



LIVING FAITH IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A keynote speech on the topic, followed by eyewitness accounts of the *Rimini Meeting for Friendship among Peoples*, the largest week-long public cultural Catholic event in the world

Keynote Speaker: John SEXTON—President of New York University

Speakers: **Brad GREGORY**—Associate Professor of History, University of Notre Dame
Emilia GUARNIERI—Professor of Medicine and Ethics, University of Chicago
Joseph WEILER—University Professor, New York University School of Law

Saturday, January 16, 2010 at 8:30 PM
New York Marriott Marquis, 6th Floor – Times Square
1535 Broadway, New York City

Bacich: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Christopher Bacich and I am the National Coordinator of Communion and Liberation here in the United States. I want to welcome you this evening to the first event of New York Encounter, a cultural festival sponsored and organized by Communion and Liberation, a movement in the Catholic Church founded by a high school teacher back in the 1950s who wanted to communicate to his students a passion for everything human—art, literature, science, law, politics, everything. And so here in New York City this evening we kick off New York Encounter with the same desire—to witness a passion for everything that is really human because we believe that by witnessing a passion, a love for everything that is human, a hope in everything that is truly human, that this is the best way to give witness, reason to our faith in the public square.

Indeed, this is the topic this evening—faith in the public square, and we are truly fortunate and honored to have with us the President of such a prominent institution like New York University this evening. President John Sexton or, as he prefers to be called, simply John, will begin this evening with some opening remarks about the question of faith in the public square.

John Sexton, the fifteenth President of New York University, also is the Benjamin Butler Professor of Law and NYU Law School's Dean Emeritus, having served as Dean for 14 years. He joined the Law School's faculty in 1981, was named the School's Dean in 1988, and was designated the University's President in 2001. President Sexton is Chair of the Independent Colleges and Universities of New York, Chair of the New York Academy of Sciences, and Vice Chair of the American Council on Education. He has served as the Chairman of the Board of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York (2003-2006) and Chair of the Federal Reserve Systems Council of Chairs (2006). President Sexton received a B.A. in History (1963) from Fordham College; an M.A. in Comparative Religion (1965) and a Ph.D. in History of American Religion (1978) from Fordham University; and a J.D. magna cum laude (1979) from Harvard Law School. He is an author of the nation's leading casebook on *Civil Procedure* in addition to several other books, numerous chapters, articles and Supreme Court briefs. He holds honorary degrees from Fordham University, Saint Francis College; Saint John's University, University of Rochester and Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. In July 2008 he was named a *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur*, the national order of the Legion of Honor of France.

So I ask you please to welcome warmly John Sexton.

Sexton: Thank you very, very much. It's a great honor for me to be here and to address a group that comes together to honor that which makes us most human, our spirits, and to put all of us on a pathway where we can more easily touch the more transcendent things in what it means to be a human.

I've been asked to make some preliminary remarks that might be appropriate to set a context for your time together, and it's caused me to do a bit of reflection. If I were to give a title to this, and my remarks will be informal, so perhaps they don't merit a title, but if I were to give a title to it, I would call it "Secular Ecumenism," not "Secular Humanism," but "Secular Ecumenism." You might subtitle it: "Honoring Great Teachers," and along the way I will honor two of my great teachers in particular as they brought me to what I call the ecumenical spirit.

Of course I would be remiss if I didn't say how pleased I was to be on the same podium with Joseph Weiler, my colleague from NYU. Fourteen years as Dean at NYU Law School would have been worth it if only one professor had joined the law school faculty during my time as Dean, and that person would be Joseph. He's an extraordinary man who incarnates the spirit of secular ecumenism about which I'll speak.

Let me move on to my remarks. I have to set the stage. I look at my audience, and I'm going to set the stage with what for some of you might be pre-history. I'm going to move the clock back more than fifty years. The setting, as you can probably tell from this accent, is Brooklyn, New York. This is the world of Brooklyn Irish Catholicism in the 50s. It's a time when you really could believe that Brooklyn was the center of the universe. And we all believed that the Dodgers were the only team that really played baseball. So this is a story about that world, but there was a touch in it of what I could call "unconscious ecumenism." Now remember, this is a good ten years before the Vatican Council; it's a good ten years before we thought of the ecumenical movement. Pius XII was Pope, not John the XXIII. But there was this unconscious ecumenism in the world in which I was shaped. So, for example, I was, without knowing what it meant, in fact, I didn't even know what I was, I was a *Shabbes goy* for the twin cantors, the Jewish family that lived next door, and there is a way in which you can all go home tonight and feel that you've met an historical figure, not because of any of the things that are in my resume, but because you are looking at the Jackie Robinson of the B'nai B'rith Little League! I broke the religion line.

