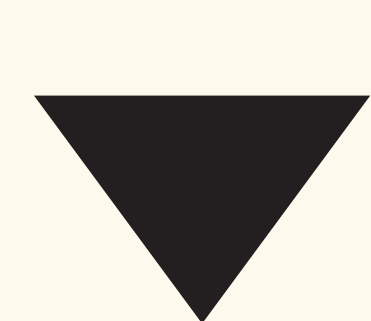


NEW YORK  
ENCOUNTER X



## THE JOURNEY TO THE TRUTH

*An exhibit  
on the Servant of God  
Fr. Luigi Giussani  
on the centennial  
of his birth*

# Biographical timeline

- ▶ **1922**  
October 15: Luigi Giovanni Giussani was born in Desio (a small town in Brianza, north of Milan) to parents Angelina Gelosa and Beniamino Giussani.
  - ▶ **1928**  
Begins elementary school.
  - ▶ **1933**  
October 2: Enters the Diocesan seminary of St. Peter Martyr in Seveso.
  - ▶ **1937**  
Moves to the seminary of Venegono.
  - ▶ **1939**  
Forms a group with several seminarian friends, calling it “Studium Christi”.
  - ▶ **1945**  
May 26: Is ordained a priest by Cardinal Ildefonso Schuster. He continues his license in Theology while teaching in the minor seminary of Seveso. In autumn, he begins pastoral work in a parish on the outskirts of Milan, which he later has to give up due to a severe respiratory disease.
  - ▶ **1946**  
Beginning of long periods of recovery, which last until 1949.
  - ▶ **1950**  
Having regained his health, he returns to teaching in the seminary and spends weekends doing pastoral work in a parish in Milan.
  - ▶ **1951**  
Occasional meetings with high school students inspire a growing desire to dedicate his life to educating young people.
  - ▶ **1954**  
Continues his doctorate in Theology with a thesis on Reinhold Niebuhr’s Understanding of the Christian Meaning of Man. He begins teaching religion at the Berchet high school in Milan. In the following years he begins teaching also in other schools.
  - ▶ **1955**  
He is appointed Diocesan Assistant to Gioventù Studentesca (GS), or “Student Youth” the pastoral outreach for high school students.
  - ▶ **1957**  
He involves all of GS in the Mission to the City initiated by Archbishop Montini. Guiding GS, he renews its educational proposal. He also involves GS students in an activity aimed to educate them to charity called “Charitable Work”. The Charitable Work takes place in Bassa, an economically depressed neighborhood of Milan.
  - ▶ **1958**  
A group forms around Giussani, the heart of which would later mature into the Memores Domini, an association of consecrated lay faithful who live in community.
  - ▶ **1960**  
Makes his first visit to Brazil, harbinger of the departure of the first GS students who would travel to Brazil as missionaries.
  - ▶ **1964**  
Begins teaching Introduction to Theology at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan.
  - ▶ **1965**  
Spends the summer in the United States to study the formation and organization of various parish activities. Upon his return to Italy, he leaves the leadership of GS, where the first signs emerge of the crisis that would reach its peak in 1968.
  - ▶ **1967**  
Leaves his teaching post at Berchet high school.
  - ▶ **1968**  
In the months marked by student protests throughout Italy, he lays the groundwork for a renewal of what later would become the CL Movement.
  - ▶ **1969**  
The name “Communion and Liberation” appears for the first time.
  - ▶ **1971**  
Oversees the founding of the Benedictine monastery at Cascinazza (outside Milan). Meets with the Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, Karol Wojtyła. Meets the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar and, through him, Joseph Ratzinger.
  - ▶ **1975**  
Begins a friendship with a group of Spanish families, who would begin the CL community in Spain. On Palm Sunday, March 23, participates in the pilgrimage initiated by Paul VI along with the Movement. Meets with the Holy Father after the event.
  - ▶ **1976**  
Participates in the Equipe of the leaders of CL University students (CLU), which would be a turning point in the history of the Movement.
  - ▶ **1979**  
January 18: is received by John Paul II. March 31: Attends the first audience with John Paul II with the CLU students.
  - ▶ **1981**  
The Memores Domini is recognized by the bishop of Piacenza, Bishop Enrico Manfredini.
  - ▶ **1982**  
February 11: The Pontifical Council for the Laity officially recognizes the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, with Giussani as the founder and president for life.
  - ▶ **1983**  
