



From the Religious Sense to Christianity: The Fundamental Works of Msgr. Luigi Giussani Founder of Communion and Liberation

FIFTH LESSON: THE CHRISTIAN: A NEW BEING IN THE WORLD

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Chris Bacich: For those of you that are here for the first time, I would like to say first and foremost, welcome, and let you know that you are coming to the last of a 5 lesson series which summarizes a presentation made by Monsignor Luigi Giussani, the founder of Communion and Liberation, on the projectory of what MG calls the religious sense to the fullness of Christianity.

In the first couple of lectures we looked closely at the human dynamic in relation to the impact with reality, in the most natural impact with reality the human being senses the need for a meaning, a final reason for his existence or for her existence, a final reason for the existence of all things, a final meaning for his existence and the existence of all things, a ultimate connection, so to speak, between the person and everything. We also looked at how, within the human existence there is a certain projectory of desire, the fact that MG says, no matter what man can grasp, he awaits another thing, he grasps what he can grasp, but he awaits another thing. And then we talked about how in his impact with reality, how reality demonstrates the existence of God. Later on we looked at the impossibility, the structural impossibility of reaching this Mystery that man suffers, suffers with great sadness and drama and finally we looked at the hypothesis of revelation, the possibility that, that Mystery, which man has pursued throughout the ages, since he began to bear his dead, thousands and thousands and thousands of years ago, that this Mystery may enter history and become a fact within history, as a historical factor. That was the content of our last lecture.

Just to recap briefly, last time I gave the example of myself, and my desire to fly as a young teenager and how I could study and study and study and imagine how to build my own airplane and consider realistically going to get lessons and building my own airplane and get book after book and read up and imagine what would be like to fly. But my teenage friend from school tells me, "I have a new neighbor. He is a pilot and he is looking for teenagers to teach to fly for free." All my desires for flying were translated into a problem if my friend is telling me the truth. And so we said, last week, if we authentically desire to know and establish a relationship with the final meaning, the only reason for my existence and therefore the only thing that can ever give me an authentic happiness, a true fulfillment, the one that does not pass, if I seek this Mystery and I hear the announcement that there is a group of people in history who say that this Mystery became flesh, became a human being and has made himself "encounter-able", if it is possible to have a human meeting with this Mystery, then the problem of religiosity is not longer in the hands of those who are intelligent, the most impeccable; it no longer belongs to the artistic creative, or the imaginative, like Plato, Buddha, Mohamed. The problem of religiosity becomes: are those people telling the truth? Are those people in history, those people that

call themselves Christians, do they speak the truth when they say: “the Mystery was made flesh,” or to use the first words of Saint John’s Gospel “the Word was made flesh and made His dwelling among us.” Does that set of words indicate a reality?

And so tonight we enter upon this question, in this lecture back in 1978, at the University of Bologna, MG says, “Today I hope to be able to clearly state what I want to say because it’s the weightiest, the greatest point. It’s the weightiest point because it’s the furthest from our education, from that type of education we’re normally given. In the second place, it’s the greatest because it’s the question of the Mystery of God, the Mystery of Christ, the new yeast in history, that from which the only true cultural revolution in history depends.”

MG begins his introduction quoting John Paul II, in an address our Holy Father made to MG’s movement, Communion and Liberation, and the Pope said: “We believe in Christ, dead and risen, in Christ present here and now, who alone can change man and the world – and in fact does change them by transfiguring them.”

