

1. "TRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE"

“What brought you here? What bonds you to this experience?”

In the beginning of high school I abandoned the Movement. I did it because I didn't see anything that belonged to me. I felt like a stranger in my own life. It made me want to escape and get far away from everything, and live according to my own rules. Unfortunately, from my point of view, if I don't knock my head up against something, I don't recognize it. In fact, in the beginning of the third year, I realized that I had knocked my head a lot. Really hard. I realized that my life had ever so lightly hit rock bottom. But then something happened, not an illumination, vision or who knows what other spiritual stuff. I simply met some people who forced me to dig deeper into my humanity, giving me the awareness that God had already granted me the greatest gift in the world: freedom. These people let me make mistakes because they were certain that I would realize that deep down a note of love was missing, something that called me to a greater good. That was the beginning of my experience, but this encounter is not the recipe for happiness. It is the beginning of a journey where you should never lower your gaze, as fortunately happened to me, because it is a continual search that never ends.

I lived the summer to the max. I also had opportunities to live life in a “true” way, from my point of view, also with simple daily encounters that set me in front of a model of life, »

» a way of being in front of reality, a model that I couldn't and didn't want to ignore. I had an almost perfect “CL-ian” holiday, with the community vacation, trips, evenings, the Meeting. I practically never stopped. At the end of every vacation, however, something bothered me inside, a bit of longing, I thought, or nothing will be “the usual longing.”

But then, the return back home. I think it was one of the worst homecomings of my vacations. It wasn't longing, or a lack, or an emptiness. It was a huge void, a wound that was so big, a cry that was so strong that I couldn't suffocate it. All those feelings of emptiness that had accumulated over the summer were assailing me and I realized something: it had been a very long time since I had said a prayer. Not a *Hail Mary* or an *Our Father*, NO. A true prayer, a dialogue with the Lord, a moment when I was face to face, to understand who I am. Maybe in this period I did “everything” but I lost myself. This EVERYTHING, without Christ, is emptiness. In fact, just as He gives everything to me, so He asks everything of me. I realized that I was living Christianity “without” Christ. The first thing that I found was His presence, but as time passed I found so many other things that I forgot Him. How can I live the Movement without forgetting Him? How can I keep His presence alive in me?

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