

“YOU WILL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE” (Jn 8:32)

A story that continues

Greeting of Davide Prosperì*

Introduction

of Fabio Colombo

“‘You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’ (Jn 8:32)—A story that [as you all are able to see if you look around you] continues,”¹ even in the year of Grace, 2023. First off, I’d like to extend a warm welcome to each one of you. To those who are just now getting here, we want to extend the same greeting. Some others are connected—imagine this—while sitting a bus that got stuck in traffic and, therefore, they thought to stream the talk directly; another greeting to them who, perhaps, had imagined a different beginning to the Triduum retreat and instead is stuck there in a bus, while still listening to us and to the greeting that Davide gave. And so, I am up here on the “perch” with Davide for obvious reasons, but, truly, in my heart there is an exploding desire to come down among you all and greet you one by one, to ask what your names are, if you have brothers and sisters, what you study, what instrument you play, what sports you are involved in, how school went last week, how to the first year of high school is going or if you have already begun to sense the direction you will take in your choice of a university: in short, to get to know all of you in person! And so, in the name of David, Francesco and Seve, I’d like to renew the welcome and I embrace you all personally in this introduction to the gesture of the Triduum that we are beginning to live together. We do not know one another, and yet, a common history has preceded us and through this story, One has con-voked us, called us together!² Each one of us has been anxiously waiting to participate in this retreat; we have been waiting so much that we thought to welcome you all by asking a little group to play some live music, during your entrance into the great room! Like an impassioned serenata, a piece of music played just for you, like a song dedicated to each of you personally, as you are a part of this people we all belong to! It is surprising to see you all here, from all over Italy, an impressive people, His people in the world and certainly not of the world!³ »

* [Greeting of Davide Prosperì to the Easter Triduum retreat of Gioventù Studentesca on Holy Thursday \(April 6, 2023\).](#)

¹ Cf. “The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power” (Second Vatican Council, Declaration on Religious Liberty *Dignitatis Humane*, December 7, 1965).

² “Once you were ‘no people’ but now you are God’s people” (1Pt 2:10).

³ “Worldliness is a culture. It is a culture of the transitory, a culture of appearances, of *maquillage*, a culture of ‘today yes, tomorrow no; tomorrow yes and today no.’ It has superficial values. A culture that does not know fidelity, because it always changes according to circumstances, everything is negotiable. This is the worldly culture, the culture of worldliness. And Jesus insists on defending us from this and He prays that the Father might defend us from this culture of worldliness. It is a ‘*use it and throw it away*’ culture according to what-ever suits you. It is a culture without faithfulness, it has no roots. But it is a way of life, even a way of life for many who say that they are Christians. They are Christians, but they are worldly. In the parable of the seed that falls to the earth, Jesus says that the preoccupations of the world—that is, of worldliness—suffocate the Word of God, they do not allow it to grow (see Lk 8:14). And Paul to the Galatians says: ‘You were slaves of the world, of worldliness’ (see Gal 4:3). It always, always hits me when I read the last pages of Henri de Lubac’s book

» All of the expectation of your hearts, all of the questions that have arisen in your reason in these months of your life, that have become a path within you as an ineradicable need to grasp the meaning of life—I thank you right off the bat for your contributions, which were many and were truly profound—but, above all, *a fortiori*, the desire to collide with the response—which, slowly, like the dawn, will become more clear in you until it becomes resplendent like the sun at noon on a summer’s day—all of this is what gave you a presentiment, an intuition of the possibility, a promise of good; it made you decide for your existence⁴, decide to take yourselves seriously, to not cheat, to be loyal with yourselves, and to welcome the invitation, to sign up, to get on a bus, to face the trip, to dedicate money, time and energy to be here, now. Perhaps, instead, it was only the hidden secret of wanting to be away from home with some friends, but know that the good Lord is always at work! Someone, a bit sad, was saying to me, “Fr. Fabio: I invited some friends, but they decided to go to a grill out instead and they missed it this year.” This provokes some pain in your heart. And so, this simple invitation, this flier for the Triduum, received from a friend or an adult, is the beginning or the next chapter of a *story that continues*, of a story that—like a great, centuries-old olive tree (such as those you can see in the Holy Land in the garden of Gethsemane which have been around since Jesus went there with his friends to pray)—sets its roots even deeper than 2023 years ago and of which you, who accepted this simple invitation, you are the most recent branch, the latest offshoot, the newest fruit, perhaps (naturally) a bit unripe still, but full of desire to reach your maturity, to the truth of your human nobility. This history was begun by the first two, by John and Andrew—and, even before, by the “Here I am” of the Virgin Mary—and has crossed and burned through two thousand years, arriving to your great-grandparents, then grandparents, then your parents and to the adults of Gioventù Studentesca, right up to you. For me, the recognition of being a part of a story greater than time and extended throughout time happened in the mountains, in Siusi, with the community of GS of Varese. I had never gone to GS (just the group of Scouts before that), but that year, between my 4th and 5th years of high school, spurred on by some questions that were emerging on the horizon [what does Jesus have to do with my life? With my girlfriend? Does He have to do with my life just so I can punch the card on a Sunday? Or is there *more*? What does this Truth have to do with my studies, with my friends? What does it have to do with soccer, with enjoying oneself, with romance?], I accepted the invitation of certain boys and girls who I met again to go on a trip to the mountains. At the time, I frequented the parish center and played soccer, and so I was used to being around priests and to admiring them for how they freely gave of their lives, I truly admired them...but, I must say, there in the mountains, I met one who was a bit particular, with a taste for life and profundity of vision which is difficult to find. His name was Fr. Fabio Baroncini and he struck me for how he was able to give reasons for the Hope that sustained his life, for his granite-like certainty, a bit rough but, at the same »