And MG comments, “If you ask me, within this affirmation of the Pope is all of the content of real Christianity, the challenge to evil and the challenge to the lie and the expression of the lover of life, as the liturgy of God says.” And in fact MG goes on underlying the insistence of the Pope for the here and now. He says, “But here’s the real problem: if Christ weren’t present here and now, it would be as if He had never come; Christianity would be a rich, beautiful memory, but only a memory – as it actually is for too many Christians – while instead He is present here and now.” This is one of the fundamental points of MG’s proposal for Christianity, a proposal of verification of the fact of revelation, we said last week, the hypothesis of revelation. MG considers this hypothesis as a fact and, therefore, as I said in my introduction, that the problem is: did this fact happen? We can see from what MG says, that he considers the only possibility to verify that this fact actually happened as a problem that must take place in the present. One must today verify whether or not God was made man, whether or not today God remains in the flesh. So MG makes this great claim that in fact Christ is present in the here and now and he starts his consideration asking, where is He present? If God has been made flesh, if the Mystery that sustains everything and is the only reason of their existence, like a baseball bat finds its reason in the game of baseball, I find my reason in God’s existence, in the Mystery’s existence. If this Mystery, which is the reason for my existence, and that which makes me and gives sense to everything with which I come into contact, if this Mystery has become flesh, where is He, where is His flesh, if He is here and now? And so MG points out something that we see in the Gospel, he points out that in the Gospel there were certain little towns and villages, that, for whatever reason, Jesus did not want to travel to. We might imagine that by this point in His career, He was becoming so fantastically famous that He had to stay outside many towns and villages, because it was impossible for Him to even enter a town or a village, even in His early career we saw, we had the sense of the traffic jam, if we can only imagine what that may mean in that world with animals and human beings, but not animated vehicles, outside people’s houses were huge crowds of people gathering. So at a certain point, Jesus has to avoid going to visit a single house or avoid visiting a single person and perhaps being present in a single synagogue, and so you can imagine the reason for which at a certain point Jesus appoints the disciples as representatives of Himself to go to the various towns and villages, just because He could not longer enter Himself and moreover, in sending out these pairs of disciples, more territory was covered, more people came into contact with the good news, that the kingdom of God is at hand. MG first points out that those people came back to Jesus, those pairs that went out, two by two, and they were telling Jesus that the same things were happening as it happened when He was present: the sick were being cured, demons were being driven out, so much so that Jesus told them to remind them, don’t rejoice so much for the fact that the demons obey you, rather rejoice because your names are written in the book of life. And so MG says, if we look careful at this example, even when

Jesus was still physically present on earth, for those people and those towns who did not meet Jesus of Nazareth, to whom those pairs of disciples were sent, what was the fact of the Messiah coming for those people? The fact of the Messiah coming to those people was identical to the faces of those two disciples, and he says, you ask them: “Are you two the Messiah coming to the world?” they would have answered “For the love of God, no.” And yet it was by means of them that Christ came there. It is exactly this method that Christ chose to be effectively present in all history. This is the system by which for all history Christ will be present.

If MG encourages us to verify in the present, in the here and now that indeed the Mystery has made Himself a fact within history, if MG claims that the hypothesis of revelation is not just an hypothesis, but a fact, he indicates us that the only place where we can verify this fact is within the community of believers. He says, I will come back to this fact, later on, but he says, I would like for you to begin to understand the profundity of what has started to happen because of the Mystery that is coming in the flesh. MG says, what has happened is that an entirely new creature, an entirely new subject has entered the world. This is the first sign, we can say, of the fact that the Mystery is present here and now. He refers to the passage of Saint John’s Gospel, where Nicodemus goes to see Jesus and, of course he reminds us that Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin and we can imagine that man, a kind of university professor, a very important person, very educated who came to see Jesus at night because he has some sympathy for Him and yet is a little bit embarrassed about this sympathy. And he starts to speak with Jesus and Jesus says to him the important thing is to be born again. And Nicodemus responds by saying, “What do you mean to be born again? I am supposed to get back in my mother womb? I am supposed to come out from my mother womb again?” And Jesus responds, “You are teacher in Israel, and not even you get this? You don’t understand that at the depth of reality there is a Mystery which goes well beyond your mother, and which sustains you much more than your mother’s umbilical cord had ever sustained you? You, teacher of Israel, don’t understand that there is a Mystery that is much deeper of the reality of your mother and from which you must be born again?” And MG comments, being born again will be a concept that will always be insisted upon for the entire New Testament. Christ meant seriously that man must be born again. And St. Paul speaks of a “new creation”. And here MG goes on to Galatians where he comments on Paul’s letter to that community: “See with which large letters I write to you in my own hand. Those who wish to look good in the flesh” – MG says, those who want to look good in society – “these would compel you to be circumcised” – MG says that circumcision was the cultural category that was decisive for the Jews, in other words, those who would want to look good in society would make you adhere to the current ideological themes, those themes taken from the dominant culture – “only that they might not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.” And MG says, the cross of Christ is, above all this change in mentality. So the first sign of the novelty that Christ brings into the world is a new creature and the first sign of the new creature is a new mentality, a new way of looking at reality, anew way of understanding the person and the entire universe and the connection between the person and the entire universe. MG continues with Galatians 6: “Not even those having themselves circumcised observe the law themselves” – MG says, they don’t bring to fulfillment their ideology; they are incapable of realizing their ideologies; they are incapable of maintaining the promises they make.

