his biological and psychological impulses, but without a profound consideration of who he is. Unfortunately, this is the view that is coming to dominate, particularly among the young. Thus, what Father Giussani called the "Chernobyl Effect" is coming to pass. He wrote: "It is as if today's youth were all penetrated by... the radiation of Chernobyl. Structurally, the organism is as it was before, but dynamically it is no longer the same... People are abstracted from the relationship with themselves, as if emptied of affection, like batteries that last for six minutes instead of six hours."

I think what Giussani is suggesting is that we are losing a profound sense of who we are as individuals and as a people rooted in history, as part of a living tradition. I emphasize the word living because even before there is a tradition, which can become ideological or a purely formal practice of religion, there must be an encounter with an Event—with a person. This is a real worry of Pope Francis, as he stated even before he was elected pope: "I would say that the gravely serious thing that all this is expressing is a lack of a personal encounter with God, of an authentic religious experience. This is what I believe creates in the end the 'religion la carte.' I believe that one has to recover the religious act as a movement towards an encounter

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with Jesus Christ.”

Without this encounter with the event, we will not properly understand who we are or where we are going. Thus, the importance of our topic: Abraham and the birth of the “I.” For the “I” has been obscured in us or at least we are becoming confused as to who we are. There is a fundamental anthropological problem, one which philosophy and politics have been unable to resolve, because they do not address the deepest longings of the human heart. Father Giussani writes: “Only an event can make the ‘I’ clear and substantial in its constitutive factors. This is a paradox that no philosopher and no theory—sociological or political—can tolerate: that an event, not an analysis, not a recording of sentiments, is the catalyst that enables the factors of our ‘I’ to come to the surface with clarity and to arrange themselves before our eyes, before our consciousness, with firm, lasting, and stable clearness.”

One difficulty is that even when we discover the “I,” it is not always a protagonist in history; it does not generate. I would say that two events in history have special importance in generating a people: the call of Abraham and the birth of Christ, the Word made Flesh. Examining the encounter of God with Abraham can help reawaken the “I” in each of us, however obscured or neglected it may seem.

The culture of Mesopotamia in which Abraham lived was polytheistic. The people used myths to explain the phenomena they observed, and these explained the origin of their gods. However, the myths could never explain the fate of the universe. In the religious world of Abraham’s time, a cyclical conception of time dominated. Nature had its cycles: for the harvest, for life and death, for child-bearing, and for religious rituals. Everything was cyclical and seemingly predetermined.

Foreign was a notion of linear time or history. The notion of election of a chosen people was also foreign to this culture. The call of Abraham was totally anti-Mesopotamic. With Abraham’s vocation, God entered history. God speaks his first words in a personal way to Abraham and in doing so reveals his divine will: God intends to form for Himself a people who will be His own and who will be aware of its role and the meaning of human

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existence, not merely subject to fate.

The idea of vocation manifests itself for the first time in history with the call of Abraham. Something radical occurs: a Mystery reveals Himself to Abraham and in doing so generates a new subject, who becomes conscious of himself as an "I" in relationship with a "Thou." Abraham understands that he is in a relationship with a Mystery and from this relationship and awareness is born the "I." If Abraham were to have asked, "Who am I?" he would have responded, "I am Yours." He belonged to God, and this belonging shaped his—and our—future. He belonged to God in such a way that he could obey Him in all things and surrender all things to Him.

Abraham is the beginning of God's gesture toward humanity which finds its fulfillment in the Word made Flesh. With the personal call, God assigned Abraham a task: to leave his country and his father's house to go to the land God would give him. The origin of the people of Israel is rooted in history: in the call and response of Abraham to accept an unforeseen, undetermined future. His life acquired a purpose: to live in response to the Other. His work became a vocation, a life lived in awareness of and in relationship with the Other. This response of Abraham also indicates that he was a free subject, capable of responsibility, no longer living a life determined by "fate."

With the inbreaking of God into history with the call of Abraham, the "I" became a protagonist in history. Abraham discovered that reality and the plan for his life and future were made by the Other. The call was a progressive unfolding of a plan which was not his own, but which would unfold in history through his response. His vocation would generate not only an "I" but a people who belonged to the Lord.