Splendor of the Church, the last three pages, where he speaks specifically about a worldly spirituality. And he says it is the worst of evils that can befall the Church; and he is not exaggerating, because then he talks about some terrible evils. And this is the worst: worldly spirituality, because it is *a way of interpreting life*, it is a way of life, even a way of living Christianity. [...] Let us ask the Holy Spirit in these last days, during the Novena to the Holy Spirit, in the last days of the Easter Season as well, for the grace of discerning what worldliness is, what the Gospel is, and that we not allow ourselves to be deceived, because the world hates us, the world hated Jesus and Jesus prayed so that the Father would defend us from the spirit of the world.” (Pope Francis, *Homily*, May 16, 2020)

⁴Existence represents, above all, a decision about what we will recognize as our true foundation: and this decision is an event that continuously re-proposes itself. It’s about finding the *unum necessarium*, the only thing necessary, which means, that which we recognize as the meaning of ourselves and, therefore, as the foundation of everything we do,” L. Giussani, *Decisione per l’esistenza*, Jaca Book, Milan 1978, p. 11; now in L. Giussani, *Alla ricerca del volto umano*, Bur, Milan 2007, p. 95, translation ours.

» time, very attentive and discrete. I did not realize in the slightest that there was an aura of esteem around his person. I didn't know who he was nor that he was one of the best friends of Fr. Giussani. Long story short, Fr. Fabio loved the mountains and so did I. Therefore, during a hike, he had taken notice of me scurrying effortlessly and boldly up and down the mountains, helping the girls struggling with the hike, carrying their backpacks like a "noble knight"... and while everyone else, coming down, took the main path, with an easy descent and a wide road, Fr. Fabio, with two other adults, invited me to go down another way, with short climbing routes, with glimpses of stupefying beauty and portions of the climb that were rather difficult! Meanwhile, while we were walking together, we talked about school, about the 5th year of high school that was about to begin, about the choice of a university, not in the abstract, but rather he suggested to me to study everything, to face every subject with great attention and in depth (given that you need to study everything in depth for the final exams anyways), in such a way that what I would want to come to know and go deeper into in the years to come would emerge more clearly. It's as if he were saying: eat everything and take time to taste every flavor and, doing this, you'll realize more concretely what jives better with your palate! When at the end of those days, there was a moment to send a postcard home, and Fr. Fabio had wanted to sign it and wrote (because, in the meanwhile, he had realized who my mother and father were): "a story that continues." On that occasion, for the first time, I became intuitively aware of a story filled with gratuitous goodness that had preceded me, of a story that, first, had reached Fr. Giussani, then Fr. Fabio, and then my parents, and had arrived even to me, and I knew that I desired to take part in this story, to discover it for myself, being the one to play the game myself... this story would later continue with my encounter with the community of CLU in the State University in Milan, then with Fr. Giorgio, Fr. Pino and many others, up to my entering the seminary in Venegono.

And so, we do not know each other personally, but we are part of a story, we are part of a Body, of a People that walks through history. We are already members of this body, inseparably members of the same body. But this Body, what is special about it? What is there that is different that is animating this people? What does it have that sets it apart and makes it unique? We would be merely the sum total of our weaknesses and of our will or capacities, a bit like the disciples who were a bit frightened in the Upper Room two thousand years ago, after Jesus ascended into Heaven, if there was not the Holy Spirit, *Pneuma*, life-giving breath. We would be alone like deflated tires, if He was not there to "fill us up" and to "inflate" us again with the Divine Life. In fact, Fr. Giussani educated us to tirelessly repeat the prayer, *Veni Sancte Spiritus, Veni per Mariam*. And in the Eucharistic prayer, during the Holy Mass, we pray: "May the Holy Spirit join us together in one body." For this reason, let's stand without making noise and sing, humbly praying *Come O Creator Spirit*: "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that (I) told you."⁵ »

⁵ "When the work which the Father gave the Son to do on earth (cf. Jn 17:4) was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the Church, and thus, all those who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father. (cf. Eph 2:18) He is the Spirit of Life, a fountain of water springing up to life eternal (cf. Jn 4:14; 7:38-39). To men, dead in sin, the Father gives life through Him, until, in Christ, He brings to life their mortal bodies (cf. Rm 8:10-11). The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple (cf. 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). In them He prays on their behalf and bears witness to the fact that they are adopted sons (cf. Gal 4:6; Rm 8:15-16 and 26). The Church, which the Spirit guides in the way of all truth (cf. Jn 16:13) and which He unified in communion and in works of ministry, He both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns with His fruits (cf. Ef 4:11-12; 1 Cor 12:4; Gal 5:22). By the power of the Gospel He makes the Church keep the freshness of youth. Uninterruptedly He renews it and leads it to perfect union with its Spouse. The Spirit and the Bride both say to Jesus, the Lord, 'Come!' (Rev 22:17). Thus, the Church has been seen as 'a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.'" (Vatican Council II, *Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium*, No-

» Why did we pray by singing *Come, O Creator*? Because our human condition is described well by one of our friends: "And yet, despite these facts that told me to abandon my position and seek to open myself, to embrace the path and set out again, it was impossible for me to abandon my position. It was like I was pushing back against my structural limit, that did not allow me to budge an inch."⁶ There is a strange resistance in us, a strong pride, which resists opening up, or else a weakness, a shadow of skepticism, of disengagement with ourselves and with reality that the Church teaches us to call concupiscence!⁷ Why? Paul of Tarsus, born as a Hebrew and Roman citizen, first persecutor of that Christian sect that was spreading at the time and then His greatest and most indomitable witness, described himself in this way, and with himself, each one of us: "For I know that [...] in me, that is, in my flesh [...] the willing is ready at hand, but doing the good is not. For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want. [...] So, then, I discovered the principle that when I want to do right, evil is at hand. [...] Miserable one that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body?"⁸