When I was a kid, my father and my mother took me to Disneyland several times and I always remember with great delight going to see a kind of a ride in a place with a particular theme, and the theme was “A Small World” - it’s a small world after all, you never sang the little song (singing) “it’s a small world after all, it’s a small world after all, it’s a small world after all, it is a small, small world”. And I remember going through the ride, the ride was basically that you sat with your parents and you saw bunches of people that are dolls, bunches of dolls dressed up like different people from different parts of world and the whole theme of that was that these people were living in a harmony and this memory, even today, strikes a deep cord in me. It does so because you cannot help in the end

that really is one of the fundamental aspects of the American dream. When Americans go around the world and do things like we are doing in Iraq now, regardless of what you are thinking of the current situation, in any case the ideology that pushes it, it is an ideology that foresees a time in history and sees America as the catalyst which will bring about this time in history, when peace, freedom and unity among mankind will be realized. And you see this in a lot of aspects of American culture, political and other areas of our culture. Otherwise that Disney land ride is inexplicable. I don't think that in any culture currently in the world you can find something like that and I would challenge anybody in the audience to show me differently. But the reason I say this is because even if, this is the ideology – and here I would like to strip ideology of any negative connotation - look at our current political situation in the senate, the nuclear option, the fight about judges, the election of 2000. Think about our current political climate, while the ideology of America is peace, liberty, freedom and unity for the entire human race, even for the entire human race as represented here in the USA. Isn't it true that that ideology betrays itself in our very senate? in our presidential election? Between the various branches, the judiciary and the legislative in our current government? And so MG says, you see no matter what beautiful the ideology the world may offers us it never delivers. MG says this is really the point that St. Paul is making. St Paul is making this point, if we give ourselves to ideologies of this world they will always betray us, they can never maintain the promises they made. And so Saint Paul continues: “they only want you to be circumcised so that they may boast of your flesh” – and MG says, they want you to adhere to their ideas so that they'll get your votes in the elections – “but may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. For neither does circumcision mean anything, nor does uncircumcision” – MG says, it does not matter if you are on the left or on the right – “what matters is to be a new creature.” So MG says the first sign of the fact of the mystery of God's revelation in history is an individual that does not adhere to popular ideologies of its time. It is an individual who looks at the world and sees it differently, understands it differently, to put in post-modern terms, interprets it differently. He goes on in his considerations and he says, what is the ontology of this new creature if the mentality of the new creature is something revolutionary, if we find in history a person and a group of people who look at everything differently? What is their ontology? How are they made up, so to speak? MG says in what does this new subject consists? Look here, I'm one of these new subjects, you're one of these new subjects, perhaps you don't know it and I usually forget it, and yet, the Mystery's plan in this world passes by means of this.

Then MG comments on Galatians 3, where Saint Paul says, “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek” – and MG says, this was the great cultural-political division of that time, in our terms we would say, neither conservative nor liberal – “there is neither slave nor freeman” – and MG says, this is the great socio-economic division of that time and in our terms we can say, there is no longer the wealthy person – “there is neither male nor female, for you are all one.” MG says, the word that is used in Greek - εἰς=*eis* - means one person, therefore when Paul says “one” he means “one person”: “All of you are one person in Christ Jesus.”

And so MG says that the ontology of new subject, if the first sign that this great hypothesis of revelation has taken place is a person who has a different mentality, who looks at world differently and establishes relationships in reality that are different than anybody else in the world. This person is not alone, this person belongs to a people and part of this person's new mentality is to be aware he or she is not alone but is constituted in the relationship with others. He goes on again quoting from Galatians 3. Saint Paul says “and if you belong to Christ, you will possess the inheritance of Christ” and MG says, the ‘inheritance of Christ’ is the possession of the world. You bear the meaning of history: this is the point. Then MG says, how does this happen? How does this new creature become one with others?

He says, you who are baptized – this gesture which is exteriorly so innocuous, full of a metaphoric meaning, but exteriorly so fragile, is brief, is a sign, it is ‘innocuous’ – this baptism, this gesture seizes your person and carries it all the way into the Mystery of that Personality, which is the divine personality in such a way that all those who are brought into that Personality by means of the mystery of Baptism – into the mystery of Christ’s personality – they are all one Body. MG says, St. Paul writes a sentence twice that no universalism could have ever imagined: “Don’t you know that you are all members of one another?” MG comments, everyone is a member of the other. This is an unimaginable understanding of a profound unity among human beings, among persons. Because that power, which is the power from which all things spring, from the depths of our being because of the availability of our being in front of God – theologians call this availability ‘obediential power’ – transforms us in a way that is much deeper than had we been born of the same mother. It is a new bond of blood. How wonderful it is to sit on the subway and think, ‘All of these people don’t know, but if they’re baptized, they’re part of me and I am part of them much more than they are one in blood with their fathers or mothers or siblings.’”

