

## Luigino BRUNI

### Interview led by David Rabbourdin and Nathanaël Garric

*What are the typical challenges facing a community approaching fifty years of existence?*

*How do you pass on your experience, and how do you open up to new generations?*

Good morning to all. Bonjour.

First, a warm greeting to you who came here in Florence, in Loppiano, to meet me. Greetings to all in the community who listen to our conversation. Thank you for this moment. I am very happy to be able to give a small contribution to such an important and beautiful reality as the Emmanuel Community, which has made and is making truly miracles of evangelisation, of testimony, of love for the poor, of love for families, for young people and for everyone. So, I am really very grateful. Knowing full well that there is a leap, a gap between my words and your way of life. Because we should be living together much longer, share daily friendship, the Word, prayer, and only then speak. We have done something like that together this morning. But let's consider this conversation as a beginning, knowing that out of many words, maybe one may be useful for someone, and that would already be sufficient. Now the first question from which we may start is: What are the challenges of the transitions faced by a community that has 50 years of age, and even more if we consider its earlier origins. So, two or three generations have passed, there is a motion, a continuity. The first image that comes to mind is from athletics, the relay race. I do not know how to say it in French: this race where there are four athletes each running 100 meters. Especially in the 4x100 meter race, it is very important how you perform in the exchange zone. You must be very good at passing on the baton, because there are many mistakes; many very strong national teams, like from the United States, sometimes lose the race because they make mistakes in the handoff. There is a specific type of practice that must be done because the handoff should occur rapidly, at the right time, at precisely the right position. And so there are teams such as the Italian team, that do not have the fastest sprinters, but have won Olympic medals because they have worked hard on the handoff. Because the stick, the baton, must not be dropped, it must not be handed over too early or too late, and at the handoff the two runners must run together. The one who arrives must side with the one who leaves. So, the handoff is this moment when we run together. The one who arrives hands over the stick, the baton – in Italian it is called the "witness", a beautiful biblical word – the runner who arrives has to give something, the baton, while running, without stopping, or running too fast or too slow, stopping at the right moment. All of this is the wisdom of the transmission of a charism. So, what is this something to hand over by the generation that is arriving? First, there is a long zone where we run together. So, this handover is not a one-day event, there are handovers that last years, sometimes even 10 to 15 years. Because there is a very long period of accompanying, when it is crucial for victory that they both run together. But what is the content of this thing that you hand over? It consists of ideas, of intuitions, of prayers, of songs, above all of narratives: stories and facts. Here it is very important to consider the Bible. The Bible has been transmitted for millennia by telling stories. Stories of a wandering Aramean in the desert, of a promised land, of a covenant, of Moses, of Sinai, of the desert, of Egypt. And these stories were the content of the promise. The narrative that we were slaves in Egypt and God has set us free. So, the baton, the witness, this thing that is handed over has much to do with the word, with stories. However, along with the facts of the stories of the past, what should be transmitted is an experience. Charisms are not transmitted

without transmitting an experience. Charisms are not something to remember but to live. The whole challenge to transmit a charism is to relive today the miracle of yesterday. Because if you do not live what you tell, your tale will not be understood. It is as if the story had a code, as if it were said in Japanese – suppose it is said in Aramaic – and to translate it, I must live it. If I do not live that tale, it will not speak to me. So, the only way to transmit a story from the past is to live today the things I tell. As I experience them, I tell them and understand them. That is the difficulty: movements and communities disappear when the things that are told are no longer experienced. It becomes only a story, like grandfather telling us about the war. He tells us things that are amazing for him, but the grandchildren after a while will ask "how much longer", because it is not their story.