In addition to this observation of our "internal" situation, we must then add a consideration that arises from our observation of external reality, from the air that blows, from the mentality that we breathe, from recent facts. Another friend writes, in fact, in his contribution: "In these days, I was watching the news: Turkey, more than 43,000 dead, innocent people dead, newborn babies, without any faults, below the ruins of buildings. I look back a year and think about the beginning of the war, to kids of my age forced to fight or escape. I look back to 2020 and think about Covid, about people I knew and friends of mine who fight against serious, even deadly, illness, and it is not their fault. [...] Sometimes, these thoughts push me to make my life something great; other times, it makes me think that everything is random and makes me want to give up."⁹ Another friend, instead, during a meeting of GS, said: "We are numbers, not persons. We are puppets of a system external to us, not only at school but in life. The system inculcates us as children: you are worth the grades you get and that's all that is asked of you. The whole system evaluates you based on the work your father does, the money you have, for the 'likes' you get on Instagram. In the assembly, the representatives »

vember 21, 1964, n. 4). "Inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served." (Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, December 7, 1965, n. 3). "It is this that was prefigured in the ancient Temple and brought about in the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit: the Church is 'God's house', the place of his presence, where we can find and encounter the Lord; the Church is the Temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells. It is he who gives life to her, who guides and sustains her. Let us ask ourselves: where can we meet God? Where can we enter into communion with him through Christ? Where can we find the light of the Holy Spirit to light up our life? The answer is: in the People of God, among us who are the Church. It is here that we shall encounter Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Father" (Pope Francis, *Audience*, June 26, 2013).

⁶ Cf. "The truth is that the imbalances under which the modern world labors are linked with that more basic imbalance which is rooted in the heart of man. For in man himself many elements wrestle with one another. Thus, on the one hand, as a creature he experiences his limitations in a multitude of ways; on the other he feels himself to be boundless in his desires and summoned to a higher life. Pulled by manifold attractions he is constantly forced to choose among them and renounce some. Indeed, as a weak and sinful being, he often does what he would not, and fails to do what he would" (Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, December 7, 1965, n. 10).

⁷ "As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened in its powers; subject to ignorance, suffering, and the domination of death; and inclined to sin (This inclination is called 'concupiscence')." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 418).

⁸ Rm 7:18-19.21.24.

⁹ "Nevertheless, in the face of the modern development of the world, the number constantly swells of the people who raise the most basic questions or recognize them with a new sharpness: what is man? What is this sense of sorrow, of evil, of death, which continues to exist despite so much progress? What purpose have these victories purchased at so high a cost? What can man offer to society, what can he expect from it?" (Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 10).

» did not propose anything for the school, but were just trying to be seen and to get the power. We are against ourselves, against one another. What can save us?”. This way of looking at our weakness, at this force that seems to make everything slide downwards, at the “internal and external” conditions of living, can launch us into the shadows of disillusionment... In 1830, there appeared, however, in the heart and in the reason of Giacomo Leopardi, this poem that reawakens the question also in each one of us: “What are you doing, moon, up in the sky; / what are you doing, tell me, silent moon? / You rise at night and go / Observing the deserts. Then you set. / Aren’t you tired / of plying the eternal byways? [...] When I see the stars burn up in heaven / I ask myself / Why all these lights? What does the endless air do, and that deep / eternal blue? What is the meaning of / this enormous solitude? And what am I?”.¹⁰ Revisiting then the same drama in “On the Portrait of a Beautiful Woman”: “Human nature / if you’re merely weak and worthless / dust and shadow, why aspire so high?”.¹¹ But why do we desire so much and we are also fragile?

Four years have passed since the last in-person Triduum retreat here in Rimini. They have been years in which each person, more or less directly has been very–very!–marked by certain events, years in which your lives have been touched by many facts at a social and personal level: very simply, for example, during the time of the pandemic, one would have liked to see their friends and was not able; one would have liked to go on vacation and had to do so within the restrictions of their so called “bubble”; one would have preferred to get together to study with classmates and the only way to do so was *WhatsApp*, *Meet* or *Zoom*... This past few years—that are exactly those years in which the “I” begins to set sail, to set out from the port and begin adventuring in the vast sea of existence, to ask oneself the most profound questions, to investigate reality—we found ourselves within, overwhelmed in the midst of a historical period that certainly provoked in us many questions that—if they are dropped—could perhaps degenerate into doubt, or even become an objection to or a systematic uncertainty about the positivity of reality, the goodness of God and the good destiny that already accompanies us and awaits us: “But isn’t it all for naught? What is life even?” The many questions on sickness and on life’s sufferings, on the real “salvific” capacities of medicine and science, on the true goal of the art of governance of the *res publica*, slowly—like dust that imperceptibly settles onto furniture—can begin to cover our heart and our reason with a kind of sad veil of resignation, of sloth, and of apathy.

Fr. Giussani, in this exact spot in Rimini, in 1985, during a historic speech at the Meeting, quoted Paul Teilhard de Chardin (a French Jesuit philosopher and paleontologist) saying that “The greatest danger which today’s humanity need fear is not a catastrophe which comes from out there somewhere, neither is it famine, or even disease; rather it is spiritual malady, which is the most terrible malady because the most directly human among the scourges is to remain without the taste for life!”¹²

In fact, after having done school half reclining in your bedroom (with a nice shirt as a top and your pajama bottoms on as well) and half among the desks at school, after two years of pandemic, with the seemingly endless war in Ukraine that seems and its globally-felt economic consequences, and the many other wars spread throughout the world that have less of an impact,¹³ in the midst of our personal and familial affairs –at times very painful, like »

¹⁰ G. Leopardi, “Night Song of a Wandering Shepherd in Asia”, in *Canti*, Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, New York 2010, trans Jonathan Galassi.

¹¹ G. Leopardi, “On the Portrait of a Beautiful Woman”, in *Ibidem*, p. 259.

¹² P. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. B. Wall, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York 1959, pp. 230–1.