Abraham's vocation carried with it a promise and opened the way for a dynamic of hope and fulfillment, which the Mesopotamic religions could not offer. In a sense, there would now be a linear history—the history of a people, marked by promise and fulfillment. The Word of God spoke to a man and the man received that Word; in doing so, he began the history—he generated a people. This word and plan of God—and God's fidelity—would be verified by Abraham during his life.

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The word of God, born from the call and promise, can be converted into actions, which fulfill the word that has been given. The promise of Abraham to have offspring and become a great nation would encounter many difficulties: the sterility of Sarah, the offering of Isaac, etc., but Abraham believed that the word spoken to him was true. This faith animated his entire existence, and so he became the father of all believers. God had promised him a land and offspring. God would do this.

God acted to fulfill His word, giving Sarah a son—Isaac. Seeing Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac, God acted to fulfill His word: returning Isaac to Abraham. Here we see the first signs of a divine fidelity to His word, which is a function of God's relationship with Abraham. This divine fidelity would remain in the history of the people of Israel.

In time, the relationship that Abraham had with God was shared with his family. The scriptures speak of "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." It is this God who heard the cries of his "chosen people" when they found themselves in slavery in Egypt; He acted to fulfill the promise to Abraham. In that case, the call and election of Moses was the fruit of the saving action of God for His people. His powerful actions and signs led the Hebrews to enter a covenantal relationship with Him: He would be their God and they would be His people. The point is that the actions and word of God, with all its hope and promise, are intrinsically connected.

Through this covenant, Israel entered a personal and exclusive relationship with God and consented to keeping His commandments. Of course, the history of the people is marked by the infidelity of the people and idolatry, culminating in the Babylonian exile, in which the land, the monarchy, and temple—and all the promises—seemed to be threatened definitively. However, God could not be unfaithful to His word. This is something Abraham understood from the beginning.

To call His people to fidelity to the covenant, God spoke His word in history through the prophets. Initially, God put His words in the mouth of Moses and gave him a mission. In this, we see the first divine condescension of the word, spoken this time by humans. With the death of Moses and

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the entrance into the Promised Land, God continued to send prophets so that they might continue to live in a relationship with Him. Again, God took the initiative. Through the prophets, the word of God would have a continuous presence among His people, which formed an ethic or morality that consisted in hearing the voice of God and not hardening one's heart.

In time, the people began to live this relationship with God and begin to reflect upon this God as the author of creation. He could be known through His created works. As in the Book of Genesis, God spoke and the heavens and the earth were made, but this writing comes as a theological reflection of a people who belonged to God and lived in a relationship with Him, a relationship which began with Abraham. Through creation God communicated with His people. Even during exile, when the people lost hope, Isaiah called them to recognize His Presence in creation and reminded them that the God who brought them out of Egypt would be faithful.

Eventually, this same people recognized that they belonged to God. This belonging was expressed in the words and terms of the covenant, whose content was the Law, the commandments of the Lord, which were revealed, not to all the nations, but to Israel because of her privileged relationship with God. Thus, the word of God was converted into a rule of life for the people—the Law.

The promises of God through the covenant were to remain for generation upon generation, not just for the generation that was led out of slavery or journeyed through the desert. Thus, the word of God came to be written down to preserve the memory of the word of God, the commandments, and the covenant as the people journeyed through history. Additionally, the words of the prophets, who journeyed with the people through history, became part of the scriptures as a reminder of the risk of idolatry and a call to fidelity. Just as God consistently made promises and fulfilled them, so through His prophets, events were foretold that would be fulfilled.

In the living relationship of God with His chosen people, the people gradually came to praise God in creation, to give Him thanks, to ask for pardon, to lament their hardship and to seek His help through petition.

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Gradually, these words of men, emerging as fruit of a dialogical relationship with God, would also become part of the scriptures. The word of God took the form of prayer, most notably in the psalms.

In time and in the absence of prophets, the wisdom of Israel emerged from her relationship with God, especially after the Exile. The word of God was understood as divine wisdom through which Israel could re-read her history and by which future generations could be guided. Wisdom accompanied the creative works of God and through the wisdom literature, the people understood their own identity as children of God, always aware of His Presence and their relationship to Him.

None of this would have happened without God's actions—His initiative in history—and Abraham's free response. God chose to call and to speak to Abraham personally. This was an event—an encounter—between man and the living God which generated a people in history, who lived in hope of a promise.