That having been said, it was still the case at the Jesuit high school where I went to high school in Brooklyn in 1956 that an extraordinarily progressive, enlightened man wrote on the blackboard the words, "Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus" which means, "Outside the Church there is no salvation." And when I went up to that priest and said to him, (I won't use his name; he's still alive, and is a hero of progressivism.) "Father, does that mean that my best friend, Jerry Epstein, (the son of the twin cantors next door for whom I turned on the lights on Shabbes), does that mean that he can't go to heaven?" The answer was, "He will not go to heaven unless you convert him. Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus."

Fortunately at that Jesuit high school, and a good ten years before the Vatican Council started, I encountered my first great teacher and, for at least two generations, because the school closed in 1972, the generations of those of us who went to Brooklyn Prep, if you just said the word "Charlie," it would cause people to feel very, very good. This man Charlie was extraordinary. Somebody wrote about him, "He had the body of Orson Wells, the voice of James Earl Jones, and the soul of Saint Francis of Assisi." A Jesuit wrote about him, even though Charlie was a lay man, and Jesuits respect few other than members of the club, "He was the first fully realized Christian I ever met." At his eulogy, which I gave, I was followed by a Jesuit who spoke about him and said that he would move sainthood for Charlie; he'd move his beatification and canonization except that "sainthood would cramp Charlie's style." And if you want a sense of Charlie, pick up the wonderful little mystical Catholic book from the 20s by Miles Connelly, *Mr. Blue*. Charlie was Mr. Blue as Connelly describes him. By the way, that book was part of the inspiration for that wonderful Jimmy Stewart movie, *It's a Wonderful Life* by Frank Capra.

But there was Charlie the experience. I still remember his address: 212 Lincoln Road, four blocks from school. I still remember his phone number: Ingersoll 2-8054. And we knew that we could enter Charlie's brownstone and

the magical world that was there—there might be an opera playing that we had never heard, or a food being cooked that we had never tasted, or a poem being analyzed by a group of our peers—as long as we did the extra assignment that was posted outside of the teachers’ room. And his motto was, “Play another octave of the piano, boys. There are notes you haven’t played.” So he began to press in us a kind of attitude of openness and curiosity that wasn’t characteristic of this closed world of Brooklyn Irish Catholicism.

The Jesuits didn’t know what to do with him, so they took twelve of us, the twelve that they thought were the smartest in our year, and they gave us Charlie for an hour a day, five days a week, for our sophomore, junior and senior years of high school for a course they just called “Charlie.” And he started with the cave paintings of Altamira and percussion music, and he started moving through the centuries doing simultaneously—this was the 1950s before anybody talked about interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary studies. And he did simultaneously with a fair amount of accuracy history, literature, art and music. I say a fair amount of accuracy because Charlie always said to us, even when he was teaching us history, “Boys, don’t confuse truth with facts.” Joseph will tell you that I always told my colleagues at the Law School that they were far too concerned with facts and not enough with truth, and that came directly from Charlie.

And I remember the day that this came back to me after I got credit for doing it, to open up NYU Law School’s awareness of law in other cultures. It came back to me as I was climbing the Pyramid of Teotihuacan with my then 9-year-old daughter. That would be 1997. And as I’m climbing it with Katie, I remember and I hear Charlie’s voice coming back over the decades, the pyramids of Giza were on the wall, the slides that he had. We’d read *The Book of the Dead*, and he bellowed to us, “Boys, you will never see these pyramids because you can’t drive to them.” You see, we were all poor kids in Brooklyn. We couldn’t get on a plane or a boat. “But there are pyramids south of here, built by a great culture; you haven’t heard of it because the damn British didn’t rob these pyramids for their museums.” When everyone was talking about Euro-centrism...he just taught us to think in ways that were different. I remember the tim (in fact, I’ve passed the advice on to my own children) he said to us, “Boys, on the first date, find out her SAT score. Beauty fades, but the need for conversation never does.”

