

Luigi Giussani: The Religious Sense

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A. The Heart of the Matter

What is the formula for the journey to the ultimate meaning of reality. Living the real. There is an experience, hidden yet implied, of that arcane, mysterious presence [that is] to be found within the opening of the eye, within the attraction reawakened by things, within the beauty of things, within an amazement, full of gratitude, comfort, and hope. ... Now the question is this: How can this complex, yet simple, this enormously rich experience of the human heart ... become vivid, how can it come alive? How can it become powerful? In the *"impact" with the real*. The only condition for being truly and faithfully religious, the formula for the journey to the meaning of reality, is to live always the real intensely, without preclusion, without negating or forgetting anything (Luigi Giussani, *The Religious Sense*, p. 108).

B. The Percorso's Three Parts

1. The Religious Sense

2. At the Origin of the Christian Claim

3. Why the Church?

C. The Way of the Religious Sense

Suppose there were men who had always lived underground, in good and well-lighted dwellings, adorned with statues and pictures, and furnished with everything in which those who are thought happy abound. Suppose, however, that they had never gone above ground, but had learned by report and hearsay that there was a divine spirit and power. Suppose that then, at some time, the jaws of the earth opened and they were able to escape and make their way from those hidden dwellings into these regions which we inhabit. When they suddenly saw earth and seas and skies, when they learned the grandeur of clouds and the power of wind, when they saw the sun and realized not only its grandeur and beauty, but also its power, by which it fills the sky with light and makes the day; when again night darkened the lands and they saw the whole sky picked out and adorned with stars, and the varying light of the moon.... Most certainly when they saw these things would they have judged both that there are gods and that these great works are the works of Gods (Aristotle, Fragment 12, Ross).

1. Awe of the "Presence"

As I open my eyes, I am drawn into awe before the presence of beings I did not make, an awe that contains a strong attraction. "It is, indeed, truly superficial to repeat that religion is born of fear. Fear is not a human beings first sentiment—it is attraction... Attachment to being, to life, awe in front of the evidence comes first... Religiosity is, first of all, the development of the attraction." (*The Religious Sense*, pp. 101-102).

2. The Cosmos

Within and among the beings whose presence imposes itself on me there is an order which is not merely functional or mechanical, but beautiful.

3. "Providential" Reality

The ordered cosmos is not only beautiful, but aims at me, allowing me to live. "God, in bestowing his benefits, has not hidden himself completely, without a clue. From the heavens he sends down rain and rich harvests; your spirits he fills with food and delight." (Acts 14,17).

4. The Dependent "I"

Encountering the real in awe as an ordered reality that allows me to live, I discover myself as dependent precisely as myself. I stand vis-à-vis the mystery of my source. "It is more than I, more 'I' than myself. It is that through which I am." (*The Religious Sense*, p. 106). In every instances I am begotten and stand thus as son before God as Father, before God not as one among other beings, but as all. As the source of being, God is all. "All human actions, therefore, inasmuch as they aim towards peace and joy, seek God, the exhaustive substance of our lives." (*The Religious Sense*, p. 107).

5. The Law of the Heart

The movement of gift in which I receive myself as a creature of God is completed in the writing of God's law on my heart. By understanding this law, I am most fully given into my own hands, I am truly self-moving, self-impelled. Yet, at the same time, this law written on the heart sets me on a journey into God. God as my origin thereby draws me to himself as my goal.

D. The Encounter with Jesus in the Gospel of John

1. Desire

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi (which means Teacher), where are you **REMAINING**?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was **REMAINING**. And they **REMAINED WITH** him that day. It was about the tenth hour (1:35-39).

2. Remaining with the Rabbi

In the house of my Father there are many **PLACES TO REMAIN IN**. If not, would I have told you that I am going in order to prepare a place for you? ... I will take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be (14:2-3).

3. The Tenth Hour

They came and saw where he was **REMAINING**. And they **REMAINED WITH** him that day. It was about the tenth hour (1:39).

The Word became flesh and dwells (lit. has pitched his tent) among us, and we have seen his glory (1:14).

Father, what you have given me, I want that were I am [in my true place of remaining] they too may be with me, so that they may see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world (17:24).

4. Interiority

The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood **REMAINS IN** me and I **IN** him (6:56). *Interior intimo meo et superior summo meo*. More interior than my innermost and higher than my summit (St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 3:6.11).

I am the true vine... (1) **REMAIN IN** me and I **IN** you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself if it does not (2) **REMAIN IN** the vine, neither can you if you do not (3) **REMAIN IN** me. I am the vine, you are the branches. The one who (4) **REMAINS IN** me and I **IN** him bears much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not (5) **REMAIN IN** me is thrown outside like a branch and withers; and they will gather them and throw them into the fire, and burn them. If you (6) **REMAIN IN** me, and my words (7) **REMAIN IN** you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples (15:1.4-8).

5. The Trinity

AS the Father has loved me, I also have loved you. **REMAIN IN** my love. If you keep my commandments, you will **REMAIN IN** my love, **AS** I have kept my Father's commandments and **REMAIN IN** his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be **IN** you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another **AS** I have loved you. No one has a greater love than this, to lay down his life for his friends (15:9-13).

6. The Cross

The hour has come,
so that the Son of Man may be glorified.

Amen, Amen, I say to you, if the grain of wheat does not die by falling into the earth,
it itself **REMAINS ALONE**;

but if it dies, it brings much fruit.

The one who loves his life loses it,
and the one who hates his life in this world will guard it into eternal life (12:24-25).

7. The Mediation of the Christian Community

THE FUTURE

John 17:20-21

THE PRESENT GIFT

John 17:22-23

THE COMMANDMENT

John 13:34-35

I
do not ask you for them alone,
but for those who believe in me through their
word,

And the glory you have given me
I have given to them,

I give you a new commandment,

<i>that</i> all may be ONE	<i>that</i> they may be ONE	that you LOVE one another
AS you, Father, are IN me and I IN you,	AS we are ONE , I IN them and you IN me,	AS I have LOVED you
<i>that</i> they too may be IN us,	<i>that</i> they may be completed into ONE ,	that you TOO may LOVE one another.
that the world may believe that you sent me.	that the world may know that you sent me and that you LOVED them AS you LOVED me	In this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have LOVE IN one another.