Is named a Monsignor by John Paul II.
  - ▶ **1984**  
Leads the CL community in a pilgrimage to Rome for an audience with John Paul II marking the 30th anniversary of the birth of the Movement.
  - ▶ **1985**  
Participates in a meeting in Avila, Spain, with the cultural association Nueva Tierra. Fr. Julián Carrón was one of the leaders of the association. In September, Nueva Tierra decides to join CL, and they attend an audience with John Paul II with the priests of CL. Giussani also oversees the founding of the Priestly Fraternity of the Missionaries of St. Charles Borromeo.
  - ▶ **1986**  
Makes a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.
  - ▶ **1987**  
Speaks at the Assembly of the Christian Democratic Party of Lombardy in Assago (Milan). Travels to Japan to meet a prominent Japanese Buddhist, Shodo Habukawa. Participates in the Synod of Bishops on the Laity as a member appointed by the Holy Father.
  - ▶ **1988**  
The Memores Domini are recognized by the Holy See as a Private Universal Ecclesial Association, with Giussani as the founder and president for life.
  - ▶ **1990**  
Begins a path of discernment with a group of individuals that would become the Fraternity of St. Joseph, an association of consecrated lay people.
  - ▶ **1991**  
Ends his time teaching at the Catholic University in Milan, having reached the mandatory retirement age.
  - ▶ **1992**  
Leads a pilgrimage to Lourdes for the 10th anniversary of the Pontifical recognition of the Fraternity of CL.
  - ▶ **1993**  
The Holy See recognizes the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Assumption, a branch of an order to which he was connected since 1958. Begins directing the new “Books of the Christian Spirit” series published by Rizzoli, which would include over 80 books.
  - ▶ **1995**  
Begins publishing articles in secular newspapers in Italy, including il Giornale, la Repubblica, and Corriere della Sera. Receives the Catholic Culture prize from the School of Catholic Culture in Bassano del Grappa, in Veneto.
  - ▶ **1997**  
Begins directing the musical collection “Spirto Gentil” through an agreement with Deutsche Grammophon and other record labels. The series begins with a recording of Pergolesi’s Stabat Mater and would include 52 other works. The English version of his book *The Religious Sense* is presented at the United Nations in New York.
  - ▶ **1998**  
May 30: Gives an address in St. Peter’s Square during the meeting of John Paul II with Ecclesial Movements and new communities.
  - ▶ **2002**  
February 11: Receives a long letter signed by John Paul II on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Pontifical recognition of the Fraternity of CL.
  - ▶ **2003**  
On the occasion of the funerals of the members of the Italian military killed in the Nasiriya bombing, his message is read during the evening news of the public Italian TV station.
  - ▶ **2004**  
For the 50th anniversary of the birth of the Movement, he sends his last letter to John Paul II. Receives permission from the Archbishop of Madrid for Fr. Julián Carrón to move to Milan to collaborate with him in guiding CL. October: writes his last letter to the entire CL Movement on the occasion of the pilgrimage to Loreto, which marks the 50th anniversary of the birth of the Movement. Late December: his health begins to decline rapidly.
  - ▶ **2005**  
February 22: Dies in his home in Milan. February 24: The funeral Mass is celebrated in Milan’s cathedral (the Duomo) by then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, as the personal representative of John Paul II. He also gives the homily. Giussani is buried in the Famedio section of Milan’s Monumentale Cemetery, reserved for the city’s accomplished citizens.
  - ▶ **2008**  
His tomb is transferred to a separate chapel built for him in the same cemetery.
  - ▶ **2012**  
February 22: at the end of the Mass celebrated in Milan’s Duomo on the seventh anniversary of his death, President of the Fraternity of CL Fr. Julián Carrón, announces that he has presented the request to open the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of Msgr. Giussani. The request is accepted by the Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Angelo Scola.
-