¹³ Cf. “For a while now, I’ve been speaking about this: we are experiencing the Third World War in pieces. That happening in the Ukraine wakes us up a bit because it is close to us, but the war in Syria, going on 13 years now,

» those described in a few of the contributions—many among us could agree with what was expressed by one of you present here: “But then is everything a cruel joke?!?! Since the GS Vacation, I’ve lost interest in everything; I’ve ceased to ask myself why I am doing things, and I did not see whether they were beautiful or not...I was in a state of total indifference, and I felt alone. For me, the solution, almost unconsciously, was to avoid going deeper, to avoid trying to understand, because it was more difficult than just getting by and staying at that. Staying on the surface, apparently, allowed me to stay in a ‘comfort zone’, protected, but it did not allow me to find a correspondence and a comparison with what my friends spoke about, which stayed like the seabed in this ocean that is life. Doing this, however: ‘There is a point at which life is staying glued to the things that aren’t going well’ (Ernia, *Something that is missing*, 2022, ©Island Records, *our translation*). I was seeing only what wasn’t going well. For example, one thing that has been and still does give me a ton of trouble, since January, is my schoolwork. I’m not interested in what my professors are explaining and I do not know why I go to school. I am certain that I have an hour-long commute every morning, but I don’t know the reason. This is the greatest difficulty that keeps tripping me up: I don’t know why I am doing things. But I feel that this kind of life is not good enough for me. Ernia concludes his song by saying: ‘what is missing is in the middle, it doesn’t ever arrive or it arrives too soon. What is it that is wrong with me? It’s not the *cash* or the *Cartier*. I’m looking for something great, something that will last.’ Everything slips away from me, and nothing remains. But then, in my life, is there something great, something that lasts? And if it does exist, how can I remain attached to it?”

“My youth was but a tempest, dark and savage, / Through which, at times, a dazzling sun would shoot / The thunder and the rain have made such ravage / My garden is nigh bare of rosy fruit. / Now I have reached the Autumn of my thought, / And spade and rake must toil the land to save, / That fragments of my flooded fields be sought / From where the water sluices out a grave. / Who knows if the new flowers my dreams prefigure, / In this washed soil should find, as by a sluit, / The mystic nourishment to give them vigor? / Time swallows up our life, O ruthless rigor! / And the dark foe that nibbles our heart’s root, / Grows on our blood the stronger and the bigger!”¹⁴ Or as the poetry of Andre Gide says: “Desire! I have dragged you around the streets; I have abandoned you in fields; I have gotten you drunk in the cities without quenching your thirst; I have bathed you in nights full of moonlight; I have carried you everywhere; I have cradled you on the waves; I have wanted to fall asleep on that tide...Desire! Desire! What do I do with you? And what do you want, anyways? And when will you tire out?”¹⁵ Or, in another famous poem by Rebora: “Whatever you may say or do / there is a cry inside: / that is not why, that is not why! / And thus everything refers back / to a secret question: / the act is a pretext. // [...] In the imminence of God / life filches / ephemeral reserves / while everyone clings / to some treasure of his which / shouts to him good-bye!”¹⁶

And so, in the end, are we only the sum of our individualities here this evening or, what’s more, is this history of which we are part only the sum total of our familiar friendships, given that we are born in Italy and come from a Catholic tradition? Who will liberate me? Will I go through my one and only life resigned to being a cog in a machine that I am not even »

is terrible. And, at that, Yemen? Myanmar, everywhere in Africa. The world is at war. And it creates suffering, creates so much suffering” (Pope Francis, “The Christmas I would like”, exclusive interview with the Italian television channel *Canale5*, December 18, 2022).

¹⁴ C. Baudelaire, “The Enemy”, in *Poems of Baudelaire*, Pantheon Books, New York 1952, trans. Roy Campbell.

¹⁵ A. Gide, *Les nourritures terrestres*, in Id., *I nuovi nutrimenti*, A. Mondadori, Milan 1948, translation ours.

¹⁶ C. Rebora, “Sandbags for the eyes” in *Canti Anonimi*, Twayne Publishers, Boston 1979, trans. Maria Marchione.

» able to make sense of? Is there something great that will remain or not? What can embrace and elevate my structural limit, what can win my skepticism, allow me to step away from mere pragmatism to heal the wounds that the difficulties of life may have caused?¹⁷ Is there truly this mystical nourishment from which I can draw strength? And what does it mean that Christ is the answer? Is that not a bit abstract? Is it not just a thought? A pious consolation? A self-deception? Should we just wait for the desire to exhaust itself, sooner or later? But why—as one of you was saying—did I have to be born at this precise moment of history?

Everyone of us, actually, could feel the temptation to say “‘I wish it need not have happened in my time,’ said Frodo. ‘So do I,’ said Gandalf, ‘and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.’”¹⁸ “‘It is another path that you must take,’ / he answered when he saw my tearfulness, / ‘if you would leave this savage wilderness,’” said Vergil to Dante, in the First Canto of the *Inferno* (vv. 91-93). If the tortuous paths already traveled by our thoughts and strategies and our efforts have already exhausted us,¹⁹ if our escapes and our anesthesia (everything that allows us to flee from the impact with reality!) have not had the desired result of exploding or fulfilling that unstoppable desire for life, for truth and for happiness that is in each one of us, then, perhaps it would be good to explore, with decisiveness and with ever-increasing conviction, another path; perhaps it is time to resolve to use our time a different way: spending time in a place, a house, not made by the hands of man, but built by God Himself: “He did not waste His years in bemoaning and challenging the wickedness of the times. He cut to the chase...Creating Christianity.”²⁰ Christianity is not a religion, but the opposite of one. It is not a ladder made by man for reaching up to heaven, but Heaven that descends to earth!

