

“I DON’T WANT TO LIVE USELESSLY: IT IS MY OBSESSION”

**Notes from the talk by Julián Carrón
at the Beginning Day with GS Student Youth**

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Razón de vivir

Liberazione n. 2

La strada

Alberto Bonfanti: First of all, I would like to informally welcome all of you present here and all those following us in 70 cities in Italy and Spain. I say “informally” because the sincerity and openness with which you live your lives and talk about them, as seen in your contributions, shows that if you are here, if we are here, it is because we expect something, that the beginning of an answer we encountered may grow, may become more and more a daily experience. It is always moving and edifying to read your contributions, because they express your freshness, openness, and sincerity in asking the truest questions, without reticence. Writing these contributions helps you to judge what you live, to look at your experience, and thus to overcome many fears that arise precisely from “not looking at experience,” as our friend Debora writes.

I would like to thank our friend Fr. Carrón, who once again this year wanted to accompany us in a particular way in this beginning of the academic year because, as he told us last year, the beginning always sets us before the decisive questions of life. I think I can say that last year we all were marked by that desire, by that need for affection for ourselves that you described last October, and without which we live as if lacking solid ground under our feet. We have experienced that this affection for ourselves is born from acknowledging and welcoming a presence, a person we have in front of us, and that this affection is born and grows through the encounter with the gaze charged with affection for our person, for our destiny. This gaze enables us to see ourselves and reality better, as we said at the Easter Triduum, quoting Saint Augustine, who, speaking of Zacchaeus’ encounter with Jesus, said, “He was seen, and he saw.” Your contributions show how this encounter elicits in us a powerful need for the contemporaneity of this gaze. One of you writes, “How can I always feel so embraced, understood, and loved?” Another writes, “I want to experience this embrace in every moment. I desire that this love be something I can see,” because, as another friend

writes, quoting the French philosopher Fabrice Hadjadj, “the deepest love implies a tactile dimension.”

Without the present experience of this love, life becomes useless. But we reject this uselessness; we do not tolerate it, as we wrote in the title of the invitation to this encounter. Without this loving gaze, boredom wins out, the “evil of living” wins out, as Cecilia tells us. Even though we have been touched by the experience of this gaze in certain moments and relationships, we also find that without experiencing the contemporaneousness of this affection, we lapse into boredom and, as Fr. Medina said so perceptively during the Easter Triduum, our life continually oscillates between moments lived with great joy and, as Caterina wrote, others when we can only cry and complain.

So then, Julián, as you said in your greeting at the Triduum, in day-to-day living, with our studies, our relationships with teachers, friends, and parents, and our interests and passions, we are often “tangled up in [our] changing states of mind and [our] reactions” (March 30, 2013). But you also told us, “My wish for you is that you will never stop at the appearance of things, and that you will tirelessly follow that constant drive to go deeper, which is your greatest ally in the adventure of life. Christ became man; He died and rose so that He could remain beside us in history and sustain this ally of ours.”

So then, following this constant drive is the way to grow in the experience of this being looked at and embraced; following this constant drive is the journey we need to make so our life will not be useless and lapse into boredom. For this reason, we ask you: How can we follow the constant drive for fulfillment and happiness? How can we keep from living uselessly?

JULIÁN CARRÓN

I DON'T WANT TO LIVE USELESSLY EITHER: THE “EVIL OF LIVING”

Hello to everyone. I am happy to be able to share with you once again this portion of our road that the new school year sets before us. There is a strong link between the two questions Albertino asked me: “How can we follow the constant drive for fulfillment and happiness? How can we keep from living uselessly?” We all sense that we can keep from living uselessly if we follow this drive, this drive we find within; as one of you writes, “When I learned of the title of the Beginning Day, I felt deeply provoked. I don't want to live uselessly either. This is the strongest need I feel every day: the need that my life be a fascinating adventure.” This need is the same one that all the great women and men of history felt. One of them, Cesare Pavese, expressed it this way: “Nothing's more bitter/ than uselessness. [...] The slowness of time,/ for a man who knows nothing will happen, is brutal” (C. Pavese, “Morning Star over Calabria”, in *Disaffections: Complete Poems*

1930-1950, trans. Geoffrey Brock, Copper Canton Press, Port Townsend, WA, USA, 2002, p. 223). This is why Fr. Giussani, with all his humanity, with that humanity he felt vibrating within, felt the urge to say what we have chosen as the title for our Beginning Day: “I don’t want to live uselessly: this is my obsession.” (L. Giussani, *Lettere di fede e di amicizia ad Angelo Majo* [*Letters of Faith and friendship to Angelo Majo*], San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (Milan), 2007, p. 33).

