

## INTRODUCTION

# A wounded humanity, in need of mercy

by Julián Carrón\*

What is the question today, the question of women and men today? Pope Benedict XVI [...] identified it as “the perception that we are in need of grace and forgiveness.”<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the Church will be able to justify herself to the people of today if she responds to this need for grace and forgiveness. [...]

“In my view,” continues this acute observer, Benedict XVI, “this makes clear that, under a veneer of self-assuredness and self-righteousness, the man of today hides a deep knowledge of his wounds and his unworthiness before God. He is waiting for mercy.”<sup>2</sup> [...]

[In his book *The Name of God Is Mercy*] When an interviewer asked, “*Why, in your opinion, is humanity so in need of mercy?*” Pope Francis responded, “Because humanity is wounded, deeply wounded. Either it does not know how to cure its wounds, or it believes it’s not possible to cure them.” Today, there is also the burden of “considering our illness, our sins, to be incurable, things that cannot be healed or forgiven. We lack the actual concrete experience of mercy. This is also the fragility of the time we live in—believing that there is no chance of redemption, a hand to raise you up, an embrace to save you, forgive you, pick you up, flood you with infinite, patient, indulgent love; to put you back on your feet.”<sup>3</sup> [...]

Therefore, to respond to the deep wounds of contemporary man, the Pope has not organized a conference on mercy. He has not limited himself to proposing a reflection on the theme, but has promoted a gesture that first of all allows us to experience mercy during a full year, accompanying us with his continual guidance to help us live it.

In order to intervene in a real way in humanity’s toil, to respond to concrete women and men in all their fragility, the Church—and therefore each of us—first of all needs to experience the embrace of God’s mercy, in order to be able to communicate it to all our sisters and brothers we meet along the way. [...]

“This is why it is necessary to recognize ourselves as sinners, so as to strengthen within us the certainty of divine mercy. ‘Lord, I am a sinful man; Lord, I am a sinful woman: come with your mercy.’ It is a beautiful prayer. It is an easy prayer to say every day: ‘Lord, I am a sinner: come with your mercy.’”<sup>4</sup> [...]

\*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.”

» At the first Spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity in 1982, looking at the faces of the many people present, thinking of the freshness of the encounter that had won them over and brought them to that point, Giussani said, “Who knows if we are still stirred, as we were stirred at Varigotti,” that is, at the beginning of GS. And he continued, “You have grown up, and while you have secured a human ability in your professions, there is the possibility of drifting away from Christ (in contrast with the emotion of all those years ago and, above all, certain circumstances of all those years ago). [...] It is as if Christ were far from our heart.”<sup>5</sup>

And what about us? Do we feel the urgent need to be forgiven and embraced again for all our falls, our distraction, the complicit forgetfulness that invades our days, for our betrayal, our wretchedness? What dominates our life—our thought and our gaze—in this period of confusion and bewilderment? Do we feel the need for His mercy? [...]

But recognition of our wretchedness is not enough: it marks the beginning of the truth about ourselves, but it is not enough. In fact, we often realize how insufficient it is. We need someone who brings forth our need to be forgiven.

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1 “Interview with His Holiness Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith,” in Italian in *Dottrina della giustificazione ed esperienza di Dio nella predicazione della Chiesa e negli Esercizi Spirituali [Through Faith: Doctrine of Justification and Experience of God in the Preaching of the Church and the Spiritual Exercises]*, ed. Daniele Libanori, p. 128. Available in English translation online at <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/full-text-of-benedict-xvis-recent-rare-and-lengthy-interview-26142/>.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 129.

3 Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy*, transl. Oonagh Stransky, Bluebird Pan Macmillan, London, 2016, pp. 13-14.

4 Francis, *General Audience*, December 9, 2015.

5 Luigi Giussani, “Familiarity with Christ,” in *Traces*, n. 2, February 2007, p. 2.