

Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón
Milan, November 28, 2012

Reference text: L. Giussani, At the origin of the Christian claim, chapter 6, McGill Queen's, Montreal, pages 59-69. J. Carrón, Letter to the Fraternity of CL, November 1st, 2012.

Song *Il giovane ricco*

Song *What Wondrous Love is This?*

Glory Be

We will be working on two texts today: chapter six of *At the Origin of the Christian Claim* and my letter to the Fraternity. The topic of chapter six is Jesus' pedagogy. We could read this chapter simply as something related to the past, as a beautiful description of what happened to other people (instead I am curious to know how each of you read it), but the letter prevents us from succumbing to this risk; it doesn't allow us to start from anything except the only point available to us, that is, the present. This is why I want to start with some of your contributions regarding the letter, because we can enter into this chapter only starting from the present. In the letter I started from my experience at the Synod. At the opening of the Year of Faith, the Pope said that faith is no longer an obvious presupposition and therefore the desert we are living in cannot blossom simply by adopting a more clever strategy (we can easily understand this: it is not enough to improve the strategy of pastoral communication): conversion is necessary. Immediately, one wonders what conversion is, because different situations can be described using the same word 'conversion'. The Pharisees also talked about conversion. They were intent on fulfilling the six hundred plus precepts. They were willing to perform all these practices, but (like us) they were not open to true conversion: to surrender to a Presence that is present. All the resistance we have seen, and see in chapter six, shows what the novelty is (which is familiar to some of you who are reading the book *La conversione al cristianesimo nei primi secoli* [Conversion to Christianity in the early centuries] where Barty describes precisely this difference between Christian conversion and any other way of conceiving conversion). Thus, also among us we can think of conversion in a, let's say, Pharisaic way: willing to change something, but according to our own image and ideas. In doing so, though, we go back and place our hope in improving what we are able to improve, and not in converting to something present. To stress that this is not just a problem of the past, at one point in the letter I quote Fr. Giussani: at the beginning it wasn't like this; at the beginning "the Movement was born of a presence that imposed itself," like for the people of Israel at the beginning it was a presence that imposed itself. Why did we then entrust ourselves - like they did - to the organization, to pastoral plans? Because we don't realize that conversion coincides with following: "In order for our life to be thus changed, our willingness toward conversion - toward following - is necessary." And what is following? "Following is the desire to relive *the experience* of the person who has provoked you, and who still provokes you with his presence in the life of the community; it is the desire to participate in the life of that person, in whom something from an Other has been brought to you. And it is precisely this Other to whom you are so devoted, for whom you aspire, to whom you wish to adhere, all within this journey." The first question one of you asked me was precisely on following: "I was struck that in the letter you sent us (for which I thank you very much) you