So Charlie had prepared me, had prepared us for the Vatican Council when it came, and John XXIII gave us that wonderful word *ecumenism*. And by now I was at Fordham, and Fordham was a special place. The great Jesuit theologian, some would say scientist, although his real note was as a philosopher and theologian, Teilhard de Chardin was on the Fordham campus. We’ve all read, I hope you’ve all read—if you haven’t, read *The Phenomenon of Man*, *The Divine Milieu*. We carry these around with us in the spirit of Father Teilhard. And here it was still now the end of the 50s, the beginning of the 60s. This is just discovered that a Catholic could be President of the United States. We thought that was impossible. And Teilhard de Chardin was talking about “planetization,” and the way humankind was coming together in a kind of communication/transportation revolution, before anyone ever used the word “globalization.”

What he did was something special, and it’s the core of what I want to say to you today. He took the doctrine of evolution that he had encountered as a scientist, and united it as a metaphor with Catholic theology. And he talked about “critical thresholds of progress” in the evolution spiritually of humankind as a whole, summarized easily in three words. When you pass through a critical threshold, there’s *emergence* of something new, and then the *divergence* into a multiplicity of forms of it, and then finally the *convergence* on some new critical threshold which he called the convergent point for which we were all yearning for as humans at that moment, *point omega*, which he saw foreshadowed as happens in the evolutionary process, as a Christian theologian, he saw foreshadowed in Christ. And we were all in the process of being “Christified.” This was the force of human history as he saw it—a remarkably progressive notion of the spiritual evolution of humankind.

And here, for reasons too complicated to explain here, I began, in 1963, the Vatican Council in full force, my study at Fordham for my doctorate in religion, and here I encountered the second great teacher, Ewert Cousins

who died about two years ago. Ewert in 1963, to give you a sense of him, was then probably the leading expert in the world on Saint Anselm, a single medieval father of the Church. By 1983, two years after I had arrived at NYU, I went to the United Nations to celebrate the publication of Ewert's 60-volume set on world spirituality which had twenty-five faith traditions in it. This was a migration of which John XXIII had dreamed. And Ewert began to talk to me, not so much in his early years, but in his later life, as he and I, (now I was at the Law School, and now I was trying to persuade Joseph to come), and Ewert began to talk to me about the way he viewed through the lens of Teilhard the history of humankind. And he picked up on Karl Jasper's phrase, the "axial age." Jasper's, of course, had spoken simply about an axial age, the time between 800 years before the common era and 200 years after the beginning of the common era, that 1,000-year period from Plato to Confucius, from Elijah to Christ, where humankind emerged from the tribe and developed a robust sense of what it meant to be an individual. And Ewert said, "We have now entered a second axial age." Now notice the Teilhardian emergence, divergence, convergence. We have entered a second axial age and we are coming together as humankind now. We've developed this notion. I'm the President of the university in Greenwich Village, believe me, we have developed individuality very well. We've got that down. But what Ewert says is that we now have to create a community of communities. We have to bring humankind back together.

And that brings me to my final message, but it is the core of what I have to say. For me, just as Teilhard took a secular doctrine, evolution, and gave it rich religious meaning, there's a way of taking Teilhard and turning 180 degrees and getting an extraordinary view of the public forum through the eyes of Teilhard's doctrine. It seems to me that we have ended in this second axial age, a century, this century, the 21st Century, where the question of the century will be: Will we as humankind create an ecumenical society? Will we be able to create a community of communities? Planetization is here. Call it globalization if you will. The world has been miniaturized. It is now impossible to use gating strategies to separate ourselves from others. The question is, in this moment where the inscrutable other, the sometimes frustrating other, the sometimes fear-inspiring other, the inscrutable other is in our lives. How are we going to react? Are we going to react with fear? Are we going to see this as a clash of civilizations? Or are we going to embrace the ecumenical spirit? It's not hard for me with this accent to see New York City as the first example in an answer to that question: Can we create a community of communities? Not a melting pot, not a homogenization, but a community of communities, a truly ecumenical, secular order? New York City is the first city in the world that can say it has a child in its public school system born in each country in the world. Every country in the world is represented in the New York City Public School System, not by descendants of that country, but by children born there. Forty per cent of the citizens of this city were born in other countries. If you go out into the neighborhoods, you can taste the bread of any country, hear the prayers of any religion. We are a grand experiment of whether or not a community of communities can be developed.

At NYU, one of the reasons we attract a cosmopolitan person, an ecumenical person, like Joseph is because frankly, as a university we've embraced that city. We were founded almost 200 years ago to be in and of it, and we don't have a single gate, we don't have a campus, we don't have a place to which our students can retreat. Most of our buildings are not next to NYU buildings. We are in and of the city, and we don't do Division I sports because we are trying to create a community of communities, and Division I sports kind of gives a false veneer of community. Everybody in the same college chanting. Just one reason we don't do Division I sports. Another reason is because we were involved in the basketball scandals of the late 1950s! But this is this truth/fact and it's important that we tell a story that holds together, that is coherent.