How can we face this adventure so as not to live uselessly? What can help us most in this adventure, in this need not to live uselessly? “These days,” one of you writes me, “re-reading the message you sent us for the Triduum, I was struck by the line where you said, ‘My wish for you is that you will never stop at the appearance of things, and that you will tirelessly follow that constant drive, which is your greatest ally in the adventure of life.’ I realized that this line addresses all my experience of this past year, in which I have had many highs and lows: I have left GS many times and then come back. What is striking is that my friends or parents or teachers were not the reason I always returned to GS. The drive of my heart always brought me back, because my heart knows what corresponds to it, my heart is truly the greatest ally I have for living. This is why I no longer am afraid.” Even if I have highs and lows, even if at times I go away, even if at times I can feel that things that are proposed are strange, the heart knows what corresponds to it. This is why I told you that our greatest ally is within us, and we just need to follow it, because the heart cries out, cries out much more than any noise around us, and all our attempts—of each of us and of society—to quiet it are useless, because the heart, even in the midst of the continual noise with which we try to distract ourselves, remains constantly there to cry out for what corresponds to it, and nobody can make it be quiet. At times, then, life sets before us people who have followed this heart.

This summer, preparing the Spiritual Exercises for the *Memores Domini*, I came upon the figure of Mary Magdalene, on her feast day. The Liturgy offered two texts that showed how the Church wanted us to look at this woman. The first is a passage from a book of the Old Testament, *The Song of Songs*, that describes what life was like for a person who did not want to live uselessly—we could say today—and who constantly followed the drive for fulfillment she had within: “On my bed at night I sought Him whom my heart loves—I sought Him but I did not find Him. I will rise then and go about the city; in the streets and crossings I will seek Him whom my heart loves. I sought Him but I did not find Him. The watchmen came upon me as they made their rounds of the city [and I asked them]: Have you seen Him whom my heart loves?” (*The Song of Songs*, 3:1-4).

Listening to this passage, I said to myself, “How I would like to have a bit of that passion that vibrates in this woman!” In fact, Mary Magdalene testifies to us of the heart that each of us would desire to have in the depths of our being, so much is our heart this search for a love that withstands the challenges of living. And we have challenges, my friends—enormous ones! The latest was

precisely today: How many children and young people like you, together with hundreds of adults, lost their lives in the tragedy of Lampedusa! [Travelling from northern Africa to this Italian island, hundreds of migrants have drowned in unseaworthy vessels, as happened on the day of this talk given by Fr. Carrón.] A fact like this must shake each of us.

This is why our heart never stops feeling the need for meaning, even for what happened today. Why? What meaning does it have? So often our heart feels too small and impotent to respond to these tragedies. And we wonder if we have something that can endure, that can give meaning, and that can stay on its feet in the face of circumstances like these that we find ourselves facing.

For the feast of Mary Magdalene, the Gospel reading was from Easter: “On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, when it was still dark.” What moved that woman to be unable to stay in bed and to set out walking there when it was still dark? The need she felt within made it impossible for her to remain in the comfort of her home. So she went to the tomb, “and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, ‘They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.’ But Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping.” She, too, had to face challenges that were not small. The biggest one was when Jesus, the most meaningful person in her life, died. Jesus, whom she and other women had followed in order to help Him in life, as the Gospel says. Mary had to face His death. Therefore, it was normal for her to cry, and we could say, “Well, that’s life.” Without finding a presence, a beloved presence, every morning would be reason for weeping. Then, we can distract ourselves during the day, but our life remains something to weep about if we do not find the love of our heart, the one who fills life with meaning, intensity, and warmth.

