The first chapter of the Gospel of St John, which is the first page in literature to speak of it, along with the general announcement—“The Word was made flesh,” that of which all reality is made was made man—contains the memories of those who followed Him immediately.

“The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by he said…” Imagine the scene, then. Among these people that day were also two who were there for the first time. And John the Baptist, fixing his gaze on him, shouts: “Behold the Lamb of God, behold the one who takes away the sins of the world!” But the people did not move; they were used to hearing the prophet come out every once in a while with strange, incomprehensible, unconnected phrases, out of context; so most of them took no notice.

Hanging on his every word. The two who were there for the first time and were hanging on his every word and watching his eyes, looking wherever he looked, saw that John was staring at the man who was leaving, and they set off at his heels. They followed Him at a distance, timid and ashamed, but strangely, profoundly, obscurely curious, intrigued.

AND MY MOTHER TOLD ME. Those two, John and Andrew, and those twelve, Simon and the others, told their wives; and some of those wives went with them. They said it even to other friends. The friends told other friends, and these in turn told others again, like a great flow that grew wider and wider, like a river fuller and fuller, and they ended up telling my mother. Yes, my own mother. And my mother told me when I was small, and I say: “Master, I too don’t understand what you say, but if we go away from you, where shall we go? You alone have words that correspond to our hearts.”

(“Riconoscere Cristo”, in Il tempo e il tempio, Milan 2014)