Listen to the author of the Letter to the Hebrews as he describes what a remarkable synthesis is completed in the history of salvation that culminates with the birth of the Church: “But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come to be, passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not belonging to this creation, he entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God!” He made the Tent, the Church, the place, the house, the body, the people (the *place*, as they say in Cremona!), He built it all, paying for it at a dear price, sacrificing Himself for us, as we will contemplate tomorrow on the *Via Crucis*. He washes our feet, as we will see in a »

¹⁷ Cf. “Young people also experience setbacks, disappointments and profoundly painful memories. Often they feel ‘the hurt of past failures, frustrated desires, experiences of discrimination and injustice, of feeling unloved and unaccepted.’ Then too ‘there are moral wounds, the burden of past errors, a sense of guilt for having made mistakes.’ Jesus makes his presence felt amid these crosses borne by young people; he offers them his friendship, his consolation and his healing companionship. The Church wants to be his instrument on this path to interior healing and peace of heart.” (Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit to Young People and to the Whole People of God*, n. 83; cf. Letter *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Regarding the Relationship Between Hierarchical and Charismatic Gifts in the Life and the Mission of the Church, May 15 2016).

¹⁸ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston 2004, p. 65.

¹⁹ Cf. “The same power that the gnostics attributed to the intellect, others now began to attribute to the human will, to personal effort. This was the case with the pelagians and semi-pelagians. Now it was not intelligence that took the place of mystery and grace, but our human will. It was forgotten that everything ‘depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy’ (Rom 9:16) and that ‘he first loved us’ (cf. 1 Jn 4:19).” (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exultate* on the Call to Holiness in Today’s World, n. 48).

²⁰ Cf. Ch. Péguy, *Dialogo della storia con l’anima carnale* [Dialogue of history with the enfleshed soul] or *Véronique*, in *Lui è qui: Pagine scelte* [He is here: excerpts], BUR, Milan 2009, p. 110, translation ours.

» little while during the Holy Mass in *Coena Domini*! God is living and operative in history, the cross of Christ is the Tree of Life on which we can lean! That tent (Tabernacle) is not built by us; it is not a ladder that we make but one that is thrown down to us from Heaven! "It is not by scruples that man will become great. Greatness comes, if God so wants, as a fine day."²¹ We can do nothing ourselves. "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing"²²: our effort, our zeal shatters itself—and could continue to do so for an entire lifetime, like a hamster who runs continuously on a wheel thinking he is covering miles and miles, all tired out, and, instead, does not move even an inch!—against the cliffs of the fact that we are creatures with infinite desires but limited capacities; our effort, as noble as it is, is impotent. We are not enough for ourselves, no matter how much time we spend in the gym...but human freedom is called to be grafted onto and to collaborate with Divine Grace!²³ We do not move out of a sense of duty, but because of a love of ourselves which comes from a judgment of our reason and from a continual prayer to God and to the historical companionship in which He makes Himself present and which is His body. In and from the Trinity we are generated, swept into an "affair" that is greater than us, in a salvific power that from the Father, from the Son and from the Holy Spirit "flowers" *ad extra*: "Now, the Spirit returns to enable the birth of the Church, the body of Christ, and, in this way, His introduction into the flux of history. It is the counterpoint to Babel [**to that Babel, that confusion that is within us and outside of us!**]. It is the birth of another society, a new society that the Lord builds beginning from the hearts of men with the force of the Holy Spirit, with this flame of God, ardent with love."²⁴ This new creation not constructed by human hands had its beginning with the Incarnation of God and remains a fact which provokes renewed wonder every Christmas and every time that we remember it: "When school began, I was excited, and I still am, but not excited because I need to keep up my enthusiasm, as if I could push a button in my head to make myself happy. No, I was excited because I know where to go to look at people or moments in people's lives that help me to discover these things. Even if, at times, I fall asleep in class, I want to live and I do live my school day, daily life, soccer, nights out and everything else with this awareness. Christmas [**this tent of encounter between God and man exists!**] happened and no one can change that. Someone arrived and promised that we would be happy. At the Triduum, I want to see this again and understand it even better," writes another friend.

"If it were not for You, O my Christ, I would feel myself a finite creature. I was born and I feel myself dissolving. I eat, sleep, rest and walk, I get sick and recover. Numberless worries and torments assault me. I rejoice in the sun, and in all that the earth produces. But then, I die, and the flesh becomes dust like that of the animals, who have no sin. But I, what do I have more than they? Nothing, except God. If it were not for You, O my Christ, I would feel myself a finite creature."²⁵ Fr. Giussani said about himself: "I have this *yes* [to Christ] and that's it."²⁶ Otherwise, little by little, we regress to existing like my cat—Birba—who was born, eats, grows, reproduces, and will die. The purely biological, instinctive existence of living »

²¹ A. Camus, *Notebooks 1935–1959*, Marlowe, New York 1998.

²² Jn 15:5.

²³ Cf. "[...] For though no one can be just except he to whom the merits of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ are communicated, yet this takes place in that justification of the sinner, when by the merit of the most holy passion, the charity of God is poured forth by the Holy Ghost in the hearts of those who are justified and inhere in them; whence man through Jesus Christ, in whom he is ingrafted, receives in that justification, together with the remission of sins, all these infused at the same time, namely, faith, hope and charity" (Council of Trent, Session VI, *Decree on Justification*, January 13, 1547, Chapter VII).

²⁴ J. Ratzinger, *God and the World*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2002, p. 342.

²⁵ Cf. St. Gregory of Nanzianzus, "Songs" II/I, song LXXIV, vv. 4–12.

²⁶ L. Giussani, *L'attrattiva Gesù*, Bur, Milan 1999, p. 204, our translation.

» creatures who are not human.