But at this point something unexpected happens. “And as she wept, [Mary Magdalene] bent over into the tomb and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the foot where the body of Jesus had been. And they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘They have taken my Lord, and I don’t know where they have laid Him.’ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?’ [She could have answered, “I am looking for the love of my heart. I am looking for that presence that can fill my life.” This is why the Church shows us how to look at Mary Magdalene with that passage of the *Song of Songs*, which speaks to us precisely about this search.] She thought it was the gardener and said to Him, ‘Sir, if you carried Him away, tell me where you laid Him, and I will take Him.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni!’ which means Teacher. Jesus said to her, ‘Stop holding on to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brothers and tell them, “I

am going to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.” Mary of Magdala went [right away] and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord,’ and what He told her” (*Jn.* 20:11-18).

In this passage, we have the answer to the most pressing questions in our life: How can we stay before the challenges of living? How does one live in the face of the challenges that life does not spare us? What can we do so that our life will not be useless? What are we called to do here in the world? It was only in answering Jesus’ first question, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”—that is, only in finding the Presence that each of us seeks, that responds to the weeping, that responds to the need for meaning, that responds to the desire for meaning—that Mary, when she found Him, immediately had something to communicate, to go tell the others: “I have seen the Lord!”

We find ourselves constantly having to face these challenges. “What I’m about to tell you,” one of you writes me, “can be summarized in a simple sentence: I suffer from ‘the evil of living.’ To understand the reasons, I’ll tell you briefly what happened last year, including during the summer [when one of her best friends went abroad]. I was restless. I went to the *raggio* [a GS youth group meeting], and the more I went the more it seemed I was surrounded by a group of moralists who saw God everywhere. I began to feel like a fish out of water, and so I decided to distance myself from my CL friends; I didn’t even go on the GS summer vacation. The summer began and, certainly, I had fun, very superficial fun, and for three months it pushed aside my sense of the ‘evil of living,’ which however returned when school started again [the beginning of school is always the test of what we have done during the summer; you can try to forget it, but school returns; life with its needs returns]. The first days were traumatic, not so much because of having to go to school, but because I felt an infinite sadness inside and an absurd need to be loved. [Then] I decided to go to the *raggio*. And what do you know, it started with a song by Chieffo that perfectly described my situation, and I decided to tell the people there about it and to ask for their help and company, even though a few months before I had accused them of being moralists. It seems absurd, but for the past few days now I have felt looked at with the attention I had requested. Now, I can’t say that I am fully happy, but neither am I fully sad.” These challenges, together with “the evil of living,” are what each of us has to face, like Mary Magdalene. We can try to distract ourselves for a while, but the heart does not give in; with the heart, you cannot cheat.

This is why it is a great consolation for each of us that this happened to someone unknown, an unknown woman like Mary Magdalene, because it helps us understand that no precondition or standard must be met, no particular gift is required to seek Him. This search can even be hidden in the depths of our being, under all the detritus of our evil or forgetfulness, but nothing can eliminate it, just as nobody could stop that woman from seeking the love of her heart. To discover this

striving in ourselves, we only need that “original morality,” that total openness, that deep down coincidence-with-self, that not-remoteness-from-self that led that woman to say, “On my bed at night I sought Him whom my heart loves.” This is the same unique openness we see in other characters of the Gospel, all poor wretches like us, but whom nobody could stop from seeking Him, like Zacchaeus, who, full of curiosity to see Jesus, climbed the tree, or the Samaritan woman, who was full of thirst and desirous of the one water that could quench her thirst.

In front of these Gospel figures, we have no excuses, because they are all poor wretches, like us, but are striving to seek Him; they are defined by the search for something, by the search for Him, and by the passion for Him that disarms all those excuses for not seeking Him that we hide behind. Imagine what happened inside Zacchaeus, Matthew, or Mary Magdalene when Jesus called them by name. This is what we need to happen inside us. “I’m in the last year of a college-prep high school. We spent the weekend after the first three days of school with our teacher and friends, at the beginning of school. I was coming from days when I got up every morning with a feeling of emptiness. In this turmoil, in this storm, I need a solid point of reference. When I get up in the morning, what do I need? I await, over and over, for His face to re-emerge.” But when there is a moment of darkness, how can all the experiences you have had continue to help you? How does that Face emerge for you every morning? How can that Face be made more and more familiar? This is precisely what happens to us at times, as it did to Mary. She too had seen many miracles, had seen Jesus do stupendous things, but faced with His death, she wept. What did she need? The same thing we need: “I am waiting for His face to re-emerge.” And this is exactly what happens.