repeat twice, 'Relive the *experience* of the person who provoked you,' and, 'only those who are willing to follow a teacher and try to relive his experience will be able to make a contribution adequate to the situation.' Can you help me understand what does this 'relive the experience of another' mean?" Since it is better to answer with witnesses rather than with explanations, I am reading you this other letter, "I am writing to tell you what happened to me after the last School of Community. While I was listening to what you were saying and to all the people who spoke, I was deeply struck and moved, but at a certain point something bothered me, precisely when you said, 'Even if you affirm something of yourself *ad infinitum*, this is not what fulfills you, because what fulfills you is to recognize the Infinite. Only this truly affirms you, freeing you from the obtuseness of self-love and allowing you to obey.' These words threw me off. They threw me off because they seemed foreign, abstract. All the things I had heard up to an instant before, that had sincerely struck and moved me, didn't hold up anymore. I felt confused. You can imagine what kind of work this provoked in me, the adventure that this brought on. At first, I couldn't understand clearly what provoked this confusion; actually, I pretended not to feel this uneasiness, I tried to ignore it. The rest had been beautiful, hadn't it? So, why not be content? Why wasn't it enough? Was I complicating things? However, deep down in my heart I knew what the breaking point was: it was when you said, 'Even if you affirm something of yourself *ad infinitum*, this is not what fulfills you.' I had immediately thought of my last exam, of the injustice I had suffered because I received a grade lower than I deserved. Immediately I said to myself, 'What does getting a B- instead of an A have to do with the fact that I am made for the Infinite? It seemed abstract, even if I know very well that I am made for the Infinite; I have seen it and recognized it so many times! But in front of that, nothing seemed more abstract; it didn't hold up. Then you said, 'To us it seems abstract with respect to everything that we have in mind, and it seems more concrete to succeed, but remain empty.' Exactly what I thought. A detail like that unjust grade, minuscule in comparison to life's big problems, seemed to me much more concrete than being made for the Infinite. Little by little, this objection instilled in me a doubt on my entire life: how did my being made for the Infinite have anything to do with that detail of my life? What does it have to do with daily problems? So, the next day this persistent doubt literally prevented me from enjoying what I already had in my hands. After I got home that evening, before falling asleep, I asked myself, 'Why am I so infinitely sad?' I was tired of being sad. In that moment I begged Him, but as a daughter may beg her father, 'will you let my day end like this? Won't you come and rescue me?' And I started to look back at my day, from Mass in the morning to sitting in a class that fascinated me, from seeing the face of a friend of mine to the unexpected dinner my grandmother had prepared for me. It had been a day filled with beauty, and yet I was sad, immensely sad. Suddenly, I thought, 'If all these beautiful facts didn't fill my heart today, it is true that I am made for the Infinite.' None of the beautiful and right things I had lived up to that moment had allowed me to breathe. Only by recognizing the capacity of my heart, irreducible to everything that seemed to me what I called concrete, only the recognition that I am this relationship with a You, suddenly freed me and filled me with incomparable joy. It wasn't reasoning – reasoning never fills the heart – it was a recognition. Even if I had a certain image of myself, I discovered another self; actually, I surrendered and acknowledged the truth revealed in my experience: I discovered my true nature. This is why all I had heard earlier in School of Community wasn't enough. I had to get to that judgment, because a doubt (at least in my life) never remains contained, but quickly spreads to everything, and in the end, without knowing why, one finds that he has become skeptical. However, doubt always originates from a specific point that begs, cries out to be looked at. It's not that I didn't need those beautiful facts, but I