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**PLAY VIDEO**

**THE JOURNEY TO THE TRUTH** ▼

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NEW YORK  
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Use this link to play the first video, before panel 01:

**[https://youtu.be/qp8AwLTw\\_Ag](https://youtu.be/qp8AwLTw_Ag)**

***Who is Father Giussani?  
How Communion  
and Liberation Was Born?  
Its method. Its proposal.***

**FIRST VIDEO**

# A PROBLEM OF METHOD



“How can we reach the truth?” This final question in the theme of the 2022 New York Encounter evokes one of the pillars of Fr. Giussani’s educational approach. As he often told his students at the Berchet High School:

I am not here so that you can take my ideas as your own. I am here to teach you a true method that you can use to judge the things I will tell you. And what I have to tell you is the result of a long experience, of a past that is 2000 years old.

His ultimate goal was not to convince them of “his” truth but to teach them a *method*. The word “method” in Greek means *path*. Fr. Giussani believed that his task as an educator was to show his students the path to the truth.

In his writings, Fr. Giussani discusses at length how one can discover for himself or herself whether a proposal is true, especially a proposal that concerns the most profound and important human questions. His answer can be summarized as follows: **The journey to truth is an experience.**

This journey requires a comparison between what we feel and our elementary experience.



**“The journey  
to truth is  
an experience.”**



## WHAT DOES FR. GIUSSANI MEAN BY ELEMENTARY EXPERIENCE?

### He describes it as:

a complex of needs and “evidences” which accompany us as we come face to face with all that exists.

### What are these needs?

These needs can be given many names ... for example, the need for happiness, the need for truth, for justice. They are like a spark igniting the human engine.

### These needs are objective and universal. They constitute our “heart”.

The need for goodness, justice, truth, and happiness constitutes man’s ultimate identity, the profound energy with which people in all ages and of all races approach everything, enabling them to exchange not only things but also ideas and to transmit riches to each other over the distance of centuries.



*“A complex of needs  
and ‘evidences’ which  
accompany us as we  
come face to face  
with all that exists.”*

**Fr. Giussani uses an example to explain how this comparison with our elementary experience works:**

- ▶ *A man is in love with a girl: this is a fact, it's a phenomenon. A young poet is passing by with his hands in his pockets and he runs into this fact. This fact enters the horizon of his eyes, the domain of his knowledge. This is the beginning of the phenomenon, but it's not the whole thing. Facing this object of knowledge, the poet's eyes are burning with curiosity, with attraction, with approval, because he sees in that phenomenon something that he also would like, but, being only a fifteen year old poet, it is still out of reach for him.*

*He feels a longing: he feels, meaning that he reacts with envy and with a desire for that phenomenon for himself. Up to this point it's not an experience, but something he feels: an object of knowledge, a presence of a little piece of reality that he feels, that makes him react, in this case spontaneously. However, the knowledge of that phenomenon, by making him envious, raises some questions.*

*The poet's entire nature asks questions about what he feels, the envy he feels, the longing he feels. **"Is it real satisfaction? Is it happiness? Is it truth and happiness?"** These needs are not part of what he feels, but they rise inside him when he faces what he feels, inside him when he's engaged with what he feels. **These questions judge what he feels. At this point the pure and simple feeling becomes experience.***

**In other words, the comparison takes place when we judge our feelings in light of our deepest needs and questions.**

Feeling, the mere feeling rises to the dignity of experience when the content you feel is being judged by the ultimate questions of your heart: they are criteria of truth, of the true man, of true humanity, of the true destiny of man.

**Man is educated by experience, not by what he feels.**



***"Man is educated by experience, not by what he feels."***



**Essential to experience, this comparison between what man feels and his ultimate questions is a fundamental work of reason.**

Reason is the need to understand existence, that is, the need for an adequate, total explanation of existence. This explanation cannot be found within the horizon of life's experience. No matter how much this horizon widens, this longing for an answer will remain.