What is a charismatic vocation? I have thought about that in recent years and I thank you that you have noticed my simple publications on charismatic communities. What I have realized in recent years, by looking also at my own life and that of others, is that the essence and the beauty of a vocation is this: while someone tells me a story, which is their own story, I feel that it is mine. That is a vocation. I attend a meeting, I go on a retreat, or I simply read a book, I listen to a story that is not mine, it is all external, but while the other talks about that story, I feel that it is about me. There is a total coincidence of external and internal. I say: "I was like that but not know!". That is the charismatic vocation. You are already made like this and the encounter with the external charism lights up what you already were and did not know. This is fundamental in the transmission: while someone tells me a story, I am living that reality. I feel that the story is mine too, even if I did not know it. So, the difficulty of transmitting a charism is not passing on a lot of knowledge, ideas, transmitting facts, stories --- this is necessary, absolutely necessary, but as they say in logic: it is a necessary condition but not sufficient. What is sufficient is that the people listening live this same experience, and that you are able to intercept their vocation. A community is not a vocation, a vocation is something amazing that is unique on earth. It is to feel that there is nothing more intimate than this external voice. This story and these people I have never seen are more intimate than myself. So, when you meet a person with a vocation, it is already perfect, even if this person has never known anything about the community, because the vocation was already a reality. A vocation is an ontological concept, not psychological. We are made this way. So, if you can intercept vocations from the world, people who light up, because they were already made that way by God, then the community will move forward. What is the risk of the passage? As I said, it can be either too early or too late, or that the stick is dropped. The risk is that there are vocations there while I talk about the charism here. This means that I look for people in the wrong places. Because today so many vocations to your charism are not found in churches. You find them in the fringes, perhaps in the Mediterranean Sea at the rescue of refugees. They fight for the environment, against climate change, or they are in Iran fighting with girls for human rights. If you make your announcements in a parish, there is nobody (or almost nobody). The difficulty therefore is to have an intuition for where the vocations are waiting for your announcement and that the announcement is understandable. Because if we speak words of love in a language that is incomprehensible, these words do not have any effect. So, this is what I think: today you must run together, not too soon, not too late, find vocations and recreate the miracle of the early days. It is the life which calls, not so much the story of the life.

***What do you call a "charism", on the scale of a community? And what "dynamics" do you see at work in a community's charism?***

Thank you. This is an important question because charism is a complex word, polysemantic, as we say in Italian. It has many meanings. Often today, charism is used somewhat improperly for people who are leaders, who have a charismatic personality, exceptional people in either a religious or a societal context. Well, that's not the sense in which I use it. In certain aspects, I use it with reference to Paul's

letter to the Romans: the Spirit, which is one, gives many charisms to the Church, to the community. This is in the stupendous chapter preceding chapter 13 of Paul's hymn to charity in the first letter to the Corinthians [correction, not to the Romans]. This idea that the Church lives by way of many charisms, both at the local level and clearly also at the central and universal level. This is a legitimate and ecclesial way of understanding the charisms. But it is not the only way. Because the life of the Church has shown another dimension of the charism: the dynamic dimension of the Gospel in the course of time. Every so often God sends gifts through people: gifts, charisms, with which the Church actualizes the message of Christ. One can say that charisms are Christ explained through the centuries. Jesus says: "Blessed are the poor", then St Francis explains what that means. Jesus speaks of doing something even to the least and smallest, and then comes Vincent of Paul, or Teresa of Calcutta to explain it to us. Therefore, the charisms explain in the course of time the Gospel and the whole Bible. So, this is a bit different, still closely related to Paul to the Corinthians, as it still refers to the revelatory nature of the Scripture. But it is also something different. When a community is born, revolving around a Word and often around one or more persons, then there is a Word of the Gospel that becomes flesh, that is explained. Around this Word and this person, a community is created, a dynamic in which people arrive. But pay attention: when a person arrives in a charismatic community that is founded by one or more persons with a charismatic personality, these may have their own way of dressing, a way of speaking that everyone recognizes. For example, I belong to the Focolare movement, and we may wonder what this Focolare charism might be, but everyone from the outside recognizes that I am from the Focolare. Because of a way of speaking, a way of doing, a way of smiling, a way of listening, a spiritual character created over time, in the family and in the person. So, if a person has a vocation for a community because they are already made that way, because they light up when one day they encounter it, then this person is not following the founder, this is very important. I mean it is not that the charism comes from the founder, and one must follow the founder to follow the charism. No, he or she has the charism directly. It is not that a Franciscan follows St. Francis. Each Franciscan follows himself; the charism is inside together with St. Francis. To understand who they are, they need the relationship with St. Francis, but one does not follow St. Francis to follow Christ, one follows Christ with St. Francis. And so, what this means is that a person with a vocation is the most free person on earth, most free of all, because there is nothing more free than following the best part of yourself. But this experience is also the least free because you cannot not follow yourself. So, when a person has a vocation to a charism, this person has at once the most free and least free experience possible, because while you are completely free to follow yourself, you must follow yourself. If you do not follow yourself, you sink into nothingness. So, you can leave a community, but you cannot leave a vocation. Because you are yourself the vocation. So, there is this play between inside and outside, between internal and external, between following someone and following the best part of yourself. It is within these dynamics that the reality of a charism is played out.