needed a relationship with the One who was giving them to me: without that relationship those facts remained voiceless. What could seem an irrelevant fact, introduced me instead to the method you have been indicating to us for quite some time. Now the words: 'You are made for the Infinite' don't seem abstract to me anymore, because I can connect them to a real experience that nobody will ever be able to take away from me. As a consequence, I also realize that I was well-made. I say I was well-made, because even if I reduce myself and reality, everything in me and in reality continuously opens up again to make me recognize what I really am. In short, I think of myself in a certain way and I suffocate; then, in action I discover a different self and I breathe. I will never be grateful enough to you for how you continually correct me in my life, thank you. P.S. I don't know yet why I got a B- instead of the higher grade I may have deserved, but if the wound that this fact provoked in me made me become aware of what I just told you, blessed be the B-!" If now we read Fr. Giussani's description of experience you realize that to repeat a phrase that constantly seems abstract to us is different than identifying ourselves with an experience. To follow is not to repeat Fr. Giussani's words; it doesn't mean to attach oneself to a person in a sentimental or 'personalistic' way, because this type of attachment is how we hide our lack of following. On the contrary, to follow is to relive the experience of the person who provoked you. Who is the person who provoked all of us? It is the person of Fr. Giussani. Where does following him lead us? "The desire to participate in the life of that person in whom something from an Other has been brought to you." If following the person who provoked us doesn't bring us to have and relive his experience, we are not following, even if we say we are. I am not saying this as a rebuke, but rather to say that we cannot complain that what he describes is not happening! If one takes all the time he needs to do it, without getting scandalized, then he understands where it leads: "To participate in the life of that person in whom something from an Other has been brought to you. And it is precisely this Other to whom you are so devoted, for whom you aspire." We long for this Other, not for the person who introduces us to this Other. If I get stuck there, if I stop there, I am not following and therefore I don't have the experience, and this is why I continue to say that it is abstract and I keep wasting time. Only one who has this entire experience is able to realize that the Mystery is so concrete, as this letter described, so radically concrete, so much so that if I don't find an answer I cannot breathe, I am fed up, I am sad. The Mystery is so concrete that we cannot live anything without comparing this being made for the Infinite with what we discover. This is far from being abstract, it is the most concrete thing! If we don't understand this, if we don't make a comparison between what we desire and the fact that every fiber of our being is made for the Infinite, whatever we meet disappoints us; we don't understand and we get angry with ourselves because everything seems unjust. Instead, nothing is more real, more concrete, more radical than the fact that we are made like this, for the Infinite, in every fiber of our being. This is what it means to have the same experience, which is very different from talking about experience; we see it right away, because it allows us to breathe. This is what I was saying last time talking about Saint Peter, when he drew his sword to defend his Friend. One of you tells me, "What kind of comment was that?! Peter didn't act maliciously, like many times we don't act maliciously when we think we are following, like one who gets attached to another, who moves because of affection for this other. It's not malicious. He wanted to defend his Friend according to his own measure, and perhaps I would have acted likewise. In fact, oftentimes I act out of good intent, but then the result is not as good. Where is the catch?" Where is the catch? We have to go back constantly to Jesus, to the dialogue between Jesus and Peter, because after he said, "You are the Messiah," he immediately thought he got it. But as soon as Jesus started to talk about the Passion he exclaimed, "No, not this, for heaven's

sake, that's absurd!" Then Jesus (Jesus!) who doesn't want Peter to get attached to Him sentimentally, but wants to introduce him to His own experience, reacts, "Peter, get away from me, because you think like men, not like God does. If you want to be with me, you have to have the experience I have, you have to get to that point, otherwise you will say that you are attached to me, but you are not following me. Then, when you try to defend me with your sword cutting off the ear of the first person you come across, you say that you are doing it to defend me. I do not need this kind of protection; I challenge you again to have my experience. Don't you realize that my Father has legions of Angels He could deploy to destroy everybody? I am not interested in this, but rather that you have the same experience I am having." And when the two on the road to Emmaus get scandalized: "Don't you understand that all this was meant to happen?" The Gospel uses the Greek word *dein*, meaning "it was necessary" for this to happen (which is a way of saying God). Therefore, to follow is not to simply attach ourselves to the person, because that is not what Jesus wants for us. He doesn't want this type of attachment. If He wants for the Disciples to become attached to Him, as Fr. Giussani always taught us, it is to lead them to the Father. It is not enough to have them become attached to Himself. Why? Because if a sentimental or personalistic attachment to the person were enough, He would be deceiving us, because it is not enough for us: we are made for the Infinite. Like the young woman who wrote to me: she was here and she was very happy about what we were saying, but if I don't redirect her by saying that even if our desired outcome were fulfilled it wouldn't be enough, I am not her friend. The only possibility is for me to say to you, 'Even if you affirm something *ad infinitum*, this is not what fulfills you, because what fulfills you is to recognize the Infinite.' If I hadn't told you this, even at the cost of you not understanding for a while, we wouldn't have helped each other. Because, this is what Fr. Giussani says in chapter six when he speaks of renouncing oneself. One of you writes to me, "Why do we have to renounce ourselves if we said that it is the time of the person?" We have to renounce our measure in order for the time of the person to really happen! Because the time of the person is this time of the infinite for which we are made, and there isn't a time of our person that doesn't coincide with this. When one discovers it in his own experience, as other witnesses I will now read briefly did, then something starts to happen; otherwise any circumstance that happens reveals our lack of substance. "A few weeks ago my girlfriend left for China, a country where the Church is not present. After several days she provoked me by saying that she realizes that her being Christian is closely related to the culture she grew up in and the place she was living in, i.e. Italy, but as soon as she physically moved away from this culture the question became huge. She wrote to me, 'What do I do with Christ? Is Christ really necessary for living here, or is it a pastime that was keeping me busy in Italy? Because, in the end I see that people here live anyway; actually, they talk less and use more of their time to roll up their sleeves and do something. Paradoxically, I realize that I could go home in six months an unbeliever, having discovered that Christ doesn't exist there.' For me this was like an earthquake and right then and there I was only able to answer her, with tears in my eyes, that I could only pray that Christ may become incarnated in front of her eyes also in China, not just for her, but especially to witness His presence also to me. In fact, if this weren't true it would mean that He is not really Risen and that He is nothing but a fairy tale we tell each other here in Italy, we who grew up in this Christian culture and in the Movement. But, as soon as we step out of our 'backyard' (to use a word of yours that always struck me), Christ disappears. I realized that this challenge was thrown at me, here where I live. How many times I reduce my being Christian to a series of activities, rituals and encounters, the fruit of the education I received in the Movement and from the friendships that kept me company! How many times I discover