It's necessary, then, that we begin to go to the depths with our brains and begin to judge, to be helped by our friends to make a judgment and realize our own fragility and weakness, recognizing them not as quick sand that, little by little, sooner or later, we are destined to sink into or as a kind of "factory error" that makes us complain endlessly against who knows who, but, instead, giving, as I was saying, a definitive judgment, with an act of reason that recognizes a given in reality, of the reality that I am, of myself, to welcome, and that does not point to anything if not the point from which we can begin, that projects towards a "and then" that shows a step on the path: "But little Fabio," Fr. Giorgio [Pontiggia] would tell me: "What surprise is there if weakness is weak!???" The point is that if there is One who is able to pull me out of myself, to heal this weakness, a medicine and a doctor stronger than the wound!²⁷ This is the most fundamental piece of evidence: I do not make myself. No one is asked before they come out of their mother's womb. We are called into being, and our parents were the visible modality of an eternal Love. Making a judgment is an act of reason that recognizes, and definitively certifies something for what it is! Fr. Giorgio told me that, during his quick lunches they would have together, Fr. Giussani always told him that man is not "only man" but "man + Christ through the Holy Spirit": that man, in order to be such, to find himself, needs Christ. The great Roman rhetorician, Marius Victorinus, publicly announcing his conversion, said: "When I encountered Christ I discovered myself to be a man."²⁸ He who has the strength to work our transformation (divinization and humanization coincide), the miracle of our change, which fills us with Divine Life is the Holy Spirit. You all know that when the fetus, the baby, when he or she is super small in the womb, is nurtured and kept living from the umbilical cord that transfers nutritional substances that allow him to develop, because the baby, by himself, could not grow. Everything comes from the mother. The Holy Spirit is, by way of analogy, the gift that God the Father offers to every one of his adopted children to generate us, to sustain us in life, even now. And the child in his or her mother's womb, what does he or she do? Nothing. He or she is receptive, surrounded by amniotic fluid and does not interrupt the flux, and just welcomes what is given through the umbilical cord... (but, already, how liberating is this?). I do not need to work myself up, but only remain attached to Him who creates us and recreates us, remain in the company of the Church that He generated, so that He can "heal our wounds, our strength renew; On our dryness pour [his] dew; Wash the stains of guilt away: Bend the stubborn heart and will; Melt the frozen, warm the chill; Guide the steps that go astray."²⁹ To Him and to the friends of this people, one can ask: "Help me, create, help me to convert and to create in myself a pure heart, help me to grow, let's help each other to grow together, give me the taste of the knowledge and of discovery in my studies, let's discover it together, allow me to learn to love the others as Christ loves, to love myself with the eyes of Christ. To love my enemies, to serve them, to live the works of corporal and spiritual mercy, to be your witness in the world."

Let's move towards the conclusion of the introduction:

For each one of us, for our families, for the friends who invited us here, what face, what »

²⁷Cf. "You bent over our wounds and healed us, giving us a medicine stronger than our injuries, a mercy greater than our fault. In this way, even sin, in virtue of Your unconquerable love, served to elevate us to the divine life. With surprising largess, you infused the Holy Spirit into our souls" (*Preface of the XVI Sunday per annum of the Ambrosian Rite*, our translation).

²⁸ Cf. Marius Victorinus, "In Epistola ad Ephesios," Liber secundus, in *Marii Victorini Opera exegetica*, cap. 4, 14. Cf. "The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light." (Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22)

²⁹ Sequence to the Holy Spirit.

» particular countenance, what accent has this tent not built by the hands of man assumed, this Church, Christianity? Through whom was it made encounterable? For some, it was through the parish,³⁰ for others, through another ecclesial reality, a religious order, but, for those who are participating in this Triduum retreat, what charism was it?³¹

Let's listen to the lively memory of Fr. Giussani:

"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 high school—I felt naïvely full of exuberance and boldness [...] I look back at myself in that moment, my heart brimming with the thought that Christ is everything for the life of man, is the heart of man's life: this announcement was what those young people needed to begin to say and to learn, for their happiness. [...] I say these things because they are the only motive, the only scope and the only root from which our Movement arose."³² "The beginning of all that was born [...] is the desire that people understand. Understand what? My opinion? What my side says? No! But rather that people may understand what their hearts are made for; that people may understand a little bit more the Destiny for which they are made."³³ "It is authentic faith, or an authenticity of faith, that we seek. We seek no other."³⁴ "We're ready to speak to the whole world, to go anywhere in the world, but we need a home, we need a place where a word is a word, a true "expression" of something and relationships are of the "heart," [from the Latin] cordial, where the companionship is positive, where words have a meaning and our intentions have a meaning, where you call bread, bread; and water, water."³⁵

You can see why the phrase of Jesus chosen as the thematic statement of this Triduum retreat, "You will know the truth and truth will set you free" (Jn 8:32)—A story that continues", because the Truth, Jesus Christ Incarnate, Crucified and Risen is "the leader and perfecter"³⁶ of that authentic faith of which Fr. Giussani spoke and on which we need to keep our gaze »

³⁰ Cf. "The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be 'the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters.' This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach" (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 28).

³¹ "Other Church institutions, basic communities and small communities, movements, and forms of association are a source of enrichment for the Church, raised up by the Spirit for evangelizing different areas and sectors. Frequently they bring a new evangelizing fervor and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed. But it will prove beneficial for them not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church. This kind of integration will prevent them from concentrating only on part of the Gospel or the Church, or becoming nomads without roots" (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 29).

³² L. Giussani, *Un avvenimento di vita, cioè una storia*, edited by Carmine Di Martino, EDIT, Il Sabato, Rome 1993, pp. 336, 338, cf. A. Savorana, *The Life of Fr. Giussani*, McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal 2018, p. 168 ff.

³³ L. Giussani, "Beyond the Wall of Dreams", *CL-Communion and Liberation Magazine*, 1 (1992), p. 4.

³⁴ "Luigi Giussani's Introduction to the Spiritual Exercises for the C. Péguy Cultural Center (Varigotti, November 1, 1968)", in J. Carrón, "Alive Means Present!", suppl. to *Traces*, n. 9/2018, p. 4.

³⁵ *Ivi*.

³⁶ "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God." (Heb 12:1-2).

» fixed, the faith that allows us to call bread, bread, and wine, wine, and even more to recognize these as the Body and Blood of Christ, as will happen soon in the Holy Mass!