***Between a community's initial spontaneity and its necessary "structuring", how do you think charism can be kept alive and renew structures?***

This is a very important issue, a classic theme. The author who first studied the relationship between charism and institution was the famous Max Weber. He is a sociologist and says some things that are far removed from us, but he has something interesting to say as a starting point. Max Weber says there is a conflict between charism and institution. When a charism becomes institutionalized, it dies as charism. There do not exist charismatic institutions for it, because the charism lives on until it is institutionalized. Because the dynamics of institutions, essentially the bureaucracy, because the bureaucracy lives for the office and not for the person. So, when a charism creates structures, he says,

it no longer has that freedom, that spontaneous dimension of sincerity, of unpredictability that charism needs. Therefore, according to Max Weber, charisms give rise to institutions that then eat the charisms. According to him, a cycle of short-lived charisms last as long as a butterfly, one day, or two or three or four. Because, to live, the charism needs structures, but once it makes the structures, these prevent charisms from being charisms. This is his intuition. I think it is partly true but not always true. It is partly true that, when a charisma moves from the founding phase to the institutional phase, there is a need for a major change. Because if it remains too attached to the structure it has, if it is not able to change it very quickly and makes the structure as if it were a charism, that structure risks to kill the freedom of the charism. To summarize, how can a charismatic community, a charism, remain alive within a structure? if it changes it very rapidly. You should consider the structure as temporary, as a tent, not a palace. Think of a camp that moves around, dismantles the tent and starts over. Therefore, if every now and then you destroy the structure, the voice returns. This beautiful experience from the Old Testament accompanies the whole Bible. The nostalgia that the Jews have for the so-called wandering Aramean. The creed of the book Deuteronomium is: "my father was a wandering Aramean and there was only a voice". On Sinai, the Jews say, there was only a voice. Nothing else. Then what happened? that voice becomes tabernacle, Ark of the Covenant, mobile tent in the desert, temple of Solomon, palace of Solomon twice as large as the temple (Book of Kings). And what was the exile in Babylon for Israel? a destruction, a return from the palace, the temple, the tent, the Ark, the tabernacle, to the voice. And in that voice becoming poor again, free as in the first period. This process, that occasionally you have to dismantle everything and get back to the voice, is crucial for charisms. Because if you become too much attached to structures, you forget the voice and eventually those structures become a kind of idol, using biblical language, that take the place of the charism. I phrase it like this: a charism remains alive if it continues to change the historical answers to remain faithful to the questions. A charism is less alive and tends to decline when it becomes attached to the historical answers, its concrete history and forgets the questions. And thus this capacity that communities have, which is a gift; some have it others do not: 90% of the charismatic experiences of the Church have disappeared with the second generation - 90%, that much - because it is not easy to dismantle the palace, the temple. Above all the temple, because the temple was fundamental in Israel. We no longer have this idea, perhaps the Jews still have it as a reminder, but there has not been a temple for 2000 years. We do not have an idea of what the temple was in the Bible. Because the temple was the place of the Lord, it was the place where God spoke and where God was present. Even if the Temple of Israel was not exactly like the temples of other nations, because God might not have been in those temples, the basic idea was that a god spoke and functioned in a certain place, a sacred place. Then with the Babylonian exile the temple was destroyed; there were many decades during which the people of Israel thought that their story was over, because the temple was no longer there. If there is no temple, we can no longer meet God. But thanks to Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the second Isaiah, the prophets of exile, they understood the extraordinary fact that in exile God was still there, without a temple. A huge thing. There is this famous Psalm 137: "How can we sing the songs of Zion in a foreign land. We hang the harps upon the willows". Because you can't sing outside the temple, only the temple is the place of God. This is where secularity was born. One can pray to God even without a temple. So, occasionally it is necessary to undergo the experience of an exile. To learn that you can also live charisms without structures, becoming again poor, again simple, because that is where vocations are born again. Vocations are born along the road, not in temples. Therefore, this dynamic is fundamental for movements and communities, between structure and charism. Knowing that first comes the voice and then the structure and one must occasionally remove the structure to hear the voice again.