A PRESENCE THAT CALLS US BY NAME

“Mary!” How all of Jesus’ humanity must have vibrated to be able to say her name with such a tone, accent, intensity, and familiarity that Mary recognized Him immediately, when just an instant before she had mistaken Him for the gardener. “Mary!” It is as if all the tenderness of the Mystery reached that woman through the vibration of the humanity of the Risen Jesus, now unveiled, though no less intense; rather, all the humanity of the Risen Jesus vibrated with the fact that that woman existed. “Mary!” So then, you understand how in that moment she realized who He was. She was able to realize who He was because He, Jesus, made all her humanity vibrate to the point of making her feel an intensity, fullness, and overabundance such that she could never have imagined before and that she could experience only in the relationship with Jesus. Without Him, she would never have known who she was, what life could be and become, and what intensity of fullness life could reach.

Friends, what is Christianity if not that presence, all vibrating for the destiny of an unknown woman, a presence that made her understand what He brought and what He is for life? What newness entered history through the method Christ uses to communicate it! Jesus made us understand what Christianity is, not by giving us a lesson, not by listing things to do, but by saying to a woman, “Mary!” This communication of being, of “more being,” of “more Mary” revealed to that woman who Jesus is. It is not a theory or speech or explanation, but an event that turned the lives of all those who entered into a relationship with Him upside down, in one way or another, and that the Gospels in their disarming simplicity communicate in the clearest way possible, simply by telling that He said a name: “Mary!”, “Zacchaeus!”, “Matthew!”, “Woman, do not weep!” Jesus’ communication of Himself happened in them with such power that it changed their lives, to the point that they could no longer turn to anything, no longer look at reality or themselves, without being bowled over by that Presence, by that voice, by that intensity with which each of their names was spoken. Each of us understands what it is like when we love someone and discover how that person’s loving presence is decisive for us. Think, then, what newness Jesus must have brought, to so powerfully turn the lives of those He encountered upside down!

One understands the upheaval, conveyed on every page of the Gospel, that takes place in front of the experience of the encounter with Christ. Unfortunately, we have become used to these stories, so we often no longer feel their repercussions; we take everything in them for granted and treat it all as if it were already known! But it does not need to be this way, and we see this when a man like Pope Francis testifies for us today to his own wonder—for example, when he speaks about his life and says, “The best summary, the one that comes more from the inside and I feel most true is this: I am a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon. [...] I am one who is looked upon by the Lord” (“Interview with Pope Francis,” edited by Antonio Spadaro, *America, The National Catholic Review*, Sept. 30, 2013).

That entire event—that unique way of relating to the other; of an “I,” Jesus, who enters into relationship with a “you,” Mary, thus making her become herself; that call of “Mary!” that causes an upheaval in that woman; the heart-melting yearning that filled her—is evident in the way she answers: “Rabbouni!” “Teacher!” In the concise way that the facts are recounted in the fourth Gospel, Saint John comments, “She turned” upon hearing her name. This is conversion: it is anything but moralism! Conversion is a recognition: “Teacher!” It is the response to the love of One who, saying our name with an affective intensity never before experienced, makes us discover ourselves. Acknowledging Him is Mary Magdalene’s response to Christ, whose passion for her reawakens all of her own affective capacity.

This surge of emotion is what drives her to turn to Jesus and to say, with so much passion, “Teacher!”. Mary’s answer flowed entirely from that unique upheaval that Jesus had provoked in her. Thus, conversion is something entirely different from moralism, which is an effort we make; rather, conversion is simply our response, full of affection, to the One who says our name. And you turn around, like Mary Magdalene, so as not to lose Him; you adhere and you never want to go away from Him.

