

# 10. Christians are not so for themselves, but with Christ, for others

by Julián Carrón\*

Why is it worthwhile to be Christians today, if salvation can be achieved in other ways? What justification of our faith can we give ourselves? This is the biggest challenge we can receive.

We must verify the reasons we have for remaining Christian now, in this moment of history. This is what Fr. Giussani told us: if Christian faith is not a present experience, confirmed by it, if I cannot find in my experience the confirmation that it is worth my while in human terms to be Christian, my faith will not be able to survive in a world where everything points in the opposite direction.<sup>1</sup> Has an encounter happened in our lives in which Christ showed Himself as the answer to the urgent needs of our humanity? Can we say because of this, that without Christ we lack the crucial thing for living, the dearest thing? Do we have an adequate reason for adhering to Christ? We need to discover that we are free in front of Him, free to love Him freely as Péguy said: “To that liberty, [...] I have sacrificed everything, God says, to that taste I have for being loved by free men, freely.”<sup>2</sup>

At this point we can ask the other question: what is our mission, our task in the world? The historical circumstance we are living in demands that we try to understand better the nature of our being Christians in the world. Benedict XVI reminds us that “the *pro-existence* (‘being for’) of Christ is the expression of the fundamental figure of the Christian existence and of the Church as such. [...] Christ, as the unique One, was and is for all, and Christians, who in Paul’s awesome imagery make up Christ’s body in this world, thus participate in this ‘*being-for*.’” Christians, Benedict continues, “are not so for themselves, but are, with Christ, for others. This does not mean having some sort of special ticket for entering into eternal happiness, but rather the vocation to build the whole. What the human person needs in order to be saved is a profound openness with regards to God, a profound expectation and acceptance of Him, and this correspondingly means that we, together with the Lord whom we have encountered, go towards others and seek to make visible to them the advent of God in Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

This makes clear God’s design and why He chose us, giving us His grace: He brought about all that we spoke of today through the history of Israel to the coming of Christ, so that already now, in the present, we might live the fullness to which our hearts aspire, and »

\* From the booklet of the Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation 2016.

© 2016 Fraternità di Comunione e Liberazione for the texts by J. Carrón “I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have had pity on your nothingness”.

» so that through this fullness we make His Presence known in the world. Maybe now it is clearer to us why Giussani considered Peter's *yes* to be crucial for building a new protagonist in the world. All of God's, all of Christ's, effort is to generate Peter, a man who with his *yes* could testify to Him in the world, an "I" that could "be for" all the others. Without this there would not be the human face of mercy in history. The goal of God's initiative is to generate an "I" that can make Him present, then as now. Consequently, the task of the Church can be none other than what we have seen God do throughout history.

"This great friendship [of ours], in which the truth planted in the world by the mystery of the death and resurrection of the Lord is actuated, reaches out toward the world. The destiny, the deep intention of the Christian community is the world, 'for women and men' [Fr. Giussani says]: a profound and passionate dedication to women and men and their destinies, a striving to make present the Fact of Jesus Christ, the one salvation of the human person, within the fabric of normal shared living, in which people suffer, hope, strive, deny, and await the ultimate meaning of things. Being 'for women and men' is the exhaustive reason for the life of the Christian community in history. The unconditional openness to mission is the guarantee of the truth and authenticity of the very life of the Christian community. 'And I consecrate Myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth.'"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Luigi Giussani, *The Risk of Education*, The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York, 2001, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Péguy, *The Mystery of the Holy Innocents, and Other Poems*, Harvill Press, Glasgow, 1956, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> "Interview with His Holiness Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith," in Italian in *Dottrina della giustificazione ed esperienza di Dio nella predicazione della Chiesa e negli Esercizi Spirituali* [Through Faith: Doctrine of Justification and Experience of God in the Preaching of the Church and the Spiritual Exercises], ed. Daniele Libanori, pp. 135-36 (italics added). The quotations in this paragraph are from a paragraph of the interview that was omitted in the *Osservatore Romano* translation. The translation offered here was published by Catholic World Report and approved by the interviewer, Fr. Servais. [http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Blog/4656/english\\_translations\\_of\\_benedict\\_xvis\\_recent\\_interview\\_missing\\_important\\_section.aspx](http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Blog/4656/english_translations_of_benedict_xvis_recent_interview_missing_important_section.aspx).

<sup>4</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar and Luigi Giussani, *L'impegno del cristiano nel mondo* [The Christian's Commitment in the World], Jaca Book, Milano, 1978, pp. 167-68.