myself living like a pagan (according to Bardy), where religion is identified with that of the town one lives in, reduced to a formality tied to rituals and belonging to a group! Now the question opens up for me: who are You, Jesus? Beyond activities and rituals... Who are You, Jesus, for my life? What does my life rest on? On a fairy tale character, or on a fullness? I don't want to waste any more time in front of this question, and I understand that at its core there is the real decision of walking that path that brings to certainty. It is a challenge I perceive as a grace, a grace for her who realized this in China and for me here in Italy. I see that also our relationship is changing and becoming truer as we witness to each other the signs of His real presence in our realities. This is the greatest companionship we can give each other, but without your help and the path you point out to us we couldn't make it. I am no longer content with something less than this, with less than this certainty." Another letter says, "I am an engineer and I often go abroad for work. During one of these trips [those who arrived last can pass us both on the right and on the left] I had the chance to work with a coworker who today is my girlfriend. She wasn't very religious, quite the opposite; due to certain issues she had grown distant from the Church. However, intrigued by me and, as she says, by my faith, in a very short time she resumed her journey of faith becoming attached to the Movement and to Fr. Giussani's experience, to the point of making it her own. What amazes me is how in such a short time she started to look at her experience in light of the School of Community and what I describe to her, so much so that often she is the one who shows the path to me. I give you an example: she is currently abroad, while I stayed and worked here in Italy, so we can talk to each other once a day in the evening because of the different time zones. Each time we talk about what happened that day, we take stock, and at times the complaint of what is not going right prevails. Yesterday it was my turn, and after a very stressful day at work, I made a list of all the things that weren't going well with my boss, my coworkers, my clients, saying that I was considering giving up and starting to look for a new job, more suitable to my personality. A bit annoyed, she surprised me by saying, "But if Christ doesn't have something to do also with your boss who doesn't appreciate you and treats you poorly, then He doesn't have to do with anything. Do you really think that the Lord overlooked this episode? Either Christ has to do with everything, or He is only a theory." In front of her who was challenging me, casting all my doubts in a greater context, I could only be silent and 'relish' how Christ was using her to correct me. Yes, because she doesn't know the discourse on Christ that I instead may know, she hasn't attended any Schools of Community yet, but she has her experience on her side. She actually said I was the one who told her these things a couple of days before, and I don't even remember them. Now I understand better Saint Paul's words: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me." Because it's not about the things you have to do and rules you have to follow, also because 'doing gets tiring.' It is about being amazed by how He manifests Himself even in those who have just arrived [that is, in one who has an experience, who places in front of you an experience even if they're the last to have arrived: one is following and the other isn't, even if the other knows the discourse or participates in certain gestures]. Thanks to this discussion my heavy and fruitless complaint vanished and gave way to the amazement for His Presence that accompanies us in everyday circumstances without leaving out anything." I could go on and on to come down to this: to follow – as Fr. Giussani says – is to relive the experience, because without this we do not get to the Other for Whom we are made, "for whom our heart aspires, longs for."

