

Disarming Beauty: Essays on Faith, Truth, and Freedom. By Julián Carrón. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017. xx + 279 pages. \$25.00. doi: 10.1017/hor.2019.12

The Fraternity of Communion and Liberation (CL) was born in Milan, Italy, through the efforts of Luigi Giussani to rekindle a love of Christ in the hearts of Italian high school and college students in the 1950s and 1960s. Monsignor Giussani presented Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, not as something that happened long ago in a far-off land, but as an ever-present event capable of fulfilling human life here and now. The visible sign of the event is the communion of the church. Participation in it must be freely accepted, never imposed. Christians and Christian communities that fully live out the faith in all its beauty, Giussani argued, are capable of building (or rebuilding) families, cultures, and nations supportive of human life.

Father Julián Carrón, Giussani's successor, defends and explains this view in the recent English translation of his book *Disarming Beauty*. Composed of sixteen relatively short chapters that discuss the intellectual and cultural challenges facing the church in the twenty-first century, the book's goal is to clarify the fundamental attractiveness of reality, including the great Mystery of God's entrance into history—His taking on human flesh, crucifixion, and rising from the dead. The chapters move from broad philosophical topics, such as the collapse of Enlightenment thought, to the more specific difficulties that families, communities, and universities are facing in Western democracies, particularly in Europe. Communication, education, and politics are all given special attention. Carrón makes clear that Christianity cannot successfully contribute to these or any other areas of human life if it presents itself as a set of propositions or rules to be accepted in the abstract; rather, the gospel must be proclaimed as an event that we can encounter each day, particularly through our relationships with others. A man's love for his wife, for example, draws him to a reality that surpasses his wife. Her beauty points to beauty itself. Parents and teachers can likewise serve as witnesses of truth and goodness for children, pointing them to truth and goodness. Friendship, in its various forms, is thus a major theme of the book. It is through our relationships that we are most likely to overcome our apprehensions about temporal life and to be attracted to the eternal.

One does not have to be familiar with the CL to appreciate Carrón's effort to get to the heart of the Christian message. He reminds all Christians that Christ did not give us an academic proof or a book of ethics. Rather, he gave himself—his body and his blood. This does not mean that reason and morality are unimportant. Carrón is careful to show throughout the book the importance of reason, and he uses it ably to support the moral teachings

of the church. But he does so rooted in the person of Christ. From this standpoint, he believes, the teacher can inspire the student by making the study of reality attractive; a husband can love his wife without expecting her to fulfill his deepest desires, which only God can do; and parents can raise their children to be adults prepared for life, rather than perpetually bored adolescents without purpose. Such relationships can greatly improve our political communities, but Carrón is not calling for social action. We do not love Christ and neighbor in order to change the world, though the world will likely change when we open ourselves to the reality of Christ's love.

Disarming Beauty is thus a valuable work for all concerned with communicating the Catholic faith in modern times, which is increasingly hostile to the gospel. Scholars and teachers—not just of theology, but other disciplines as well—will find a sincere effort to think through present challenges in light of the faith. Many of these challenges are new, but their solution is not. When authentically lived, truth, goodness, and beauty are attractive. They have been leading us to God as far as our memory stretches.

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Solidarity with the World: Charles Taylor and Hans Urs von Balthasar on Faith, Modernity, and Catholic Mission. By Carolyn A. Chau. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016. xvi + 237 pages. \$31.00 (paper).

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Chau argues that reading Charles Taylor and Hans Urs von Balthasar in tandem provides important resources to understand the obstacles and opportunities for effective Christian missionary work. She argues that Taylor's analysis of Western secularity presents a critical opening for the church's evangelizing efforts, while Balthasar presents the ecclesial vision to respond in a faithful and credible way to this work. In addition to an introduction and conclusion, Chau's book consists of four chapters: the first two devoted to Taylor's analysis of secularity and the challenges this worldview presents to the church; the third and fourth chapters present Balthasar's theological anthropology and his vision of a witnessing church.

Chau does an admirable job tracing Charles Taylor's development of his understanding of Western secularity through his major books (i.e., *Sources of the Self*, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, and *A Secular Age*). In particular, Chau highlights Taylor's analysis of the cultural matrix that makes discussion of transcendence difficult, if not impossible, because secularism operates in a worldview that lives within an "immanent frame." This perspective closes off