What came out of reading the contributions is precisely your need to reach certainty about the truth, on which to place the foundation of the house that is your one and only life! Because if one is not certain, if one is not grounded on the truth, how can we build? In fact, Jesus spoke of the house built on the Rock: it rains, but the house stands! For this reason, there is less resourcefulness, less daring, because the foundation is fragile and therefore the attempts built on sand crumble! Who of you here invited a friend from school, a friend from soccer, a friend from your neighborhood, a friend from dance? What is missing is the certainty about the truth encountered and about its convenience for your life! Today, you can place the foundation. The future is built today, in the present. Not continuing to put it off, I am still small... "Tomorrow! Then, I'll see! We'll see! But, yes, however... who knows... we'll see!"

Another boy from GS wrote to me: "In the last months since the Summer Vacation at San Martino di Castrozza, up until today, I have met and gotten to know many new friends who have filled my life, making me happy and grateful to wake up every day and love my neighbor. To this Triduum retreat, which happens to be my first, I am coming with a huge question: 'How can I not lose myself in daily life and live my life with truth?'" "Hello, 'The truth will set you free' is the title of the Triduum. It is easier said than done. During this school year, I've asked myself a great deal about what it means to be truly free. Everything began from a song of the Nuclear Tactical Penguins that says: 'Because the greatest freedom is the one that holds you in a chain, the one that doesn't let you go.' I did not understand. I had always thought that freedom meant not having connections and ties." Another GS student responds: "We have something great right in our hands but we are not ever ready to use it, or at least to try it: if GS becomes only a place where it is possible to share doubts, questions, difficulties or even new and exciting discoveries, then that's it. We do not sing 'I do not fear because I have a certainty in my heart, certainty is here with me', songs without responses to life: but then it is better to be like some of our schoolmates: blessed in the ignorance of not having tremendous questions that need responses."

And so, we are here because each one of us wants to know the truth, to understand what we can live for, who we can die for, each one of us cannot but have at heart our own destiny. "I have had experience of many who wished to deceive, but not one who wished to be deceived."³⁷ "*Gere curam mei finis*" [take care of my destiny, of my totality, until the very end] we will hear tomorrow in the *Dies Irae*, attributed to Tommaso da Celano. We are here to take seriously this desire for truth, this need for happiness and the meaning of life, we are here, above all, because One took our destiny to heart; he did not remain in heaven to look at us from the Heights and someone—Fr. Giussani—was, for us, the vehicle of that other One. Therefore, the playing field is this, it is at this level, that is, our personal match before Destiny, before God, responding and living the only life that we have at our disposition. The greatness of this place is that it proclaims that the response exists. There is One with a capital O who took our destiny to heart through one with a lower-case o (that is, Fr. Giussani).

"Freedom does not appear so much in the clamor of the choice. Rather, it is played out in the early, most subtle dawn of consciousness in its impact with the world."³⁸ Our freedom is played out in the present moment! Therefore, as a conclusion, I'd like to suggest a few indications to sustain us in living out this gesture and these days together:

1. Above all, I want to underline a fundamental attitude, that we need to ask for this »

³⁷ St. Augustine, *The Confessions* X, 23,33.

³⁸ L. Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal 1997, p. 122.

» evening during the Holy Mass and then during our trips in the buses and then again in bed before going to sleep and then tomorrow morning as soon as we open our eyes. It is an attitude that we need to reconquer always, in such a way that the position of our freedom becomes available to listen, to letting itself be educated, and becomes docile and available for following. Using a single word, we could call this attitude *humility*, looking again to the Blessed and Ever Virgin Mary—a young woman from Nazareth, 15 or 16 years old, like you all!—we can ask her to have a humble and attentive heart like hers: “For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty,” as we pray every day in the *Magnificat*. Let’s ask for a humble heart, *humus*, earth, and so *humilis*, humble is the one who is like the earth: not impermeable, but ready to welcome the seed, to welcome it in himself, to safeguard it so that it flower and bear fruit. Even she must have had her own projects and things she desired, but, ultimately, she was available to adhere to a greater design...so we too, this evening, let us put down our weapons and surrender, setting aside those weapons of our pride and egoism.

2. Then a second invitation to prayer is closely tied to humility, which is love for the Truth, more than our own ideas, preconceptions and fears. During these days, let us pray to learn to not be superficial, to place love for the Truth before our own opinions, before our emotional state, before sensations, before commonplace conceptions, before style... “*Amicus Plato, sed magis amica Veritas*”, “*Socrates quidam parum curandus, et veritas plurimum*” (Plato is our friend, but a greater friend is the Truth”, “We should care some about Socrates, but about the truth we should care much more). Do not get hung up on secondary matters, but turn your eyes, lucid and penetrating, beyond vain things towards the substance...how myopic it is to say: “That one there is boring, that one, instead, is fun.” One can be not very captivating in their exposition but also suggest an incredibly deep content...and someone else can be agreeable and exhilarating, but, perhaps, have nothing to truly offer us! Retain what is of value, *panta dokimazete, to kalon katechete*, as the First Letter to the Thessalonians says (5:21).