I am a secretary at a High School where we have a boy who is seriously ill. Last week I accompanied the professors who went to visit him and while they were with him I stayed for an

hour and a half with his mother who asked me many questions and told me about her dramatic situation. She told me, "If he dies, I will go crazy: please help me." I answered her according to all that we are taught, all that I know. I left, got in the car and called my husband, "I am not happy, because this conversation didn't satisfy me." There was something within me that didn't make sense; in fact, I thought: she will never call me again, because I blew it, I made a mistake, even if I couldn't understand what I had done wrong. Two days later she calls me at 8:00 p.m. and says, "I am desperate because I keep thinking of that 20% chance he has, I keep thinking about the next MRI, I am going crazy. What should I do?" I asked her, "What happened today?" She told me, "Today he ate," and I, "Let's look at what happened today: he ate, he smiled. Now have dinner with your family and enjoy what you have today, because not even I know if I will wake up tomorrow. Enjoy the instant and give thanks that it is there." She told me, "Thank you. I know I had to call you, because I needed to be told this." When she put the phone down I felt a jolt because I immediately thought of the example of the King of Portugal: he didn't give many speeches. First he fixed things and helped people, then, when the question was asked, he revealed himself. So, the next morning I ran to my boss and told him, "Do you see? I don't need to have the religious problem with her, because that is not the point. I have to help her and offer my companionship to her in reality; then, whether He will reveal Himself (maybe through me), that I don't know." Since Monday this sixth chapter truly changed my day. For the past two days I have enjoyed being like the King of Portugal.

This is how it is. The problem is not to give her the theory of the King of Portugal, but to relive the experience, so that she may perceive that what you say is relevant to her need. Then we can only wait and see what the Mystery will do with your concrete gesture towards her.

I would like you to help me understand something that happened. One day I was with a coworker in a client's office where some sacred images were displayed. Going back to the car my coworker said, "It is a scandal; it is shocking that an executive display sacred images in his office. It is a state agency, there shouldn't be sacred images lying around." I answered, "Listen, I see all sorts of images in state agencies, even calendars with naked women and naked men. People display whatever they want. Why is it, then, that one cannot display a sacred image?" However, at this point he said something that surprised me, "Yes, in the end the atheist is someone who doesn't have a presence to answer to." Period. This blew me away, because I told myself: I am not an atheist because I have a Presence to answer to. However, I realized that if this presence is only tied to my acknowledging it, it is almost something that I fabricate, while a presence is something objective.

Yes.

What I mean is: you have a pen in your hand and this pen is present, I can see it. I have a pen in my pencil case and that pen is present, even if it is not visible.

Sure.

I wanted you to help me understand why I am more attached to this idea that somehow this presence is something I have to...

...Generate.

Correct.

Let's leave the question open, because this is the point of chapter six. Because we have to recognize in which moment of our experience, now, we run into something present that we cannot fathom to be creating on our own. We cannot respond to this with a theory. We respond

with a presence that amazes us, and we are not the ones generating it. The best thing is to recognize it, to prove it, to witness it to each other.