The very dynamism of reason forces us to affirm the exhaustive answer beyond the horizon of our life. The answer exists. It cries out through the entreaties that make up our being. But it cannot be defined by experience. It is there, but we do not know what it is.

**Fr. Giussani explains this with another example:**

- ▶ *Imagine that reason were a great mountain climber who scaled the highest summit on the globe and, once at the top, realized that the peak which he had just climbed was merely an infinitely small foothill leading to an enormous mountain whose beginning or end could not be seen. The summit of reason's conquest is the perception of an unknown unreachable presence, to which all human movement is destined, because it depends upon it. It is the idea of mystery.*

▼  
***“The summit of reason's conquest is the perception of an unknown unreachable presence. It is the idea of mystery.”***

## THE JOURNEY TO THE TRUTH ▼

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NEW YORK  
ENCOUNTER X



### To summarize:

Reason is the need to understand what exists, but because in life this is not possible, fidelity to reason forces us to admit the existence of something beyond our comprehension...Once this “something” is discovered, reason yearns to know the unknown.

### In Fr. Giussani’s view, the pursuit of this “something” is what makes life worth living.

It is this relationship with that “beyond” which ensures the adventure of the here and now. Otherwise, boredom dominates - a boredom which leads to elusive and evasive presumption or censorious desperation. Only the relationship with the “beyond” makes the adventure of life possible.

### However, in the end, the mystery remains unfathomed.

Our nature is need for truth and fulfillment, or, in other words, happiness. All human movement, whatever it might be, is dictated by this urgency that constitutes us. But this desire, having reached the extreme borders of our life experience, still does not find what it has been searching for: at the utmost frontier of its lived territory, this urgent need of ours still has not found its answer.

▼  
***“It is this relationship with that ‘beyond’ which ensures the adventure of the here and now.”***