3. The third—extremely important—regards the *conditio sine qua non*, without which it is difficult for anything to happen: silence. In noise, in commotion, in chatter and, therefore, in distraction, distraction from ourselves and from others, fleeing from our heart because we are absorbed by our thoughts on the outcome of Naples-Milan in the Champion’s League, or on a friend, or our cellphone, or by the sweet sibyl of the one we love who keeps us in suspense about a response we’ve been waiting for and who we’d even want to meet in the moonlight this evening to admire the sea. Wrestling with our thousand thoughts, how can I place myself with eyes wide open to realize what there is, how can I open my ears to listen to the songs and to enjoy their texts, or to pay attention to the meditations, and the *Via Crucis*? But it is not even this. Silence, even more deeply still, means to respect the mystery that the other is, in this moment of life in which they find themselves and that we, truly, do not understand deep down, who knows what moment of life they are passing through? We need to begin to beg God for this gaze this evening: my friends, or just the person next to me: who are they? A man or a woman who is in dialogue, in relationship with the Mystery. And so, I respect them more, I love them more and affirm them, I affirm their good more, I am more a friend to them if, during these three days, while we exit and enter from the venue, while we are on the bus, while we are going to our hotels, I, aware of this, arrest my instinctivity and respect their dialogue with the good Lord: maybe they were struck by a phrase and they are thinking about it, mulling it over, and therefore, let’s help each other to keep »

» watch over each other during these days and not to disperse the initiative that the Mystery has taken towards each one of us. Then, on Saturday at lunch, we can greet one another, tell each other how we've been doing, and take the coolest selfies ever. But until the last moment of the meditation on Saturday, let's help one another to live the Triduum in silence: watch over silence and it will watch over you, watch over order and order will watch over you. Footnote about silence: there is the booklet, an *Anthology of chosen readings*, for you all, which embrace practically two thousand years of history, one we are part of, containing the intuitions and discoveries, the conquests of those who came before us, the living tradition of the Church might illuminate us, the last to arrive, like children who are being carried on the backs of giants. Therefore, let's take advantage of this possibility, during silence, during the classical music at the entrance or during the bus rides, or while the others are chattering, or while you look back over your notes, there is a great deal of material so use it: it is not like homework to do, but food to taste, phrases to taste, to nurture yourself with, without any indigestion! *Ad modum recipientis!* [according to the nature of the recipient]. Do not be anxious about understanding everything, but, rather, worry about pausing over and going deeper into what struck you, because it is there that the Lord is calling you, educating you and carrying further His dialogue with you.

4. And lastly, keep in mind that *militia est vita hominis super terram* (Job 7:1): there is a battle to fight, above all in the nooks and crannies of our being. The field is not neutral; it is not just you and the good Lord, but there is also an enemy, who will try to play all of the cards of temptation. Therefore, *estote parati* [be prepared!] and do not open that door. About this I'd like to offer you a criterion that is healthy and ancient like all of spiritual theology: everything that moves you and makes you tend toward your maturation and sanctity is a soft wind that comes from the Holy Spirit on the sails of your freedom, bringing you towards your conversion; everything that makes you stay put in yourselves comes from the enemy of the human race who makes you stagnate, who would have you lower the sails, who makes you give in to the temptation to say: "I'm fine like this...I do not need to change anything."³⁹

Alright, coming to the end! To add to what I have reminded you of in my indications, I would like to share a piece of a letter from an older friend, at a distance of about twenty years from his first Triduum retreat:

"Dearest friend, I thought I would try to write something in a more 'orderly' fashion. As I was already saying to you on the telephone, for me, the Triduum with Fr. Giorgio has always been an extremely significant moment. I remember a great intensity being lived out, an intensity that leaves you full of nostalgia when you have to leave: 'I wish all days were like those three days!'. A position that, looking back now, has its limitations, but still seems to me to be genuine and a sign of the greatness of the experience.

At the beginning of my first year of high school, I wanted to leave the Church and everything that my parents had communicated to me, because I saw only rhetoric and everything that I heard being proposed seemed like it would weigh down life. Tommi, on the first day of school, invited me to the GS meeting; that time, I trusted him and so began to go. At the beginning, I only went because the people seemed cool and they were familiar faces at school, where I always felt a little lost. I remained, however, hesitant towards the propos- »

³⁹ "The Tempter, taking advantage of human frailty and needs, insinuates his lying voice, as an alternative to God's, an alternative voice that makes you see another road, another road of deception. The Tempter seduces. [...] We must be aware of the presence of this astute enemy, who seeks our eternal condemnation, our failure, and prepare to defend ourselves against him and to combat him. The grace of God assures us, with faith, prayer and penance, of our victory over the enemy" (Pope Francis, *Angelus in Saint Peter's Square*, February 21, 2021).

» al. What began to chip away at my conviction was seeing Fr. Giorgio for the first time. Once I arrived at the Easter Triduum retreat in that first year of high school, I was cordially following all of the proposals of GS, or, even stronger, I was throwing myself deeply into that friendship and I was finding, for the first time, interlocutors with whom I could share the questions about life and faith that I had. But I was still a 14 year old kid, and I liked to cause a bit of ruckus. I say this because the first thing that struck me at that Triduum was the silence at the entrance. I distinctly remember the moment in which I passed from the outside of the complex to the inside and the impression that I had: the impression of being in front of something great.”

One of you all, a few days before the beginning of this gesture, wrote: “And so, why do we risk? If I’ve decided to go to the Triduum retreat, even despite my difficulties, it is because I am aware of how I am made and am taking into account that it could go poorly at the level of relationships or go well, because I have put everything aside, risking the outcome of having put myself into motion. I can risk for a beautiful thing like this because I know from this experience that I can bring something back home, even if it is my first Triduum, and so I feel like I can take a risk on being amazed by what will happen here. Only now that I have written this phrase do I realize what risking means for me: putting myself within something with an open heart so I can be SURPRISED and AMAZED by what will come after, after having risked!”

Therefore, and I’ll end for real now, quoting Claudio Chieffo and Adriana Mascagni in this introduction to the three days we have together: “Do not fear, my little child, but it is the more difficult road that will bring you there; leave the path behind, then, take to the fields and go, [...] do not be confused, [...] do not give in to the darkness that devours things, [...] do not fear because there is Someone who remains with you [...] He will never leave you,”⁴⁰ “our voice sings with a reason”!⁴¹

⁴⁰ C. Chieffo, “Favola”, in *Canti*, Società Coop. Ed. Nuovo Mondo, Milan 2014, pp. 226-227.

⁴¹ M. Campi, A. Mascagni, “Povera voce”, in *Canti*, op. cit., p. 208.