I wanted to say two things about the last School of Community. One is about the comment on the Gospel chapter of the Garden of Gethsemane, on the question of the sword. I was particularly struck by your judgment, especially because I think that that type of judgment could somehow explain the very history of the Church and the very history of the Movement. Because, when talking about the severed ear you say with irony, “Perhaps for a moment the Mystery got ‘distracted’?” You ask a question that makes us reflect on this point and this makes me say... Theology states that Divine Providence never errs. Therefore, anything that happens is within the realm of Divine Providence; not because the Mystery wills something evil or is responsible for the evil we do, but He permits it, somehow. Is it clear? Then the question is if through all this it is possible to win over evil. How does Jesus win over evil? How does He defeat it once and for all, so that evil may not commit the greatest evil of all? And what is the greatest evil? Breaking the bond with the Mystery. This is evil, because it undermines our possibility of salvation. Jesus never lets go of the relationship with the Father. In fact, we see many of our friends, many people, who when in difficulty, as we heard, or when sick or in the most different circumstances, blossom because this relationship with the Mystery is not broken. Jesus witnessed this to us, giving us the possibility of seeing how we, even if the Mystery doesn’t spare us anything, can overcome evil because He did. This is the greatest contribution He gives us; not sparing us, not giving us the greatest victory and then leaving us alone. No. Instead, showing to each of us that that bond is more powerful than death, more powerful than evil, because evil wasn’t able to – as I always say – separate Him from the Father. This is crucial, because when the suspicion is raised, this is what really kills us, what wounds us to the core, because it is like crushing our possibility of salvation, cutting the bond that saves us.

By the way, this brings out clearly that the judgment born of School of Community is useful for everything.

Absolutely.

Absolutely for everything, including these aspects.

If it weren’t useful for everything it wouldn’t be true, we heard it in the letters.

The other thing that struck me was when you, in answering to a question, raised the issue of the eternal. Because that evening I left School of Community with such an impressive experience of being able to breathe that I felt as if I had never breathed as I did in that moment, that evening. As a consequence, the following month I lived normal, daily circumstances (such as work, problems, etc.) with a serenity and an intensity that, I dare to say without exaggerating, I had never experienced up to that moment.

This allows me to re-propose this challenge for the next School of Community that will continue to be on chapter six: what you just said, what does it have to do with School of Community? Because, after what we said this evening about the Letter to the Fraternity and about following, now we can continue to work on this chapter until next time. Let’s not try to comment on the text, but try to identify situations in which something like what is described in the text happened to us. Because, if it is an experience, we have to be able to have it now; otherwise we cannot make the journey of certainty described there, the journey through which the Mystery truly revealed His unique claim. I am going to read to you this piece by Guardini as an introduction to the work on this chapter. Jesus witnessed “a continuous, silent transcending of the limits of human possibility, with a greatness and vastness perceived at first like some natural goodness,

like a natural freedom, like a simply sensitive humanity.” Where is the claim? Many times, since it doesn’t manifest itself in all its magnificence, we don’t notice it; we think we are unlucky compared to the people in the Gospel who could see for themselves Jesus’ impressive gestures. But Guardini writes that what is most striking is this “continuous, silent transcending of the limits of human possibility,” so that it looks like a natural goodness, but that in time “reveals itself simply as a miracle [...] a silent step transcending the limits of human possibilities, but [pay attention!] much more portentous than the immobility of the sun or the trembling of the earth.” Much more portentous. However, since we often don’t notice it, then Christ seems abstract to us, and we continue to talk and repeat sentences almost trying to convince ourselves. This will never work. It is there, in what I see, that there is something much more portentous than the immobility of the sun and the trembling of the earth. And what initially seemed to be the fruit of some natural goodness or natural freedom, or simply of human sensitivity, is actually a miracle. The facts concerning Jesus that are narrated in the Gospel are more portentous than the trembling of the earth. Then we realize what kind of attention is necessary, together with sharing our life with Him and our openness to notice the extraordinary in daily life. Because our problem is that we reduce the presence of the divine, Christ, to the expression of mere natural goodness: but where does it differ from a seemingly human sympathy, from a ‘simply sensitive’ humanity? And we don’t understand that this is a miracle. For us a miracle is only something astonishing; instead, this transcending the limits of human possibilities is much more portentous than the trembling of the earth. So, if we want to relive the experience of the Disciples we have to help each other and surprise ourselves in the act of noticing this in our existence; because it is there where we will start to see the claim Jesus has on life. Otherwise ‘claim’ will become just another word that doesn’t have any meaning for us. But the Christian claim is irreducible, so much so that in some it generates (as we will see) even hostility! For this reason let’s help each other to look at the life we are living with this chapter in our eyes, to notice in our experience what is happening. Because, to follow is to relive the experience of another.