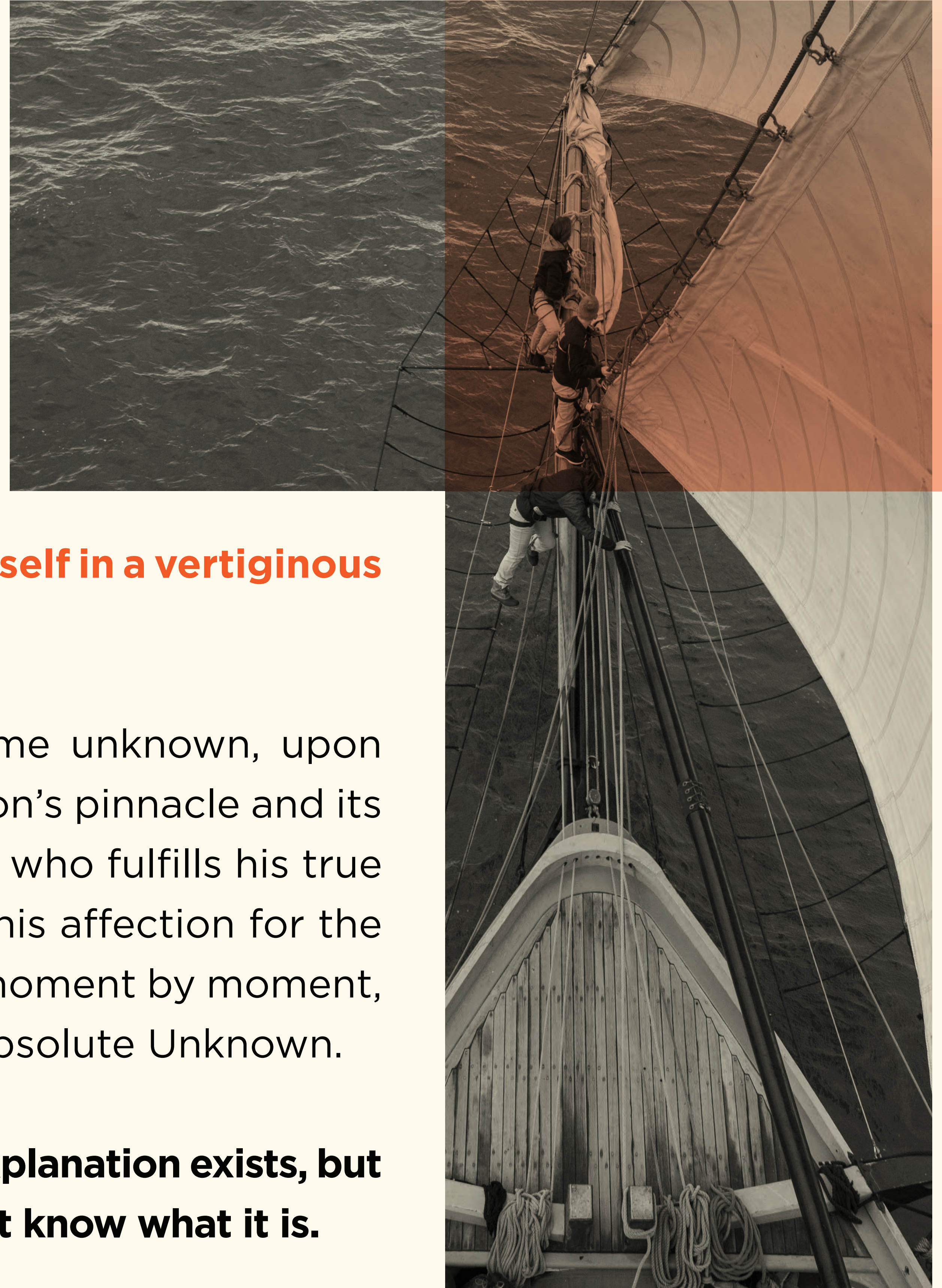


**In order to illustrate reason's striving for this unattainable mystery, Fr. Giussani refers to the character of Ulysses in Dante's Divine Comedy. Ulysses went out in search of the unattainable, going beyond the limit of the known world, the "Pillars of Hercules."**

- ▶ *Ulysses is the intelligent man who would measure all things with his own acumen. He is relentlessly curious, wandering from Ithaca to Libya, from Libya to Sicily, from Sicily to Sardinia, from Sardinia to the Balearic Islands - measuring and governing the entire Mediterranean Sea. Ulysses represents man as the measure of all things. But, once he arrives at the Pillars of Hercules, he confronts a common belief that beyond the Pillars nothing is reliable any longer - all is emptiness and madness. Whoever ventures beyond this point is a dreamer who will never reach any certainty. Likewise, beyond the confines of reason as the measure of all things, there is only fantasy or at least no possibility of certainty.*

*Ulysses, however, precisely because of that very "stature" that had driven him all over the Mediterranean, felt not only that arriving at the Pillars of Hercules was not the end, but in fact, it was the moment when his true nature would be unleashed. And so he smashed to pieces the conventional wisdom and went on. He did not make a mistake in doing so: to venture forward was in his nature as a man, and, in making this decision, he truly felt like a man.*

*Ulysses' attempt was foolish, not so much because he presumed to cross the ocean, but rather because he presumed to cross it using the same means by which he knew the Mediterranean Sea...It is the ocean that Ulysses is trying to navigate, but the ocean 'swallows' him, because it is larger than the little ship he uses to traverse it. He has to find a bigger ship.*



**Facing this unattainable mystery, man finds himself in a vertiginous position.**

The realization of the existence of this supreme unknown, upon which all history and the world depends, is reason's pinnacle and its vertigo. This means that, ideally, a human being who fulfills his true capacity, his nature - with all of his will for life, his affection for the real - ought to be at the mercy of, hanging on, moment by moment, to this unreachable, indecipherable, ineffable, absolute Unknown.

