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MEETING FOR THE FRIENDSHIP AMONGST THE PEOPLES

#meeting15

August 20th-26th Rimini Fiera

Abraham and today's challenges

Joseph Weiler and father Carrón debating, but also videos, readings, music

Rimini, August 24th 2015 – The theme – the choice of Abraham and the challenges of the present – was developed in a close dialogue, charming and familiar at the same time, at 5 p.m. by two special guests: Julián Carrón, president of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation, and Joseph Weiler, president of the European University Institute; the lecturer, Monica Maggioni, president of Rai. The confirmation of the importance of such appointment comes from the large number of visitors. The people of the Meeting had occupied the auditorium Intesa San Paolo in Hall B3 several hours before – as much as the neighboring Hall B1, Sala Neri, Hall Sud and foyer B4 linked by videoconference with the auditorium for the occasion.

The encounter took place in an original and unexpected way. The audience was offered a presentation made of images, music and reading acts to introduce the four developments of the theme with which the speakers were confronted.

The theme of the birth of the self is introduced suggestively by three narrators who read of the call of Abraham from the text of Genesis (12,1-3), echoed in father Giussani's texts CS Lewis' as well. The first consideration is up to Weiler: "In Abraham there are three revolutions taking place: the nature of the conversation between God and man is *alliance* between two parties, where 'leave' is a proposal, not a commitment. The second revolution is the rise of interiority that comes from a relationship with God. Lastly, Abraham discovers in himself a sense of justice in reaction to the threat of God to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. If it's not right it is not God. Abraham dares face to God" adds the rabbi "and I guess God rejoiced and said: I did him so".

Carrón continues on the thought of the professor: "Why God was not there before? Because it happened as an historical event; men's potentialities need proper provocations, as it happens for the child with the mother: a man's face is revealed in a relationship". Carrón continues: "The human being that emerges in from this alliance between God and Abraham is amazing; he is the awareness of a self that expresses itself".

Monica Maggioni, however, comes to identify a problem: "The awareness of the self is not achieved once and for all: we all know that often the self fails – it is an experience for the past man of Mesopotamia and for the current one as well". It follows three considerations offered to the public by the voices of the actors on Pietro Citati, Eugenio Scalfari and Rainer Maria Rilke's texts.

Weiler noted that, in his experience as a law professor in different parts of the world, the word that haunts the majority of young people is "rights". "Gone are the words responsibility and duty". "The quotes we just listened" reacts Carrón "describe very well what this absence of self is. Why does this torpor happen historically? We often think that the story of Abraham is fine for the devotees and don't believe it is necessary to all men: in fact, it brings to light all the capacity of human responsibility". We can observe it in many expressions of the dominant culture, where only what is predictable is suitable for men. "That of Abraham for us is a kind of religious fairy tale" observes Carrón "and we pay that in terms of addiction". Weiler asks the thorny question: the sacrifice of Isaac. Carrón does not escape: "I wonder what can move a person to consider such a proposal? What had happened between God and Abraham? There it was the beginning of a story that progresses".

The President Rai reintroduces the issue of the disappearance of the self: "There is a void that leaves harmless"; she sees the educational challenge as the real emergency of today. The dramatic images of the massacre in Paris last January 7th come suddenly in the halls of the Fiera along with the text from a letter

written to the editor of Corriere della Sera (Ferruccio De Bortoli) by Julián Carrón, a month later. Maggioni addresses Carrón: "In the chorus of those who, in those days, saw the problem in a logical us vs. them, you have reported the matter within us". "Of course" says Carrón, "we have it all at home: with our children, with our friends, with our students. We have people who come to us with different lifestyles, with different religions; with them, we want to live together. The question of Abraham is interesting because it offers the same problem: is there something that can awaken the need for fulfillment that we have? This is the educational emergency". Weiler agrees and emphasizes the richness of culture, democracy and justice that we can offer. Carrón insists: "How can we lure by passing on this treasure, so that not everything is destroyed? We have to regain what we received generation after generation to find a good and not to start always from scratch".

Maggioni comments the photos of Salgado (penguins in a row plunging into the sea) projected on the big screen: "It is the representation of a dominant mainstream: no penguin thinks to plunge from another point". In this situation, where to start? The presenter resumes, quoting Benedict XVI when he says that "it is not science that redeems man". Three items follow: Hannah Arendt, Don Giussani and Pope Francis, accompanied by a slight sound of violin. The whole audience is conquered, including Weiler: "Now I need a minute..."

Carrón does not let it go: "It is from here that we can start over – from that moment when one is taken again. No need to do anything, something out of us need to happen. As the Pope tells us, this is the charm of the present time, the Church opens a fascinating way as at the beginning: to recognize the truth of oneself through the experience of beauty".

The meeting ends on this provocation of father Giussani: "But do we Christians still believe in the ability of the faith we have received to exercise a particular attraction to those we meet and in the winning charm of its unarmed beauty?"

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