This heart-thawing yearning that Mary felt was present first in the humanity of Jesus, who was entirely vibrating with passion for the destiny of that woman; His passion for her destiny became flesh to communicate itself through His flesh, through His being moved, through His gaze, through His way of speaking, and through the tone of His voice. This is the newness, my friends, that entered history and that today, like yesterday, each of us, deep down, awaits. “Man today,” said Fr. Giussani, “expects perhaps unconsciously the experience of the encounter with people for whom the fact of Christ is such a present reality that their life is changed. What will shake today’s man is a human impact, an event that echoes the initial event, when Jesus raised His eyes and said, “Zacchaeus, hurry down. I mean to stay at your house today” (cf. *Lk* 19:5). (L. Giussani, “From Baptism, a New Creature,” in *Traces*, Vol. 8, No. 6 [June] 2006, p. 23, from an excerpt printed in *L’avvenimento Cristiano [The Christian Event]*, Bur, Milan, 2003, pp. 23-24.)

This same event has also bowled over those of us who are here this evening. This event, the echo of the initial event, reached us through the person of Fr. Giussani or those who encountered him; it reached us through his humanity and his vibration for Christ—to which we are witnesses—so much so that we would not be here if we had not been bowled over by the way he communicated Christ to us. We will become more aware of what happened to us in this encounter with Fr. Giussani when we read his biography, *The Life of Fr. Giussani*, which was just published in Italian, and perhaps you have already begun to read it. Through Fr. Giussani, the same vibration that touched Mary Magdalene reached us, not “like” the one then, but *the one* as then, the same as then, friends; the same event that reached Mary reaches us now, too. Each of us must look at her or his own experience, our own encounter with this different humanity that fascinated us, to recognize the first dawn of the desire to belong to Christ breaking precisely there. In fact, if we had not encountered Him in this way, we would not be here, because there is no other source for the desire to belong to Christ than the experience of Christianity lived as the encounter with One who calls your name, an encounter that is happening now. This alone was enough for us to feel a crazy desire to be His, to belong to Him, not to miss what Christ means for life, and not to miss that intensity, that vibration and fullness that the relationship with Christ brings to our life. “What is Christianity,” asked Fr.

Giussani, “if not the event of a new man, who, by his nature, becomes a new protagonist on the scene of the world?” (*Ibid.* p. 23).

HIS PRESENCE RENEWS THE ADVENTURE OF KNOWLEDGE

Therefore, only if such a powerful Presence permeates our life are we spared the need to raise our arms in front of our face to defend ourselves from the blows of circumstances, in order to live. But many times we are so wounded by the repercussion of circumstances (think of what happened today in Lampedusa) that the journey of knowledge is impeded, and then everything becomes truly suffocating, because it is as if we only see reality in terms of our wounds, like Mary, who looked at reality through her weeping and could no longer see anything else—she could not even recognize Jesus! This is why He appears, calls her by name, and in this way everything begins anew. He enables her to recognize Him, to begin to look at reality differently, because His presence is more powerful than any wound or any tears; and so her gaze is thrown wide open again, to be able to see reality in its truth. “[Zacchaeus] was seen, and he saw.” How different life would be for each of us if we were to let that gaze enter, no matter what wounds we bear, no matter what our difficulties! We need what we sang about as we began: “To continue walking under the sun in these deserts, to reaffirm that I am alive in the midst of so many dead [...] I just need you to be here with your light eyes [to be here with your light eyes!] [...] To lighten this heavy load of our days, this solitude that we all have [...] to avoid this sensation of losing everything [...] I just need you to be here with your light eyes” that is, with Your presence.

This is why Fr. Giussani insisted on the fact that Jesus entered history to educate us to a true knowledge of reality, to allow us true knowledge of reality, because we think we already know what reality is; but without Him we are assailed by fear—as we see many times—and we freeze, then we suffocate in the circumstances, in our studies, or in relationships. Instead, with Jesus, everything opens up again, as if He were telling us, “Look, I came to educate you to the true relationship with reality, to the right position that enables you to have a new gaze on reality.” If we do not experience this, if His presence is not powerful enough to constantly re-start the game, if we do not continually let in His gaze, His presence, then we live reality like everyone else, suffocating in every circumstance.

Only if Jesus enters and makes a new knowledge possible will we be able to bring to the world a different way of staying in reality, because all circumstances are given to us for this, to provoke us to this new knowledge, to see what Jesus is: a Presence that enables us to live reality in a different, new way. This makes us discover that all the circumstances are no longer an objection, as we often think just because we cannot see their attraction; we are so defined by our wounds that we reduce

the circumstances because we think we already know what the circumstances are and believe there is nothing new to discover within them, that they are simply to be borne. We think that all that remains for us is our moralistic attempt to measure up to enduring that suffocation with our own strength.