**Human reason lives this dizzying condition: the explanation exists, but it is not within our grasp. It is there, but we do not know what it is.**

**Fr. Giussani noted that this condition is perfectly described by the Ancient Greek philosopher Plato in his work *Phaedo*:**

- ▶ *Well-spoken, said Simmias. I will tell you my difficulty...I believe, as perhaps you do, that precise knowledge on that subject is impossible or extremely difficult in our present life, but that it surely shows a very poor spirit not to examine thoroughly what is said about it, and to desist before one is exhausted by an all-round investigation. Man should achieve one of these things: learn the truth about these things or find it for oneself, or, if that is impossible, adopt the best and most irrefutable of men's theories, and, borne upon this, sail through the dangers of life as upon a raft, unless someone should make that journey safer and less risky upon a firmer vessel, that is to say, with the help of a revealed word of God.*



***“The realization of the existence of this supreme unknown, upon which all history and the world depends, is reason's pinnacle and its vertigo.”***

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ENCOUNTER X

The endpoint of the human quest, therefore,  
is the hypothesis of revelation.

The longing for a “redemption,” for a sure route to cross the sea of meaning, had been prophetically voiced four centuries before Christ, in Plato’s *Phaedo*. At the extremity of life’s experience, at the edge of this passionate and hard-won consciousness of existence, in spite of man himself, this cry of the truest humanity breaks out as an entreaty, a begging.

And then emerges the great hypothesis: *“unless someone should make that journey safer and less risky upon a firmer vessel, that is to say, with the help of a revealed word of God.”*

Properly speaking, this is called hypothesis of revelation. In the proper sense of the word, “revelation” does not mean man’s *interpretation* of reality, human nature in search of its meaning. Rather, revelation means the possibility of a real *fact*, a historical event, a presence within history that speaks as a friend, a father, a mother - Plato’s *Phaedo* aspired to this kind of revelation.



▼  
**“Revelation means  
the possibility  
of a real fact,  
a historical event,  
a presence within  
history.”**



## A TOTAL INVERSION OF THE RELIGIOUS METHOD

The hypothesis that the mystery has penetrated man's existence by speaking to him in human terms alters the man-destiny relationship which will no longer be based on human effort, the fruit of man's construction or imagination, the study of a distant, enigmatic thing, or on waiting for something absent. Instead, it will mean coming up against something present.

In this hypothesis, the religious method would lose all of its disturbing connotations of an enigmatic deferment to something in the distance. Rather, it would have the dynamics of an experience, **the experience of a present, an encounter.**



*“The man-destiny relationship will no longer be based on human effort. Instead, it will mean coming up against something present.”*

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NEW YORK  
ENCOUNTER X



# THE TRUTH BECAME FLESH

To make Himself known, God entered human life as a Man, taking on a human form, so that the thought, imagination, and affectivity of man are as though “blocked”, magnetized by Him. The Christian event has the form of an encounter: it is something which penetrates our eyes, touches our heart, which can be grasped by our hand.

**This initiative by God corresponds to our deepest human needs.**

It would be impossible to become fully aware of what Jesus Christ means if one did not first become fully aware of the nature of that dynamism which makes man human.

Christ proposes Himself as the answer to what “I” am and only an attentive, tender, and impassioned awareness of my own self can make me open and lead me to acknowledge, admire, thank, and live Christ.

Without this awareness, even Jesus Christ becomes just a name.



***“The Christian event has the form of an encounter: it is something which penetrates our eyes, touches our heart, which can be grasped by our hand.”***

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Use this link to play the second video, before panel 11:

