

6. Not a self-analysis, but a correspondence to the needs of your heart

by Julián Carrón*

Pope Francis told us the same thing on March 7, 2015. This is the origin of Christian morality: “The will to respond and to change, which can give rise to a different life, comes thanks to this merciful embrace. Christian morality is not a titanic, voluntary effort of one who decides to be coherent and who manages to do so, a sort of isolated challenge before the world. No. This is not Christian morality, it is something else. Christian morality is a response, it is the heartfelt response before the surprising, unforeseeable—even ‘unfair’ according to human criteria—mercy of One who knows me, knows my betrayals and loves me just the same, appreciates me, embraces me, calls me anew, hopes in me, has expectations of me.”¹

In the same sense, Fr. Giussani underlines that the beginning of human morality—*of a fully human morality*—is an act of love, not a law or a sense of duty. “Simon’s *yes* to Jesus cannot be considered the expression of a mere feeling [to which we sometimes reduce it]; it is the beginning of a moral road that either opens with that *yes* or does not open at all. The beginning of a human morality is not the analysis of the phenomena that fill the self’s existence, nor the analysis of human behavior in view of a common good.” Not even one line should be skipped. “This could be the beginning of an abstract secular morality, but not of a human morality.”² If we do not recognize this, in the name of Christianity we will pass off as Christian morality what actually is just abstract secular morality. Instead, the beginning of a “human morality” is an act of love. “The life of man consists in the affection that principally sustains him and in which he finds his greatest satisfaction,”³ which is the way by which Christ justifies Himself to us. In fact, the greatest satisfaction is a correspondence to the needs of the heart. Only because I find in Christ the greatest satisfaction, an affection for Him is generated in me—in me! In each of us!—that can sustain our whole life. “The beginning of human morality is an act of love. This requires a presence, the presence of someone who strikes us, who gathers all our powers and stirs them, attracting them to a good that is unknown, but is desired and awaited, that good which is Mystery.”⁴ Without this Presence we are not able to be united within ourselves. “Christ in His beauty draws me to Him!”⁵ Christ attracts all of me, attracts my entire being. »

* 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”.

» “The dialogue between Jesus and Peter ends in a strange way. Peter, who is about to follow Jesus, is concerned about the youngest, John, who was like a son to him. ‘And seeing him, he said to Jesus, ‘What of him, Lord?’ Jesus replies, ‘Do not worry about him, just follow Me.’ That *yes* is directed to a Presence that says, ‘Follow Me, leave your life behind.’ ‘Jesu, tibi vivo, Jesu, tibi morior, Jesu, sive vivo sive morior, tuus sum.’ Whether you live or die you are Mine. You belong to Me. I made you. I am your destiny. I am your meaning and the meaning of the world.”⁶ Nobody else satisfies us like He does.

It is striking to see Fr. Giussani’s awareness of what moves the human person deep down. We may think we are “realistic,” but only a Presence is able to grasp us in our innermost depths, set us in motion, and cause us to desire to change. If this does not happen, all the rest is chatter, the babble of ineffective attempts. An instant of this movement, an instant of this instinctive affection that Christ kindles in us is worth more than all the good intentions we can formulate; an instant of gut-felt preference for Christ is worth more than anything else. In fact, without a dominant Presence that can be embraced by us, the *yes* cannot take root in us. Only the powerful attraction of His Presence can awaken an instinctive affection that takes precedence over our coherence or incoherence, even over numerical calculations. Only a Presence full of mercy can awaken love, which is the beginning of morality.

¹ Francis, *Address to the Communion and Liberation Movement*, Saint Peter’s Square, March 7, 2015.

² Luigi Giussani, Stefano Alberto, and Javier Prades, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal, 2010, p. 64.

³ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa, IIae, q. 179, a.1.

⁴ Giussani, Alberto, and Prades, *Generating Traces*, p. 64.

⁵ Jacopone da Todi, *The Lauds*, transl. S. Hughes and E. Hughes, Paulist Press, New York, 1982, p. 260.

⁶ Giussani, Alberto, and Prades, *Generating Traces*, pp. 64-65.