And so going back to “it is a small world” or thinking at the worker’s paradise in the Soviet experiment or recalling the great *pax romana* or any attempt of human beings to be in unity with one another, MG says, nobody has ever written anything as audacious as this sentence, which Saint Paul writes twice, “you are members of one another”. When I speak to my students, about this word “member”, I remind them, and St. Paul means “members” in the sense that my finger is a member of my body, if I rip out a finger, a member of my body, what an incredible pain, what a terrible violence and what a great impoverishment of myself, to consider others members of my selfhood of my I. No dream, no utopia of human construction ever came close to such a phrase. And yet MG says this is the awareness that this new subject has of herself in the world. And MG continues: the true problem is that this unity explodes. This is the message with which Christ challenges history and where this happens the world cannot but recognize it because it’s too crystal clear. Thus, the world is infuriated and tries to utterly destroy it, if it could even with a bomb, or it remains struck by Christ.

MG comments that this is one of the greatest signs that the Mystery has entered history. This is what we can look at in history to see if the Mystery has indeed entered the world because the world realizes that Christ is true and he says that commenting on that great final discourse of Jesus before being killed, on John’s Gospel: Jesus says, “I ask you Father that they may be one, so that the world may know that are in Me and I am in You and that You sent Me.” And MG says, the world will realize that Christ is true – that is, that He is present – in the unity of Christians also because unity among people is impossible. It’s so impossible that the wisdom of worldly philosophy today defines even the unity of man and woman as fundamentally dissoluble. Not even among and man and a woman any longer is this unity seen as possible. To experience this unity or to witness others who experience this deep abolition of extraneousness, this utter and unique surmounting of any kind of racism: this fact is beyond the strength of man; it is the profound miracle by which you understand Christ is God. And so MG comments that this is one of the greatest signs of Christ present and the fact that He is God, when people meet the possibility to see people from which all extraneousness and foreignness has been eliminated. So if I am looking to truly verify in my present experience that this hypothesis is not just a hypothesis but is a fact, I have to find a place where this unity is. For this reason MG says that sense of community, charity and unity, the sense of the Church, the universal Church, must grow on us. The awareness to be a population that shares common characteristics, a people, a true people of God must be affirmed in us. We can think of our late Pope’s great attempts to reconcile the Churches, especially the Churches of the East and the West, of how important it is, how important that this unity becomes as MG is saying. And so MG comes back to the new creature. If the new creature has new mentality and his ontology is this oneness this unity with the others, what more can we say about new creature?

He comments on 1 Corinthians: “Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel – and MG says, the Gospel is the announcement of this event: that something new has entered the world - and not with the wisdom of human eloquence, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning – and MG says, it is by means of our misery – the message of the cross – this is the way that God and Christ challenges the world and attracts and draws man, inviting him to salvation . St Paul continues, “The message of the cross is” – and MG says, the cross is the way God chose – “is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the learning of the learned I will set aside.’ Where is the wise one? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made the wisdom of the world foolish? For since in the wisdom of God the world did not come to find God through wisdom, it was the will of God through the foolishness of the proclamation of the cross to save those who have faith. For Jews demand signs” – and MG says, this is the demand of the miracle of moral coherence – “and the Greeks look for wisdom” – and MG says, they look for an impeccable philosophy, in other words what MG is saying to us is, the problem is not to find people who are morally coherent, nor the problem is to find a group of people to find people with an impeccable philosophy, who are intellectually challenging, - “but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.” And MG continues, “If you read this first chapter and the second and the end of the third chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians, you will well understand how Christianity entered the world. The reality of the Christian people entered the world in a deep conflict, not because that people puts itself in conflict, but because it announced a reality that the wise of the world, ‘reason-measure-of-everything,’ that man’s pride and autonomy could not accept. Hence, a conflict broke out.” And so in this last part MG reminds us that this new creature brings an announcement, brings an announcement of the cross, brings an announcement that the mystery of God came into history, suffered and died on the cross for man in order that man might be changed.