**<https://youtu.be/qTCkeajDc6Y>**

***John and Andrew***

**SECOND VIDEO**



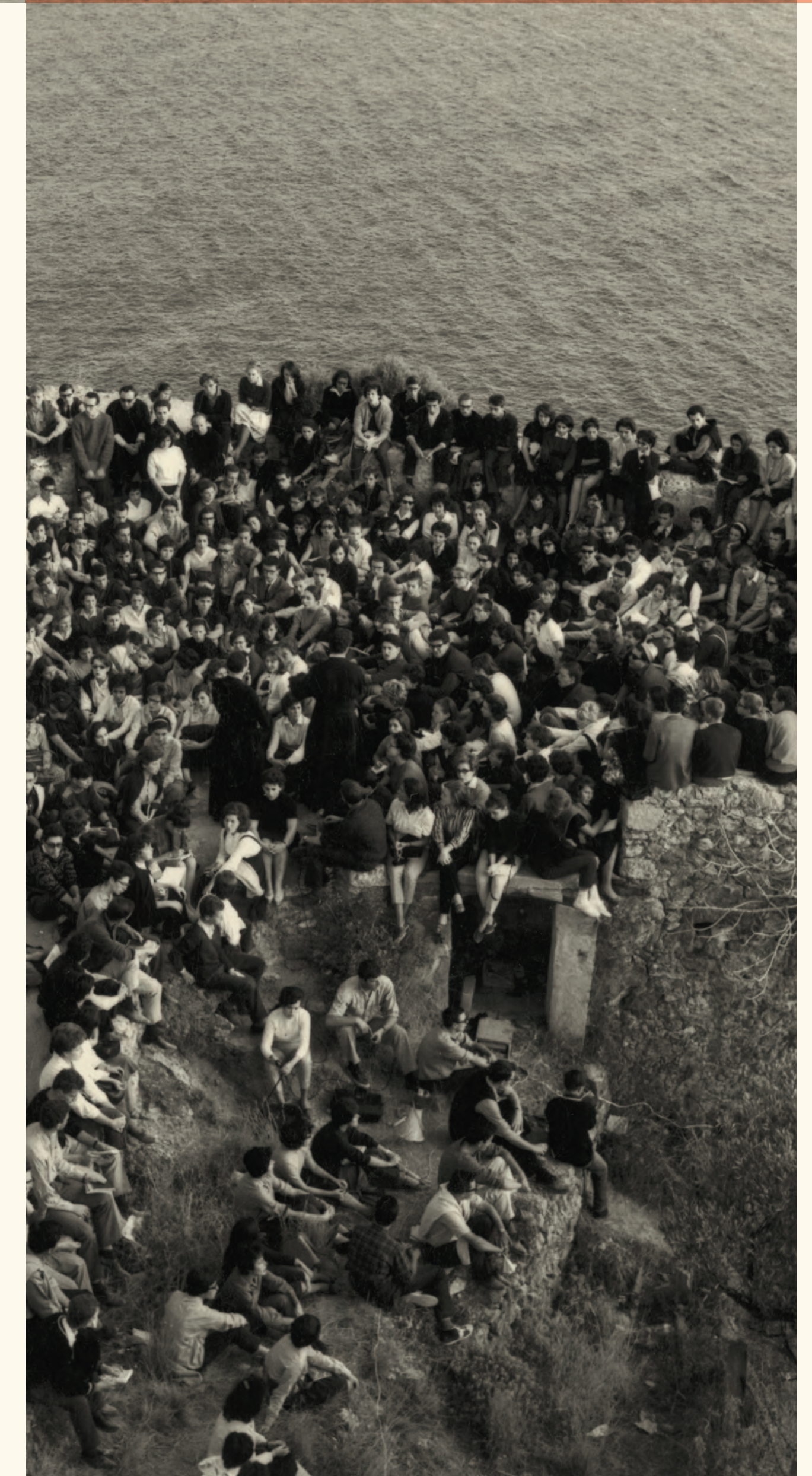
## THE TRUTH HERE AND NOW

How can those who encounter Jesus Christ a day, a month, a hundred, a thousand, or two thousand years after His disappearance from earthly horizons, be enabled to realize that He corresponds to the truth which He claims? In other words, how does one come to see whether Jesus of Nazareth is or is not in a strict sense that event that incarnates the hypothesis of revelation?

This problem is at the heart of what history has always called Church. The word **“Church”** indicates a **historical phenomenon** whose only meaning lies in the fact that it enables man to attain a **certainty about Christ**.