The next School of Community will be on Wednesday, December 19, at 9:30 p.m. We will continue to work on chapter six of *At the Origin of the Christian Claim* and also on the Letter to the Fraternity.

I take the liberty of recommending the magazine *Traces*. As you know this is the time of the subscription drive. *Traces* is the only instrument we feel directly responsible for, the instrument that tries to document the newness of the life God makes happen among us. It also expresses the attempts of judgments that our common journey generates. It was always useful to make it more known, because it means to communicate what the Mystery makes happen, but we all understand that it is particularly important now, with all that the newspapers are saying about us, because of the way some reduce our experience: what we can offer is not only dialectics or refutations, but to witness a life. Then making *Traces* more known becomes particularly urgent to allow many people of good will, who may not have another way to get to know us, to have the possibility of revising the judgment or the idea they had and have on the Movement. Two young men recalled meeting a person who was spewing every possible criticism on everything, and after getting upset while they were eating lunch and they could hear her talking, in the end they gave her *Traces*. Someone decided to go and sell *Traces* after seeing some TV show. The insistence on making the magazine more known is crucial especially because it brings to the surface our

awareness of what happened to us. Also, I expect (to give an example) that some among us, facing the present situation, instead of getting confused and asking fearfully, “What are we going to do?” may propose *Traces* or reread it for themselves, to find an answer to their doubts, because we are the first ones who need the witness God gives to us. Like for the man born blind, also for each one of us it is possible to be a different ‘I’, not dominated by the environment, joining the fray instead of being outside of reality, because each of us is an ‘I’ who finds his substance in the unsurpassable event that happened to him, that he encountered. Then, in every circumstance, even in what seems most hostile, one is not stuck, prevented from answering with creativity; he doesn’t react negatively, but proposes a presence, proposes an experience, for example by saying, “Do you want to know what CL is? I can tell you, and I put myself out to tell you what it is, I tell you what it is through this instrument that is *Traces*.” This is possible for everyone.

Christmas Poster. The texts are two, one from Pope Benedict XVI and one from Fr. Giussani. The image is the *Adoration of the Magi* by Gaetano Previati. This is the text by Pope Benedict: “No one can say: I have the truth – this is the objection raised – and, rightly so, no one can have the truth. It is the truth that possesses us, it is a living thing! We do not possess it, but are held by it. God came so close to us that He Himself became a man; this should disconcert and surprise us again and again! He is so close that He is one of us. He knows the human being, He knows the ‘feeling’ of the human being, He knows it from within; He has experienced all its joys and all its suffering. As a man He is close to me, close ‘within earshot’.” This is the piece by Fr. Giussani: “The greatest miracle, which left a deep imprint on the disciples every day, was not the healing of crippled legs, the cleansing of diseased skin, or the restoration of sight to the blind. The greatest miracle of all was that truly human gaze which revealed man to himself and was impossible to evade. Nothing is more convincing to man than a gaze which takes hold of him and recognizes what he is, which reveals man to himself. Jesus saw inside man. No one could hide in front of Him, and before Him the depths of conscience had no secrets.”

The Book of the month for December and January (how could it be any other?) is the recently published *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives* by Pope Benedict XVI. This book is another gift Pope Benedict gives us to accompany us during this Year of Faith.

Veni Sancte Spiritus