

CL is Not a Lobby, But a Force for Change

By Andrea Simoncini*

Dear Editor,

I ask that you let me intervene, because Communion and Liberation continues to be described by the press as a political “party” or “lobby.” Regarding this distorted image, I would like to try to offer a positive idea of what it is and what its real contribution can be, including to the political debate.

The aim of the thousands of people who share CL’s proposal today is not to constitute lobbies or interest groups. In truth, today there exists a question that is much more radical and decisive, and that no one—politicians and journalists included—can avoid. It is, “How can one live?” What is it that gives a man or a woman the strength to continue to hope, when everything says the contrary? Not to realize how burning these questions are, and how they constitute the very fabric of daily life, is already the obvious symptom of the extent to which politics has undergone an irreversible detachment from practical life (that is, “political” in the true sense).

You will say, “This is a spiritualistic, abstract response.” Precisely the opposite is true! In order to become aware of this, let’s look at the Italian political panorama. The landscape is that of the film *The Day After*: a world populated by rival bands, ready to maul each other for the least advantage. There is no longer any interest in debate, because everyone already knows how it will end: for one side, it’s the other side’s fault, and vice versa; everyone is only looking for a scapegoat.

But if we are truly realistic, then we have to admit, when looking at ourselves in the mirror, that a sort of mutant radiation has struck us all. It is as if each of us today were devoid of energy; there are no longer any reasons that push us to take on a responsibility, be it private or public. When faced with needs, the first question is, “What is the government doing?” or “What are ‘they’ doing?” Well, confronted with a condition of this nature, what can put this energy back in motion? What can reawaken a subject capable of initiative, even in politics? Now you can understand that the question, “How can one live?” is not abstract. What is truly needed today, in fact, is an ideal hypothesis that is very attractive and human, for which it is worth sacrificing and building. And so we come to the decisive point: politics cannot respond to this need, let alone anti-politics.

The issue is more radical. It has to do with what can restore man’s stature, his greatness—which, paradoxically, is the fact of being limited, but being able to “use” his needs as a propellant for a more intense search and a more intelligent building.

Communion and Liberation was born precisely from the intuition that a Christian faith that was unable to respond to these questions about life would, sooner or later, be swept away by history. The challenge for which CL exists is this: to show the pertinence of faith to the real questions of life. Faith, in fact, has an unmistakable characteristic: it reawakens the human, that is, man's capacity to live the ordinary circumstances of life without suffocating. This is precisely why a truly lived faith can make a real contribution to our situation today. Faith is not *a priori*, but is a verification that is born from the encounter with Christ, and that is convincing in the trial of facts. Only by being itself can CL contribute to everyone's life, certainly not by "directing" the actions of others or by elaborating political strategies, but, as we have always repeated, with its very existence, because the life of a Christian community is in itself a "political"—public—fact.

And how does a Christian community contribute to public life? By generating subjects capable of assuming a responsibility in society, even in politics. Of course, the political attempts of people are fallible—we have always defined them "ironic"—and can therefore reveal themselves to be mistaken, because they are born from the freedom of individuals and trigger each one's responsibility. But any parent well knows how painful, yet absolutely necessary, it is to respect the freedom of one's children and never substitute oneself for their personal risk.

Pope Francis summed up this task in his interview with *La Civiltà Cattolica*: "We must not focus on occupying the spaces where power is exercised, but rather on starting long-run historical processes. We must initiate processes rather than occupy spaces. God manifests Himself in time and is present in the processes of history. This gives priority to actions that give birth to new historical dynamics. And it requires patience, waiting." What interests us are not spaces to occupy, but that the person can start to change. After all, we were born from the friendship with Fr. Giussani, who always reminded us that the forces that change history are the same ones that change the human heart.

**Presidential Council of Communion and Liberation*