

CHRISTMAS VACATION - "GENERATING TRACES IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD"

During Christmas vacation, we propose taking up again the last part of the GS Beginning Day, together with a brief passage from Generating Traces by Father Giussani and a witness. The question remains the one from 9 December, on which we have already begun to work.

"Our heart has an ultimate, imperious, deep-set need for fulfillment, for truth, beauty, goodness, love, final certitude, and happiness'. Is this true? And what is able to correspond to these needs of the heart?"

FREEDOM IS THE VERIFICATION THAT AUTHORITY IS TRUE

"The word 'authority,' which coincides with the word 'paternity,' [...] generates freedom. [...] Therefore, authority is true [we know it is true] [...] truly experienced [...] when it ignites my freedom, when it ignites my personal awareness and personal responsibility," in the face of all I have to do, in my studies, in all my affections, my relationships, in facing myself. How is it possible our friend was interested in Kant or in math, without taking some kind of class to reawaken one's appreciation for studying? It was because she met someone who generated her, who gave her new life until she was interested in everything, who brought out her "I" and her personal responsibility so much that even she was amazed.

It is precisely the relationship with authority, perceived by so many people today as an oppressive, limiting factor for one's freedom—the entire modern world is constructed in opposition to authority due to the presumption of absolute autonomy, because man wants to make himself—that Fr. Giussani indicates it as the condition to be truly free. Do you see the difference in thinking about authority in this way?

This is the underlying reason a person can encounter GS and immediately see the difference between it and their Saturday night crowd. It is the difference of the experience in which you find yourself, of the freedom you are surprised to see in yourself, and the total engagement of your "I" in all of life.

We verify this authority that frees us—this place where Christ conquers—in our experience, in any and every situation life sets before us. I am describing something I learned from what you wrote; I don't invent anything, or "imagine" something that is not present. I repeat the things I see that are confirmations of an experience I am already living. And in this way, I grow, just as you grow by learning from what happens to you. Listen to what these friends of ours wrote and see how what happened to them makes them able to experience this freedom anywhere.

"WHO IS THIS MAN? For me, this man is a friend, my best friend. A real presence that is here NOW, who is manifested in a face with a precise first and last name. This man has touched my heart and continues to surprise me ANYWHERE, even at school, where two teachers have started to really take an interest in us, in how we feel, in our concept of friendship; at school, where I spoke with my GS friends in my class about our experience with the Movement, and it was beautiful how some of our classmates were struck by what we said and started to ask questions. I had desired all of it for a long time, but I thought it was impossible [this is Christianity: something you thought was possible that, instead, happens right in front of your nose, overtaking you down to the marrow] because I thought the teachers were only there because it was their job, and also because I had ruled out the idea that what was »

» said about GS could be interesting for my other classmates since they talk about different things. Instead, I realized how we can bring the Movement anywhere, because it is a fact that continues to happen again independent from our thoughts, therefore it is for everyone. And if you have had an encounter that changed you, sooner or later, those around you will notice. It doesn't depend on us. The important thing is to keep our desire alive."

Another girl wrote: "Is it worth starting again? I think it is worth starting again not so much because I like being in class or [...] because studying is not tiresome for me. In fact, I think there are very few people who feel like that. I think it is worth starting again because living is worth it. Often, I hear people say, 'You can't live for less than everything,' or 'I want everything,' but is it really true that I want everything if I spend nine months out of the year counting the minutes until the last bell? This is what I want: to arrive and look forward to every day of school the same way I look forward to the community vacation. Maybe I'll be anxious about a test, maybe I will have questions I still don't have answers to, but I want to live desiring and asking to go to bed at night as happy as I am when I come home from the Triduum." She already has her sign: it has begun to happen. In some moments of her life it has begun to happen. She only needs to verify if it can happen everywhere, anywhere, in any situation. In fact, she closes saying, "Only when (if ever) my life is that way will I know that what we say in GS is true."

To conclude, another friend offers a working hypothesis for the new year we have just begun: "We are a ragtag band, a simple group. Hardly anyone really believes and very few go to church regularly. Yet, this makes the question 'Who are you?' even more urgent and opens up an infinite curiosity about how this presence that is among us will show itself and amaze us this year."

Let our wish for each other be that we never lose that infinite curiosity—which belongs especially to youth, but I, too, who am "almost" old need it to live—if there is even one among us, wherever we are, who is curious to see how the Mystery will demonstrate its presence this year, that we all may see and recognize.

This is what each of us must verify, and only those who risk what they have encountered in their life can be surprised to see the impossible become possible.

This is the great adventure we have in front of us this year: to see whether the thing that seized us—that magnetized us in certain moments of our lives—can conquer anywhere and everywhere. To see if Christ, whom we have recognized victorious in a person we recognize as an authority, can also conquer in us. Only those with the boldness to verify will discover the answer.

A happy journey to all of you!

(["Who Is This Man?"](#), Notes from the GS Beginning Day with Fr. Julián Carrón and Francesco Barberis)

WHAT AN EVENT IS

"In this sense, we add, an event is by its nature a novelty, something new. With an event, something new enters our life: something unforeseen, not defined beforehand, not willed by us as the outcome of a plan to be realized. [...] it is precise, concrete, visible, tangible, embraceable, when it does happen. [...] If we do not understand and use the term 'event,' we shall not even understand Christianity, which will thus be immediately reduced to a word, to a work of man, the outcome of human activity."

(L. Giussani, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal 2010, pp. 29-30) »

» WITNESS

I met GS at a time in my life when I didn't have balance, and from one day to the next I became increasingly tired. I didn't eat, I argued with everyone, and everything seemed to leave me empty. It felt like there was nowhere I could go, which caused me to close in on myself even more. I was insecure, everything seemed wronged, and I avoided most activities. When a friend invited me to the winter vacation, at first I said no, certain that my mom would say no anyway. But as more time passed, I took courage and accepted the invitation. I don't even know why I wanted to go; I only knew one person, I was sure that she would be able to make friends and I wouldn't, that surely this would be the usual boring vacation. At the first meeting, where we split up into groups to organize the hike, I started to change my mind slightly, and during the three days I actually realized that this was not a super-boring vacation, but instead a moment in which so many kids could exchange ideas, have fun, and have new experiences with a different awareness than they normally have. When I got home, I remembered every moment because I had lived them to the full. The games, the laughter, the trips on the bus, the songs: all of the beautiful moments. At the second vacation (during the summer), I did nothing but realize all the no's in my life, all the times I refused experiences that I could have lived instead. I have had the opportunity to respond to such questions as "Where is the heart found?". And other questions too. I realized that everything I was doing, I did just to do it and not to live it. I was unaware of everything. But if I had not tried to ask myself questions, or better, if I had not listened to these questions (because they have always been and will always be there), I would still be living as if everything were a passing shadow. All these encounters have opened a door for me and allowed me to grow. I started eating again, desiring more, not being content or ignoring myself. Not only Christians go to GS, for example I am not one, because they welcome you there whatever religion you profess. It is a place where you can discover yourself. GS has been and will continue to be a home for me; it has saved me and helped me.

(Signed letter)