So then MG continues and he asks, “I would like to now pass on to the question that I called the problem of ‘verification.’ How can I verify this fact? How can it be clear to me that this unity of people, this companionship made up of people this *sui generis* ethnic reality is truly the presence of God made man?” MG says, “I would say—right off the bat—that if Christ is really present, what happened with Christ would have to keep happening. Like with those two who were sent by Christ to the outlying villages. What happened when Christ was around, happened when they were: people saw miracles.” And so MG goes back to this quote from the Pope John Paul II to Communion and Liberation: “We believe in Christ, dead and risen, in Christ present here and now, who alone can change man and the world – and who in fact does change them by transfiguring them.” And MG continues, “What does ‘change’ mean? It means to become more truly human, to become more truly ourselves. What does ‘transfiguring’ mean? It means that without eliminating or censoring anything, man as he is, with all of his interests, with all of his reactions, with all of his activity, is changed. It would be very interesting to analyze exactly what’s inside this word ‘change’ but for now I will only highlight one thing: that the miracle by which you understand that Christ is God is the miracle that man become more man. With Christ, with that man, people felt themselves becoming more human, more human even when it came to controlling things.” And so he goes on to talk about miracles, and he notes that, if we are to believe that God was made man, we should be able to see miracles in this unity of people like 2,000 years ago people saw miracles. But before he speaks of this fact, present in the Church today, he says, “Christ didn’t come to eliminate blindness or lameness; He made the deaf hear, the blind see, the lame walk in order to show that He had that power, but the goal was that people would believe, that they would understand who He was.” And he goes on to remind us that in the history of the Church there was always been great miracles. This lecture was quite few years ago,

back in 1978 and he says if we look at the year 1950, the Pope beatified 20 people and canonized 20 other saints. And he says, in order to beatify or canonize anyone you must have 2 miracles of the first order. Thus he says, that year 1950 along there were 80 scientifically proved miracles in the Church in 1950 alone. And he reminds us that, at that time, in 1978, over the 50 years between the moment he was speaking, going 50 years back in history, that in Lourdes in France hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of miracles have been reported to Rome and only 8 have been officially recognized by the Church. And he says, "The reason I give you this example is to show you the great skepticism that the Church has when it comes to people saying that there are miracles. If the church officially recognized in 1950, 40 people for canonization, it means that the skeptical Church has seen evidence for 80 miracles." Here Giussani tells the story of a man who went to a shrine in Belgium that was a sister shrine to Lourdes at the end of the 1800s, after his femur was pulverized when a tree fell upon it. It was impossible for bone to heal by itself and so the doctors recommended amputation, but he did not want to amputate and then the leg became gangrenous and the stench it gave off was unbearable to everyone around him. He traveled there and found himself on his knees in front of the shrine. In the x-ray it looked like a normally healed broken leg. And for my personal experience, I myself I was born with cancer and I was on the verge of being dead with fever of 105 and I believe it is called a septic infection, which is an infection of the blood. It is a very long story but I am here in front of you today because of a miracle also. MG says, "A miracle is as though a genius were to get into a car that was invented by someone who was inspired and that others use badly and only up to a certain point. The genius who invented the car gets in and knows how to make the thing really go! He uses all of its potential: 100%. With a miracle it's as though the engineer who designed nature were to use nature with a speed and a strength that man only dreams of having. Because I remember that in order to heal my friend's leg after a skiing accident, he needed six months of rehabilitation, while he limped around."

And so MG says that if you are a religious person, authentically religious, seeking to establish a relationship with the Mystery, seeking to understand what the meaning of your existence is as person, seeking to understand the reason for the big bang and everything that happened after it and everything that will happen after it, and you heard this announcement of a man about whom certain people became convinced that He was God, that He was the Mystery that entered into history and you run into their testimonies, and when you are around this man you saw extraordinary things, things that are naturally inexplicable that broke the laws of nature. MG says that if you come to this unity of people who claim to be the very presence of this man dead and risen, you will find and see these same things happening. And we can understand, from what MG is saying, that Jesus of Nazareth not only the things Jesus was doing, He was doing other things, those were perhaps the most clamorous things, but He was saying things, looking at people, doing things that were not only miracles, teaching, provoking, challenging the powers that be often times. And so if we take the hypothesis that the presence of Jesus of Nazareth is this unity of believers, that is the Church, we find the same kind of things happening today. And going back, these miracles were a sign and there meant to be a sign for people to understand who He was, understand what He was saying when He said, "I and the Father are one". "I forgive you your sins." "You have heard it said, don't commit adultery." "But I tell you, a man who look with lust at a woman, has committed adultery." "You have heard it said... but I tell you..." He claimed to change the law. All these things, the miracles, were in order for the people to accept what He claimed to be Himself, what He claimed in front of the all Sanhedrim the night He died. "You will see Me coming on the clouds of heaven." And so MG says, "I would like to highlight within this change that comes about this companionship of believers, 4 points that are impossible for human beings. He says, "St. Paul highlights this factor in his letter to the Galatians when he writes of us addressing ourselves to God with the word, 'Abba, Father.' But Romano Guardini observes the same thing with a greater scope. I'm speaking about love for God, personal love for God, this is the first

