

SPECIAL EDITION
REBUILDING TOGETHER

1980 2020

DEVOID OF
WONDER
WE REMAIN
DEAF TO THE
SUBLIME

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RIMINI PALACONGRESSI



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“Devoid of wonder, we remain deaf to the sublime”

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We have all had the experience of finding, in the course of an ordinary day, within the usual hustle and bustle of life, something that strikes us, something unexpected and surprising: a face, an encounter, or an event that you could say “shatters the veneer” of the already known and offers a new and different perspective on the plans and expectations we have. In those moments, it is as if reality becomes transparent, allowing a meaning, perspective and depth we are usually unaware of to shine forth. In those moments, the burden of existence—which is not just the result of the various problems life brings us, but above all the lack of a sufficient meaning for life—gives way to a promise that attracts us.

Meeting 2020 seeks to focus—using the beautiful, yet dramatic words of Jewish philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel cited by Fr. Giussani in *The Religious Sense*—on that “wonder” through which reality touches and surprises us, and thanks to which all that we think we understand and know how to handle, or that we are always trying to fit into our boxes, reveals its mysterious attraction: the simple and dizzying realization that things are, and are given to us. They are given to us gratuitously, and we ourselves are given, because we are constantly being called into being, our “I” reawakened by the encounter with reality, with objects and with people.

Without that wonder, reality is opaque and taken for granted; and our “I” is reduced to our capacity and our performance; then, finally, sadly reduced to our incapacity and our failures. The game seems lost. In a time of widespread nihilism, in which meaninglessness is like second-hand smoke we breathe in, often without even grasping the origin of our subtle discomfort, the whole problem of humanity—and with it the many problems of the world—is concentrated in this possibility of us returning to wonder. Not a sentimental and fleeting emotion, but that impact of reality on our reason and on our heart. The impact that signals a path for us to follow, a method and a new gaze to face all of life.

Humanity can only be rekindled if something or someone tears it out of nothingness. Not an intellectual idea or a moral duty, but an event that can overtake life, an incarnate “ideal” that happens in time and space: a historical presence, in flesh and bones, that corresponds so much to our desire for life that it seizes us and sets us free.

The sublime is the voice of reality calling to us, not something from another world, but here in this world, as a promise that awaits our attention and availability—the “poverty of spirit” described in the Gospel—in order to make the Mystery that inhabits all things present and visible, experienceable.

Looking at the problems of the world, at all levels, especially cultural and communicative, economic, social and political problems, while remaining deaf to the sublime, means failing to understand the challenge and the task that await us. The wonder that flows from the sublime; that is, from something that awakens our person and sustains us in our desire, is the most concrete, and in fact the most productive element in facing these times—difficult and fascinating times, as all great moments of crisis in the history of humanity have turned out to be.

The contribution the Meeting seeks to offer is a new step in friendship—renewing the history that has endured for over forty years—with all those who perceive life’s urgent call and a hunger for meaning in life. A step in that friendship of people who attend to the call of being, who are committed to interpreting its signs, and who are educated to savor its beauty. That friendship is not only what the Meeting would like to offer to everyone, but is also, above all, what it hopes for from all people, in order to learn once again how to live in wonder.