Instead, if a Presence like the one that happened to Mary Magdalene “happens” again to us, the journey of knowledge is thrown wide open again, because we have much more than *knowledge* of the theoretical answers to all the objections and challenges: we have *the* answer. However, the answer is not a matter of having the “instruction manual” for living, because the “instruction manual” became flesh, is a Presence, the content is a Presence, a You, the You of Jesus who reached Mary. We see this when some people among us make life different! This is why we can understand what happened when Jesus called Mary by name, and she felt the Presence that changed her whole gaze. Truth is this relationship, as Pope Francis wrote to the journalist Eugenio Scalfari: “Truth, according to the Christian faith, is the love of God for us in Jesus Christ. Therefore, truth is a relationship” (Pope Francis, “Letter to Non-Believers,” *la Repubblica*, September 11, 2013, p. 2). It is also this way for a child who realizes she does not know many things, but she does know one thing: she has her mother and father, and they know, so what is the problem? If I am certain of this Presence that invades my life, I can face any circumstance, any wound, any objection, any repercussion, any difficulty, because all these things throw me wide open to expecting to see how the Mystery will show Himself, will suggest an answer to me, and will accompany me everywhere, even in darkness.

What a difference it makes in how you stay in reality, when you have questions, when you have open questions, because then you get up in the morning or pray the *Angelus*, or listen to a friend or read the newspaper, or go to school or meet your friends, poised to discover, to intercept any crumb of truth that can come to help you on this occasion! So then, what can life become? One of you says, “I’m expecting a tough year, academically and otherwise. In this period I have been conscious of two needs, two things that most concern me for the new school year that has just begun and that I am already worried about. First, my studies. This year I want to enjoy my studies. I have a strong desire to be serious with my teachers and study well [not just the effort necessary to get good grades, but to enjoy his studies], to be able to continually discover something new, something interesting for me, something of myself [how different life is this way!]. A discovery of this kind is possible even in one’s studies, and it is stupendous when it happens; it is stupendous when you realize that also that page in front of you, that author, is speaking about you, is with you. [But to speak about you and be with you, you have to be there, you have to take your heart seriously, you have to be there, present with all your needs, because that page, that author, is speaking with you!]

School can be fascinating and I ardently desire to live it with open and curious eyes to discover it and discover myself more and more. So then, the problem is my fragility, my weakness, my incapacity; I fall right away. The desire is great, but I fall right away. How can my desire defeat the tiredness, the boredom [defeat this decline], which seem much stronger?”

“WALKING IS AN ART”

Look how the Pope answers you: “Walking is an art,” he told students of Jesuit schools, “because, if we are always in a hurry we tire and cannot reach our destination, the destination of our journey. Yet if we stop and do not move, we also fail to reach our destination. Walking is precisely the art of looking to the horizon, thinking about *where* I want to go, and also coping with the weariness that comes from walking. Moreover, the way is often hard-going; it is not easy. ‘I want to stay faithful to this journey, but it is not easy’; listen: there is darkness, there are days of darkness, days of failure, and some days of falling... someone falls, falls”. Yet always keep this in your thoughts [the Pope tells us]: do not be afraid of failure, do not be afraid of falling. In the art of walking it is not falling that matters [which is what blocks us, scandalizes us], but not ‘staying fallen’. Get up quickly, immediately, and continue to go on. And this is beautiful: it is working every day, it is walking humanly. But also: it is terrible to walk alone, terrible and tedious. Walking in community, with friends, with those who love us: this helps us, it helps us to arrive precisely at the destination where we must arrive” (Pope Francis, *Address to the students of Jesuit schools of Italy and Albania*, June 7, 2013).

So do not be scandalized by your fragility, because children are fragile, too, but they never tire of getting up, of continuing to go on, limping, but always fighting, always continuing. And so then everything becomes interesting. Another of you says, “I also want to discover this beauty with a capital B; I want to stay in front of the questions, of the continuous ideal of improvement. Is it possible? Is it possible to become more and more only one thing with Christ?” for Christ in this way to become the one and only thing who accompanies us on the journey? “I want His presence to enter definitively in me and for me to become one thing only with Him”. Is it possible? Yes, it is possible, with time. It is not something instantaneous or magical. It is like in our relationships; they take time to grow, and any other way would not be human.