***How can a community face up to the challenge of internationalization, and enter into a dynamics of inculturation?***

First of all, internationalisation is a gift for a community, not all communities become international. It is a sign of Providence and "hunderfold" fruitfulness. So, you must be grateful. Say "thank you" for this. Because it signals that the community is a beautiful family: a family where children go to work abroad. So be thankful. Recognise it as a gift from the Spirit. One must realize that every gift, every donation is also a responsibility. In economics, I am an economist, there is a peculiar poverty that is called the curse of abundance. When a great abundance becomes a problem. As in countries that have very much oil, they have so much of a resource that it becomes a problem, they do not develop other dimensions. So, the wealth, the gifts, should be managed intelligently in order that they do not become a problem. You have expanded a lot abroad, and you know that today the Christian world suffers. Especially in Europe, but everywhere. There is a problem of narrative. We do not manage as we did in the 20th century to tell and to live our experience in a way that everyone can understand. We all suffer, you do as well. There is the birth of a new type of Christianity, something new. The Emmanuel Community too takes part in this birth. In Italian "giving birth" is called "travaglio", meaning "heavy work". This is an interesting word. When a woman is about to give birth, I don't know how it is said in French, but in Italian we say "travaglio" [in English: labor]. So, we take part in a collective labour. Now we must pay attention, I have had experiences, this is the reality, that when a few years pass in a community and maybe you are a bit far away from the early days and you become older adults, there is a risk of becoming a consumer club. A christian house remains alive as long as it is a place where we are together for a little while, we are helped, we feed ourselves, we enjoy the warmth, but then we go outside to the middle of the road. When the warmth of the house becomes too attractive and we no longer go outside, a deep crisis has already started. We must prevent Christianity from becoming consumption rather than production. We are called to produce the Kingdom of Heaven for others, not to consume it for ourselves. We must be very careful, because you lose sight of the poor. The poor are outside, along the road, they sleep in the cold. We should not start to consume the Gospel, the liturgy, the songs, the prayers, as a comfort good, because we like it. I am concerned when someone tells me, not from your Community, from some other: "I go so willingly to the meeting because it does me so much good". So, what? This is a consumptive act, as we say as economists, and not the donation of the Gospel to others. Obviously, also the act of donation makes you happy. The poor is a sign of the quality of the Gospel. It is a bit like fish, like trout, we say in Italian: when there are no more trout, the water is dirty. The presence of trout tells you that the water is clean. When a community loses the poor and the youth, the water is dirty. These are the indicators: the poor and the youth stay in clean charismatic water. So, you must go out and meet them, and not stay in the warmth of your community. A second thing you need to know: you must not be afraid to make mistakes. In the process of inculturation, there is a high risk to make mistakes. One is often wrong. You either do too little or you go too far in the cultural and national aspects, by adopting excessive aspects of the local culture. Say in Africa or Brazil, etc. Or one brings unchanged as a kind of mummy the charism made in France or made in Nairobi, because that is the only one. One must keep in mind that mistakes and errors are typical for charisms. To have one true prophet, you need nine false ones, because if you only want a true prophet, he will surely be false. It is like the sower who sows the seed in the thorns, among the rocks, in the earth. If you want to throw the seed only in the earth, it will never reach good soil. You have to experiment, make errors, have generosity, have the trust that we are not the masters of the voice - but God. We do not have this perfect track record. We must trust that there is an abundance, that along with 10 errors there will be one good thing from which everything will continue. This is very important. The Bible itself is full of errors, full of sins and full of wrong pathways. Think of Saul, who was replaced as king by David, and from this imperfection the Messiah is born. That is life. So don't be

afraid of experiments, of things that leave us with some uncertainty, because if you avoid the risk and stay on the safe side, there is definitely no life there. Life is made of errors, of excess, of generosity, of waste. The "dépenses" (expenditure) of which the French philosopher Battaglia speaks. This waste is life itself.

***In your opinion, what is the right positioning for those entrusted with a governing role? What challenges do they face, and how should they respon ?***