change, personal love for the Mystery, I am also speaking of love for Christ: look at the possibility, the reality, which after 2000 years this man of 2000 years ago can be so loved with such creative efficaciousness, with the possibility of an emotional affection, with a strength of attachment that one can't find even among lovers." And he quotes Guardini, who says, "Christian faith is born as a personal attachment to Christ. There's a certain analogy that can inform a person as to what this attachment is, when in his life a person acquires an existential significance. There is such a powerful way that this may happen that all the world, destiny, and duty are fulfilled in the beloved. The beloved is as though contained in everything. Everything makes one remember the beloved and to everything the beloved gives meaning. In the experience of a great love, all the world is within the relationship between the 'I' and the 'you,' and everything becomes an event within its ambit, even the unity of the 'I.'" And MG continues, "This is what happens: the I experiences unity and this is impossible: that man loves God, not in a moment of emotion, but according to the content of a self-awareness, according to a judgment, according to an affectivity that doesn't envy anything of that being in love between a man and a woman in its most beautiful, balanced, intense and pure moment. This is the greatest thing because if the human dimension is the relationship with destiny, that the relationship with Destiny be lived like this is not to be found anywhere else." And so we go back to those first lectures and we think about MG's insistence on the need for us, as human beings to relate to this Mystery, to discover the final sense of all things, to establish the connection between me and that which gives reason and justification for my living, that relationship to be established between me and that Mystery be one of love, and a love that does not have to be embarrassed even in front of the most passionate love between man and woman, even the most pure love, the love most filled with sacrifice and beauty between man and woman, that this love between the person and the mystery needn't envy anything about the love between man and woman. MG says this is impossible and yet if you look at history of the Church you find people consumed with this love. Read *The Confessions* of Saint Augustine, read Saint Therese of Avila, read Saint John of Cross, Saint Therese of Lisieux, any of the great Saints and see this burning love between the person and their destiny. And remember MG's insistence since the first lecture that these are things that have to be verified in our experience as human beings. This is the way I can be sure that God has been made flesh, that the Mystery has come to my existence, because I can experience this kind of love, this kind of love for my destiny. The second change is the capacity for certainty, and MG emphasizes that is not talking about certainty as stubbornness, but clear and luminous certainty, capable of giving reasons for itself, persevering, patient, embracing, universal, catholic. MG gives a quite heavy judgment about the situation of the Church, he quotes Paul VI, who says, "I have the sensation that from some crevice the smoke of Satan has entered the Temple of God." And MG says, "This is a quote not from John Paul II or Ratzinger, but from Paul VI. There is doubt, uncertainty, problems, restlessness, dissatisfaction and combat within the Church itself. Nobody trusts the Church any longer: instead we all trust the first pagan who wants to speak to us from some newspaper or social movement so that we might beg him for the formula that is the truth of life and we don't notice that *we* are already the lords and masters of this formula. Doubt has entered our consciousness and it has entered through windows that were opened to let in the light. In the Church there currently reigns this state of uncertainty. Christ didn't come to launch us out on some search; we were capable of that by ourselves. He came and said, 'I am the Way and the Truth and the Life.'" Then MG goes back to Paul VI: "We believe in something that is supernatural, the devil, who has come into the world exactly in order to upset and suffocate the fruits of the Ecumenical Council, in order to impede the Church from exploding into the hymn of joy at having the fullness of awareness of who she is. We would wish to communicate to you this charism of certainty that the Lord gives to the one who unworthily represents Him upon this earth." And MG comments on this quote of Paul VI: "A capacity for certainty: I repeat and insist, not as stubbornness, but as a constructive, creative openness. A capacity for certainty: I believe in God, I believe in Christ, I believe in the Spirit, I believe in the Church. Man needs certainty like nothing else, also because

without certainty, it's impossible to construct anything. Then St. Augustine got it right when he noted that the one who would use doubt as the foundation of everything contradicts himself because if I say that everything is uncertain, I make a statement of certainty."