However, one must acknowledge that the people lived under the Law, which came to be interpreted in a very narrow and restricted way, external to a relationship with the living God. Religion became something formal and, at times, burdensome to the people, called to be God's own. How was God to overcome this?

Throughout the history of this people, a great temptation was idolatry. While God had revealed His word to the people, images were not permitted, but then the Word became Flesh and made his dwelling among us. This is the second event—the birth of Jesus. The invisible God was made visible. He is the first born of all creation. Through His life, death, and resurrection, He called and generated a new people, giving them the power to be His adopted sons and daughters, born not by flesh or by man's willing it, but by God.

Christ is a true descendant of Abraham, obedient to the will of the Father. He belongs to the Father. He is the "beloved Son." His life was lived in a relationship of love with His Father. Jesus Himself says, "Your father Abraham longed to see my day, and he saw it and rejoiced." He rejoiced

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because he saw the fulfillment in Christ of what had begun in the call that God addressed to him—in that first event. Jesus was the fulfillment of his vocation. The leaping of John the Baptist in the womb at the Visitation is a sign of this joy and the fulfillment of the promise.

Through Christ, the Gentiles too share in the plan of salvation—the new and eternal covenant, and the Church can be understood as the new Israel, journeying in history. Jesus gives definitive form to the believers who were born from the faith of Abraham. It is in the relationship with God in Christ that man discovers or rediscovers his “I,” his identity. Christ is a Presence that attracts and intrigues those who encounter Him. We need only think about John and Andrew on the day they met Him. From that moment, they belonged to Him; they were his disciples—the first of a “new generation.” To be a Christian, and so to discover who we are, is to encounter Him and adhere to Him.

Pope Benedict placed this conviction at the beginning of his first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”

The encounter reawakens the “I” from its obscurity and neglect. It awakens a new curiosity to use one’s intelligence and freedom to discover the truth, to engage reality, to search for the plan for one’s life that has its origins in the Other, and to live in a new way, with a “new mind” that one did not have before the encounter with the event. Thus, a characteristic of the “offspring of Abraham” and brother or sister of Christ is to have faith to recognize God in all things and to be aware of His Presence and one’s relationship to this Presence. Everything is to be lived from the moment of the encounter with the Presence.

Still, being aware of one’s “I” is not enough. Just as for Abraham and the people of Israel, the heart must be open—it cannot be closed to the Divine Word. Moreover, in a culture that is become evermore individualistic, the “I” must be protected and renewed within the context of a community—with companionship that supports the risk of faith, and the Church, the Christian community, can be just that as she journeys through history,

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generating a people for the Lord of history, en route to the new and eternal Jerusalem. Thank you. [*audience applause*]

AN "IMPOSSIBLE" UNITY

We naturally yearn for unity and long to be part of a real community: life blossoms when it is shared.

And yet, we live in an age of fragmentation. At the social level, we suffer profound divisions among peoples and religions, and our country is ever more polarized along ideological lines, corroding our unity. At the personal level, we are often estranged from our communities, family members, and friends. When we discover that someone doesn't think the way we do, we feel an embarrassing distance, if not open hostility, that casts a shadow on the relationship. As a result, either we become angry or we avoid controversial issues altogether, and retreat into safe territories with like-minded people.

But the disunity we see around us often begins within ourselves. We are bombarded by images of what we are "supposed" to be, but they generally do not correspond to who we really are. In fact, our truest self seems to escape us. The full scope of our humanity, with all its vast and profound needs and desires, may suddenly emerge, elicited by memories, thoughts or events, but usually quickly fades, without lasting joy or real change. And unless our relationships are rooted in the common experience of such humanity, we don't even have real dialogue; we just chat, gossip, text or argue.

In the end, the unity we long for seems impossible.

But what if it is possible? How can it happen?

"YOU KNOW IT WELL: YOU CAN'T MANAGE A THING; YOU'RE TIRED; YOU CAN'T GO ON. AND ALL AT ONCE YOU MEET THE GAZE OF SOMEONE IN THE CROWD—A HUMAN GAZE—AND IT'S AS IF YOU HAD DRAWN NEAR TO A HIDDEN DIVINE PRESENCE. AND EVERYTHING SUDDENLY BECOMES SIMPLER."

—ANDREI TARKOVSKY