It is not easy to be responsible for Christian charismatic communities, because on the one hand the responsible person must take responsibility. I have sometimes seen myself, I have experienced, that there are movements or communities that go into a crisis in the name of fraternity. The responsible persons emphasise much the fact that they are not responsible, they are like the rest of us, there is no difference between you and us. They do not make choices. Confronted with choices that must be made, difficult choices that may displease someone, they say "do your own thing", "see for yourself", "do everything together". They don't govern, they don't manage, and things go wrong. So, on the one hand you have to govern, because we asked you to. As a community we put you in that position, we voted for you, we pay for you. We support you to govern and so you must do so, because government is a function. It's like it is in a tree, in an organism, each part has a function. If you are a root you must act like a root, not like a leaf. So, on the one hand you must make decisions, and you need persons who are capable of doing that. On the other hand, the characteristic of communities in general, but Christian ones in particular, is that they are truly a fraternity. There should be no classes or castes of privileged members. I am struck by an Italian community called Nomadelfia, founded many years ago, that has the charismatic rule that the most menial jobs should be done by each one, taking turns. Even the president will clean the streets. Because they understood that if this rule is not maintained, after a while the leaders say mass and those who have not studied clean the streets. You create a problematic distribution of power. So, each one does the cleaning of streets, the cleaning of sewers, of toilets, in turn. A very wise rule. So, on the one hand you need executives, on the other hand, you must make sure that you do not create an executive elite, which begins to lose contact with the fringes. The problem is this: élite groups decay because of lack of contact with the fringes. This also applies to business managers. When do managers begin to fail? When they meet only those like themselves, on the golf course, in 5-star hotels, in star restaurants. They only meet other managers, they no longer queue up in the supermarkets, they no longer go shopping, they no longer take the underground, they no longer catch the tram, and so they lose contact with life and the decline begins. This also applies to religious experiences. If an executive no longer speaks with normal members of the Community, but only with other executives... In the Catholic world there is this kind of disease, I do not know where it originated, which is that -- since talking to everyone is difficult -- you talk to the bosses. There is this sort of pyramid, where who is on top meets 5 other persons, who is just below that meets 25 and the one below that meets 70, but a person at the base will never meet a president. This is bad for any experience but it is particularly bad for charismatic experiences. Because the life is with the people, with the children, with the poor. If you live in an office and no longer meet a normal person from your community, because you always run to an executive, you lose contact with life and unwittingly you lose contact with the Spirit. The real problem is that in general it is not the responsible persons who close themselves off, but the members of communities like very much to create leaders, because they need security, they need someone to tell them what they have to do. This is also my own experience with the Focolare: this separation between those responsible and the common people is created by the people themselves. They need the Golden Calf from the Bible. The story of the Golden Calf has

always struck me, what is it about this bull that the people need? They say: "We can no longer live with a God who is so different. You can't see Him, you can't touch Him, you can't make an image of Him. We want a god like the other nations have. A god you can talk to, a god you can touch. Communities often do this kind of operation. Since Christian fraternity is so difficult, you lack certainty, there is not one who tells you what God wants, because God speaks in so many ways. You do not succeed in living with this difficulty, and so you create an idol: a person who becomes someone who speaks in the name of God. Because the community struggles. And the executive, the responsible person is made into a little idol. Not by themselves, but by us, by the people. That is why the fraternity needs to be maintained, needs tools, needs prayers, needs also common-sense rules. Rules also serve to avoid these things, for example by changing the positions every few years. Rules that after 5-10 years of being the executive, you switch to toilet service. Even if you are a great professor or a great priest. Because while a business enterprise might also survive with a system of castes, a charismatic community dies if it does not have the fraternity of hands and feet: washing the dishes, cleaning rooms, when someone loses contact with the dishwashing service -- "no, no you must not get tired, because you are doing more important things" -- this is already a sign of a great crisis, because there is nothing more important than washing the dishes, nothing more important than this. This also applies to me. I have a challenging job, but when I come home, I am like everyone else. Not because I am humble, but because that is where life is, in that normality. I have experienced three times that I heard a voice, I hope it was the good voice, from the Spirit, and two out of these three times I heard the voice while doing the dishes at home. Not in a church, nor during a retreat, nor at a conference, but while doing the dishes at home. The third time was while I was working. All very secular, very simple places. To conclude, this dimension of fraternity of the hands and the feet is a form of charismatic hygiene, essential to ensure that the communities are always able to listen to the Spirit.

***What is your vision of the Church, of what it is experiencing now, of the future as it is taking shape. How do you see this from your observation point?***