The third point of change that MG says we can see in the community of believers, the unity of Christians is mercy. And he says, "Christian mercy isn't 'Let's forgive each other; let's forget about it;' it's the opposite. It's the transfiguration, the transformation. 1,000 times I do wrong and 1,000 times I begin again, such that my mistakes become wisdom, they become an experience of greatness. The apostles asked Him, 'How many times do we have to forgive?' 'Always.' Because '70 times 7' means 'always.' Not for nothing the fundamental Christian category is resurrection. Because within every action, even one that carries within itself a great ideal, there is death, decay; it decays because of a kind of unavoidable gravity. Hence, we should feel – if we were always attentive – a pain of incompleteness in every action. When these mistakes become grave and they start to happen 1,000 times: 1,000 times you do wrong and 1,000 times you begin again. The fact of sin – no matter what kind and how often they are committed – is never a reason to stop but it is one more reason to start again. The optimism of humanism that begins in the 1400 is ridiculous, beyond just being a lie, in front of Christian optimism, which passes by means of sin and the cross and is made possible by a greater Presence. Because man is like someone who has been sick for a long time and can't walk anymore by himself and – bingo! – out of the blue someone arrives upon whom he can lean, upon whom he can put his hand on his shoulder; he fastens himself to his beloved for life, so he can always begin to walk again. This is Christ: God made companion to man!" MG quotes the psalm 'My soul clings to You, Your right hand holds me fast.' And MG says, this is the most fascinating image of the amorous relationship between a man and a woman and it is this image that suits the man who in his weakness, fragility and sin, believes in Christ. And after a year, 5 years, 10 years one looks back and says, 'It always seemed as though I was immobile in the same point and instead I've become different in the way I understand things, in the way I do things, in the way I act. My God, I'm so different!' By means of this mercy man becomes, has the experience of becoming always more himself."

And so third factor that MG says, we can verify as the truth of the fact that God has become man, is this indomitable capability to begin again, never crushed by our weakness, never stopped by our sin, never impeded by any fragility, weakness, no matter how grave, no matter how habitual. I remember once I went to confession in Italy and the priest asked me how long since your last confession? And I said, "I was here just yesterday, Father." And he said, "Beautiful! That's the way, isn't it? Every day, every day, we have to come and say to Him, 'Give me your mercy, give me your mercy again.'" I don't think you can find anything like this anywhere, except in a Roman Catholic confessional. Finally MG says that the fourth and final change that he wants to talk about in this lesson is the transformation of the world. He says, "So we reach the final consequence: the world is transformed, the structure of all relationships, the structure of the relationship in the family, the structure of the relationship in the life shared together whether they be at home or in the city, in the nation or in the entire world. There are fascinating and demonstrative points that witness to this change and not only during the Middle Ages."

And here I would like to mention, as a teacher of history just a few examples of them, the hospital as it was born, did not exist in history before Christianity. Women, as person, did not exist in history before Christianity. So much so if you go and read the book "The Rise of Christianity" by Rodney Stark, who was a sociologist, printed in 2000, he wanted to understand how it is possible that in 300 years an Empire would be converted to an entire new religion, and not by some "fiat" of the state. One of the things that he identified is that at a certain point in the history of the Roman Empire it was very difficult to find women to marry. Augustus had to put in reforms that would encourage people to have children, because at that time there were many forms of contraception and in particular infanticide as in