## A DIFFERENT HUMANITY, THE SIGN OF THE TRUTH

Even when Jesus was at the height of His earthly activity, the event that he was assumed an identifiable form which was not merely His external physical appearance, but also that of those who believed in Him. The so-called Orthodox-Catholic approach shows us this method for reaching Jesus Christ even today, so that we can verify whether His great claim is true or not, whether He is God or not, whether the Christian message is true or not. This method is the chance encounter with a reality comprised of those who believe in Him. For the presence of Christ in history - the visible appearance - abides in the unity of believers, which is the encounterable form of His presence.



*“For the presence of Christ in history abides in the unity of believers, which is the encounterable form of His presence.”*



## HOW CHRIST BECOMES AN EVENT FOR ME?

The event happens today according to a specific form of time and space that enables us to face it in a certain way and makes it more understandable, more persuasive and more educationally effective. **This characteristic intervention of the Spirit of Christ, which makes possible the event existentially in time and space, is called a “charism.”**

A charism is precisely the mode of time, of space, of character, of temperament, and the psychological, affective, intellectual way in which the Lord becomes event for me, and for others in this same way. This way is communicated from me to others, so that between me and *these* people there is an affinity that is not there with everyone else; a stronger more specific bond of fraternity. **This is how Christ remains present amongst us every day, till the end of the world.**

▼  
***“A charism is precisely the mode of time, of space, of character, and the psychological affective way in which the Lord becomes event for me.”***



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# PLAY VIDEO

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Use this link to play the third video, after panel 12:

**<https://youtu.be/46j-5PPhtKO>**

***Father Giussani  
and Saint John Paul II***

**THIRD VIDEO**

## REFERENCES

### TEXTS

Throughout the exhibit, all quotes of Fr. Giussani are shown in black font.

#### Panel 1

- *The Risk of Education* (The Crossroads Publishing Company, 2001), Introduction
- *The Journey to Truth Is an Experience* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006)

#### Panel 2

- *The Religious Sense* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), Chapter 1

#### Panel 3

- Unofficial translation of *Si puo' (veramente?!) vivere cosi'?* (Rizzoli, 1996), Chapter 1

#### Panel 4

- *The Religious Sense*, Chapter 11

#### Panel 5

- *The Religious Sense*, Chapters 11, 14, 15

#### Panel 6

- *The Religious Sense*, Chapter 14
- Unofficial translation of *Si puo' (veramente?!) vivere cosi'?*, Chapter 1

#### Panel 7

- *The Religious Sense*, Chapters 11, 14, 15

#### Panel 8

- *The Religious Sense*, Chapter 15

#### Panel 9

- *At the Origin of the Christian Claim* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), Chapter 3

#### Panel 10

- *Generating Traces in the History of the World* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), Chapter 1
- *At the Origin of the Christian Claim*, Introduction

#### Panel 11

- *Why the Church?* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), Chapters 1, 2

#### Panel 12

- *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, Chapter 2

### PHOTOS

#### Cover panel

- Varigotti, 1975: Fr. Giussani (Fraternita' di Comunione e Liberazione "FCL")

#### Panel 1

- Milan, 1983: Fr. Giussani. (Federico Brunetti)

#### Panel 2

- 1987: Fr. Giussani (Fotogramma)

#### Panel 9

- Milan, 1980s: Fr. Giussani at the chalkboard (FCL)

#### Panel 10

- Varigotti, October 1958: Morning prayer on the beach during Student Week (Photo by Elio Ciol, Casarsa)

#### Panel 11

- Varigotti, September 1961: Radius gathering of high school students at the Varigotti tower ruins during Student Week (Photo by Elio Ciol, Casarsa)

#### Panel 12

- Subiaco, Hermitage of Blessed Lorenzo Loricato: Fr. Giussani and the painter William Congdon conversing with young people (Photo by Elio Ciol, Casarsa)

#### Last Panel

- Desio, May 31, 1945: Fr. Giussani riding the bike he received as a gift on the occasion of his first Mass. (FCL)
- Varigotti, 1975: Fr. Giussani playing cards (FCL)

## CURATORS

- Amy Hickl
- Carlo Lancellotti
- Maria Teresa Landi
- Colin Nelson
- Marcia Otto
- Natalie Polzer
- Angelo Sala