The familiarity with Jesus grows over time. How can it grow? It grows when we put everything that happens to use for this familiarity. Make every circumstance be the opportunity for a relationship with Him, as the Pope reminded us in Rio. He asked, when we have to face difficulties, challenges in life, “in whom do we place our trust?” He continued, “In ourselves, in material things, or in Jesus? [This is the question each of us must answer on every occasion]. We all have

the temptation often to put ourselves at the center, to believe that we are the axis of the universe, to believe that we alone build our lives, or to think that our life can only be happy if built on possessions, money, or power. But we all know that it is not so. Certainly, possessions, money, and power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being happy, but they end up possessing us and making us always want to have more, never satisfied. And we end up ‘full,’ but not nourished, and it is very sad to see young people ‘full,’ but weak. [...] ‘*Put on Christ*’ in your life, place your trust in Him and you will never be disappointed! [Do you want to grow in familiarity with Him? Put on Christ in your life, because only this way will you be able to verify who Christ is, only this way will you be able to reach certainty about Christ, will you be able to see if you can become one thing only with Him.] You see, dear friends, how faith accomplishes a revolution in us, one which we can call Copernican; it removes us from the center and puts God at the center; faith immerses us in His love and gives us security, strength, and hope. Seemingly, nothing has changed; yet, in the depths of our being, everything is different. With God, peace, consolation, gentleness, courage, serenity, and joy [...] find a home in our heart” (Pope Francis, *Homily during the Welcoming Ceremony for Young People*, Copacabana Waterfront, Rio de Janeiro, Thursday, July 25, 2013).

Recently, in Cagliari, Sardinia, Pope Francis said, “A young person without hope [...] has aged prematurely! [...] [There are many] merchants of death [...] who [...] offer you a way out when you are sad.” The true challenge is “*trusting Jesus*. [...] I do not come here to sell you an illusion [the Pope told the young people]. I come here to say: there is a Person who can keep you going—trust in Him! It is Jesus! Trust in Jesus! And Jesus is not an illusion! Trust in Jesus. The Lord is always with us” (Pope Francis, *Meeting with the Young People*, Cagliari, September 22, 2013). Do you want to grow in this familiarity? Trust Jesus, enter into reality with Him, because this is what makes us always present to reality, that makes us attentive to everything that happens.

“What do I need?”, one of you wonders. “Having in mind this question helps me live every circumstance and I have been amazed at how attentive I have been,” because only when we have questions, friends, are we attentive. “I want to be attentive in every moment.” Only if we leave the questions open, only if we do not refuse challenges, can we intercept an answer in all that happens to us in life. For this reason, ours is a very human journey, not made of hallucinations or “visions,” but of participation in a fascinating adventure of knowledge that enables us to discover more and more the attraction that lies within any limitation, within any difficulty, because any challenge or any circumstance, even painful ones, always have within them something true. This is what we need to discover, and to do so, we need to search. “For two years,” one of you says, “euphoric, carefree, angry, I searched consciously and unconsciously for something existential for my life, which it seemed I had lost irreparably. However, what I gained in this continual confusion was an

underlying sadness that never abandoned me, and the terrible awareness I had lost myself more every day, that I had lost life in living, as Eliot would say. Instead, as Chesterton would argue, we all need to be found. For two years, I was troubled; I didn't move. Only now, returning to the community, living the encounter with Jesus through the companionship of my friends, I have been regenerated, have felt myself pulled away from the confusion of the recent years, and have been restored to myself [Jesus entered history, friends, to restore us to ourselves!]. And I say, 'Jesus,' because in the relationship with my teacher friend and with other friends I met during the summer, I was amazed by their way of staying in the world—free, passionate, and alive—and I couldn't help but see in those faces something more human, a 'more than human' [that is, divine], passed within and through the life of those men."

Only in this way does Jesus make Himself present, continue to call us by name, and be our companion in life, so that we can live this adventure without being swallowed up by the circumstances, no matter what they may be, and retain the attraction of living. Only in this way can we keep from losing life and avoid living uselessly.

Happy adventuring, friends!