the classical world was. And so Stark says, there were no woman to marry or just few of them, because in particular we have found sewage pipes clogged with baby bones, in certain cities that have been uncovered from the Roman Empire, clogged with baby bones, and he says, we can assume that the vast majority of babies were girl babies. Woman, as person, does not exist in outside Christianity. And I could go on and on. But MG says, “And the goal of this change is clear: to render more human the life of man, to render more human the life of the world, the life of our brothers, those who believe and unbelievers. This is the goal of the Church as John Paul II said – and with no little courage: to build the civilization of truth and love. To realize a civilization in the here and now, not in the afterlife.” So MG says, look at witness of these believers who from the time they show upon the scene of history, seek to build a better world for everyone. One of first records that we have of the Roman Christian comes from the plague that broke out of the city of Rome. Generally when plague broke out, one of first to leave the town were the physicians, and they left the town, because the logic of the world is, if I am going to die in the plague, who is going to help the people who survive? Reasonable enough. I have to stay alive because what about people who survive? Those people need physician, and moreover, the art of being physician will finish with me. Not only that but the family had to leave the house and whatever members might be sick because the logic was the same. If my children are sick, but not all of them, if the one that are not sick does not go away from the one that are sick, my entire family could die and my name be wiped off face of earth. And so they would leave the sick children lying in their beds. One of the first things that struck Romans was that Christians stayed with there sick and went and get those not Christians and took care of them as well. MG says, so it is not that something has to change in the beyond, something changes here in this world, he says, this is the same as the Christian concept of ‘merit.’ It is by means of my making this world better that man becomes worthy of heaven, beginning with the relationship with one’s own mother and father, girlfriend, boyfriend or friend.”

And MG finishes his *tour de force* about the life of the Church and what Christianity is with the briefest of comments on the idea of movement, with what a movement is in the Church. He quotes John Paul II, who says, “It’s significant how the Spirit, in order to continue with the man of today the dialogue begun by God in Christ, has raised up so many contemporary movements within the Church.” And MG comments on this saying, “Because the Church, in as much as it’s an organism, a structure, is not what shakes man up, because a structure does not provoke man, the structure is the guardian of a life, the riverbed is the guardian of water, and the Church is the guardian of the living water. The water is the Spirit; so in order to find the Church, you need to go where there are people that live, who are alive.”

And he gives an example, just before finishing this lecture, of a movement in the town where he comes from, Desio, where there was a priest who had become famous in the town in particular among a certain group of women, a large group of women, 40, 50, 60 women in the town, regularly went to confession to this man, and MG comments on how those were the liveliest women in that parish. He says, the life of the town was not the Parish; the life of the town was those 40 or 50 women who went to confession with that priest. And he says, I thank God that I was the son of one of those women, but the life was those woman. The parish was a structure that protected, guarded and gave home to that life. And so finishes by saying, “Christian life wasn’t a Parish; in my town it was the parish inasmuch these women were inside of it. Here lies the importance of this method of the Spirit that the Pope continually underlines, as it is in the life of the Church. Because the life of the Church was revived in all centuries – particularly in those of decadence – by religious orders, by religious congregations (meaning by them the third orders—the Franciscans came about like this—meaning a reality of people that joined together because they were reawakened by an example of life). It’s through communitarian realities or companionship or friendship, in which the faith becomes what it has to—that is, something

that determines life—and it's there that you learn that Christ is present; you understand it in the sign of His living body. It's also for this reason that the Church says, 'At least one time a week should we get together to Mass.' Any less than this and you die, that is, it's a mortal sin."

And so MG finishes by saying, if we are interested to verify this hypothesis, if we take seriously the question of our humanity, the throbbing of our heart inside of us, the wound which is our existence, if we take seriously the difficulty finding ourselves alive, if we take seriously our hearts, we cannot help but taking seriously the fact of those people who proclaimed that the mystery, which is the reason for the existence of everything has become man, has become encounter-able, and where can I encounter and verify Him today, now, here, in the Church and He gives those ways so I can verify myself that He is present through my own change, through the mercy in my life, through the capability to begin again, from my love for God, from my certainty and from my ability to change world, to impact the world. And he says, "Fine, but where in the Church can I find that? I have to go to the livest part of the Church because the Church is an institution but the life of the Church is a spirit and we need the spirit, which is the light that animates the institution of the Church in the movements, in those groups of people who are more alive than other group of people within the Church itself." With those group of people, in their faces and in their friendship, I can begin to verify this change, I can begin to say with certainty with myself, the Mystery is made flesh, I know Him, I love Him, He picks me up, I'm certain of this, He picks me up and allows me to begin again, He allows me to change the circumstance in which I find myself; He allows me to change the entire world.

And so this is the point at which MG ends the series of lectures and we can say he finishes his great proposal to us as what Christianity is and why it is interesting to us as human beings. I thank you for your participation, especially those of you who were present the entire series, I thank you for your presence and for your participation and I can only say that this is a poor presentation of something which is so more powerful and convincing. You can find more about the works of MG through the publications by McGill University Press and Crossroads and even more importantly through the life of the movement that was given birth to through his life, the life of the movement, Communion and Liberation, which continues to grow herein US and throughout the world. Thanks.