This is a challenging question. Thank you for the trust you are placing in me. From my perspective, which is the single point of view of a 56-year-old economist, member of Focolare, but one who over the years has followed dozens and dozens of religious communities, for tasks that have sometimes been very painful. I am befriended with Pope Francis, a member of "Economy of Francesco", consultant of the Dicastery for Laity, I have my own point of view that is one among 1000 others. From this perspective, what I see is that today the Church has a major problem of narrative. Narrative means this: 30 years ago when I was a boy in Italy, but possibly also in France, maybe 40 years ago in France, if a person who had never entered a church passed by a church, they knew what a church was, because their parents or grandparents had a certain idea of what a mass was, they knew about confession, they knew at least one prayer, perhaps the Our Father, learned from grandparents. This is no longer the case. Today 70-80 % of young people in Italy from my University, my Catholic university, no longer know what a mass is, what the Eucharist is, what is celebrated at Easter. Because in 30 years there has been a radical paradigm shift, we have moved a very long way from the symbolic code of the 20th century. We are faced with two options, as in this famous book "The Benedict Option", that's Benedict of Nursia: the first option, according to some, is that we lock ourselves up in monasteries, as Benedict of Nursia did. Those first monks fled from barbarians, the French (just kidding), the barbarians who descended from Northern France, from Germany, from the East to Italy. They enclosed themselves in abbeys, saving Christianity and saving civilisation. This idea is "save yourself from the barbarians". Then there is the second option, the option of Francis of Assisi, who lived in a time of crisis in Christianity. With the rise of commerce, of cities, of trade, a new world is born. The Franciscans go along the roads,

they leave their monasteries and give birth to convents in the centre of cities, in the heart of their commercial cities, like Florence, Siena etc. They say: "let's go out, bring something along, change our narrative", and something huge was born: medieval art, a new way of representing faith, of showing the crucifix. I think that today we are at such a stage. We close ourselves off and save what remains of Christian values. We withdraw in fortresses, in communities, to protect what remains of the Gospel, but 99% of humanity remains outside. Or we can try to go outside. But how? First, by making a major effort at a symbolic narrative. Today we have a Faith that speaks a language too distant from the youth. Young people don't know about scholastic theology, they are unaware of the categories that we had in mind in the 20th century. They have lost the translation of the code. We often say words of love in a dead language. So change the language! You might want to wait for people to convert and then announce them the Faith, with all its wealth, its spiritual heritage, the Bible, prayer, inner life, but you can also announce it before they convert. What I want to say is this. Out of love for our time, for young people, we must give spirituality because a world without the Spirit is a world that will have depression at the next pandemic. In the face of death, of grief, people sink into nothingness. So, we must recreate a spiritual capital for today's humanity, that may not know about God, Jesus, Mary -- but all have need for an inner life. As Christians, we can love the men and women of today by giving a spirituality in a way, I don't know which, a way in which one saves the heart of Christianity; it is very complicated, the kerygma, the essence of Christianity. In my opinion it is the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not an ethics of virtues, but it is a change of perspective: in one second, you are converted and you are already in the Kingdom of Heaven, even if you are a sinner. We need to announce the heart, the essence of Christianity, in a language, in a way that can reach the youth and the people of today, who have an infinite need for the Gospel and the Spirit, a language they understand. Today this language does not yet exist.

### ***Would you like to conclude with a word of encouragement on our mission?***

I wanted to end this nice moment with you with a "thank you", and with the conclusion of my last booklet (only partly included in the French edition), which is the conclusion that I reach after having written a lot about communities and their difficulties. Because I am indeed an expert in these "diseases" and how to treat them -- even if the treatment is complex. I write about errors in the management of charisms and community, but then I conclude with this sort of prayer, which is a wish that I make to people who have had a true vocation as a young person or as adults and who may be struggling today to understand the meaning of that experience. The religious world today is full of adults who have difficulty becoming an adult, or to grow old. Perhaps they have memories of a world that no longer exists, they may have chosen in a different Church and find themselves in a world that no longer understands them. They ask themselves: "Who still needs me today?" It is difficult to grow old if you have received a true vocation as a young person. After having listened a lot to these people I wanted to make this wish of mine to all of them. Let's say to adults who today are in a moment of transition. So, I wrote down this [at](#) the last page of my booklet: "while you live the adult time of exile (because today the Church is in exile, as in the Babylonian times), while you live the adult time of exile, never forget the time of the first love, when your heart heard different and eternal words, and your eyes saw a different face. Because that time is not a lie, it is only far away. You wanted to touch the sky and you touched the earth, perhaps to finally truly love her. Don't forget the first covenant, never forget that great promise, because it was wholly for you. Don't forget that at the beginning of a life that has now become complicated there really was something wonderful. There was a young person who believed in the splendour of their best years and started out with an unconditional yes. Initially there was something wonderful, a beauty, a generosity, free and infinite. If it was there in the beginning, it

is there forever. No disappointment, no pain, nothing in the world can erase this infinite beauty and free generosity. Do not ever allow it to be destroyed. Try to resurrect". I conclude by saying: "When the Son of man returns to earth, will He still find faith in the community?" My small wish.