



The Holy See

**LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II
TO MSGR. LUIGI GIUSSANI
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE MOVEMENT "COMMUNION AND LIBERATION"**

*To Rev. Mons. Luigi Giussani,
Founder of the Movement "Communion and Liberation"*

1. It will be 50 years in October since you stopped lecturing at the theological faculty of the Seminary at Venegono and began to teach religion in Milan at Berchet Secondary School. This was how you came to set out on the way to an ecclesial association that was subsequently to become the Movement, and later, also the Fraternity of "Communion and Liberation". I gladly join you in the surge of gratitude to God, the Giver of every good thing, that wells up in your priestly heart and in the hearts of the Movement's members on this anniversary. In this half century, divine Providence has brought to life an institution which, spreading rapidly in Italy and throughout the world, has yielded an abundant harvest of good for the Church and for society.

Today the Movement exists in 70 countries and offers a faith experience that can take root in the most varied cultures; it is an experience that profoundly changes people's lives since it impels them to a personal encounter with Christ. "Communion and Liberation" is a Movement that together with a whole range of other associations and new communities can rightly be considered one of the new shoots of the promising "springtime" inspired by the Holy Spirit in these past 50 years. This half century has been distinguished by a harsh clash with the dominant ideologies in a crisis of utopian projects, and more recently, by a widespread tendency to relativism, scepticism and nihilism that risks dampening the hopes and aspirations of the new generations.

2. I would like to express to you and to all the members of the Movement my hope that this important jubilee will spur each one to think back to the experience that gave birth to the Movement and to renew the enthusiasm of its origins. It is important, in fact, to stay faithful to the founding charism so as to respond effectively to the expectations and challenges of the times. I

repeat today what I said to you some years ago: "Continually renew the discovery of the charism which has fascinated you and it will more powerfully lead you to make yourselves servants of that one power which is Christ the Lord!" (*Address to priests taking part in a spiritual retreat promoted by the Movement "Communion and Liberation"*, n. 3, 12 September 1985; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, [ORE], 14 October 1985, p. 11).

In the humble and faithful following of Jesus to which all the baptized are called, may the example of the Virgin Mary inspire each one of you. May she be the model of how to be Christians today! "The Movement", as I said on the 20th anniversary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity's approval of the "Communion and Liberation" Fraternity, "wanted and wants to point out not a way but *the* way to arrive at the solution of this existential drama. The way, as you have said so often, is Christ" (*Message to Mons. Luigi Giussani*, 11 February 2002, n. 2; ORE, 20 February 2002, p. 7).

Your Movement's original pedagogical intuition is exactly this: to present anew and in an attractive way in tune with contemporary culture, the Christian event, perceived as a source of new values which can give the whole of life a direction. It is urgent and necessary to help people encounter Christ in order that he may also become the ultimate reason for living and working for people of today. This experience of faith gives rise to a new vision of reality, to responsibility and a creativity that permeate every sphere of life: from work activities to family relationships, from social commitment to leadership in the contexts of culture and politics.

I raise a prayer to the Lord that the celebration of the 50th anniversary of your Movement will afford all its members the opportunity for a salutary reflection, so that they may set out refreshed and face the new apostolic tasks of the third millennium with renewed enthusiasm. May this Jubilee Year be a providential opportunity to deepen the knowledge of Jesus and love for him and for his message of salvation.

3. Put out into the deep! "*Duc in altum!*" (Lk 5: 4). I now address to you these words of the Gospel which I have repeated on several occasions. It is an invitation to commemorate the past with gratitude, to live the present passionately and to open yourselves to the future with confidence, because "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*" (Heb 13: 8; cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 1). Encouraged by this awareness, may your Movement continue to communicate to one and all the beauty and joy of the encounter with the Redeemer of man; may it vividly proclaim divine mercy and remind human beings who are sometimes disheartened that there is no need to be afraid, for Christ is our future.

With deep devotion to the Successor of Peter and the legitimate Pastors of the Church and in close contact with the other Movements and Associations, you make the original contribution of your charism to the diocesan and parish communities, spreading and witnessing to the Gospel Message.

May the Blessed Virgin, teacher and model of Christian life and "the living source" of hope, always accompany and protect you on your way. May she be the support to which you constantly turn.

With these sentiments and hopes, as I assure you of my spiritual participation in the jubilee celebrations, I gladly impart to you, to your collaborators and to all the members of the Movement, a special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 22 February 2004

JOHN PAUL II

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