So we've come full circle. *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*. "Father, will my friend Jerry Epstein, a Jew, be saved?" That question became very real to me because the most remarkable person I've ever met, a person I was privileged to love more and more every day for our more than three decades of marriage, was, is, Jewish, and died very suddenly just about three years ago. If there ever was a saint, it was Lisa. If there's an argument for immortality, it is her presence in my life that I experience daily as she calls me as a hyper-conscience to a better self. And I have no doubt that she is conscious of our continuing love, and joyful in it. And when I pass from

this plane to where she is—not some green pastures, but the real being in God where she is, that she will be there more fully than I, because she is more worthy, and no theological doctrine can deny that existential truth.

So we have kind of united this progressive view, and hopeful view for humankind, which certainly animates my life, it animates my university, it animates my ability to answer the question the Jesuits taught me to ask—am I living a useful life? And I hope also it animates the spirit of this conference.

Thank you very much.

Bacich: I can only thank you from the bottom of my heart and in the name of all of us here for such a moving and personal story because I recognize that there's a brotherhood with us. We too met a teacher, a high school teacher, Fr. Giussani, who was doing similar things with kinds in the 1950s before the Council. And so it's more than fortuitous, it's providential that we should meet this evening. So thank you again, John, for your presence here and your comments.

Part of our evening wants to be the public presentation here in New York for the first time of *the Meeting for Friendship among People* which is hosted in Rimini, Italy annually. This was a completely unplanned event that took place spontaneously in the hearts of some people who lived in the town of Rimini on the Italian Adriatic Coast because of their familiarity and their friendship with Msgr. Giussani. And we'll hear more about that in just a second. But now we're going to present a short video and as we continue with this theme of the witness of the faith in the public square, this "secular ecumenism," as we've just heard from John, we can see a little bit about what has already happened in our history there, one continent away.

Video is shown.

Bacich: With that video we just wanted to give you a brief introduction with just a few of the facts about the Meeting of Rimini.

I'm very, very pleased to introduce a friend and one of the founders of the Meeting from the community of Communion and Liberation in Rimini, Italy. Her name is Emilia Guarnieri. She was born in 1947 in Italy. She attended the faculty of Modern Humanities at the University of Bologna, where she graduated with honors in 1969. She immediately started to teach Italian literature and Latin in high school. In 1980 she was one of the co-founders of *the Meeting for Friendship among People* and she took on the role of head of the cultural program. Since 1993 she has also been the President of the foundation that organizes the week-long Rimini Meeting. Since then, she has been traveling around the world (just to mention a few cities—Moscow, Jerusalem, Paris, Berlin, Prague) as an ambassador for the Rimini Meeting and for the ideal that moves her and all those who help with the event. In 2003 the President of Italy conferred upon her the honor of "Commendatore dell'Ordine al Merito" of the Italian Republic and in 2004 she was awarded the "Sigismondo d'Oro," the most important honor of the City of Rimini in Italy. Emilia is married, has two daughters, and resides in Rimini.

Guarnieri: Dear friends, good evening. I would love to express myself in English, but sorry, I can't. Let me just say that I love New York; it is a wonderful city. For me the first time I come here is wonderful, wonderful. Finer than many Italian cities.

Thank you for this invitation which has given me the possibility to come to America for the first time. It is a great joy in addition to an incredible emotion to be able to be here and speak to you about the Rimini Meeting which means to speak about half of my life because ever since we began this adventure in the Summer of 1980, the Meeting has been for me one of the key factors through which I have learned to live and to know reality. God has granted me some amazing gifts in life—Fr. Giussani, my family, Fr. Carrón (in chronological order, the latest grace) and not least of all, the possibility of collaborating and putting together the Meeting. I refer to

Msgr. Giussani and Fr. Carrón with familiarity, as friends, because that is what they are for me, as for many of you.

Fr. Giussani founded Communion and Liberation, the international Catholic movement which is also one of the organizers of New York Encounter. Fr. Carrón has been guiding Communion and Liberation since the death of Fr. Giussani in 2005, and tomorrow in this hall he will present the latest book by Msgr. Giussani published in North America.

I didn't invent the Meeting; in fact, the idea came from my husband, Antonio. All I did was accept the invitation to be involved with it. It was the early summer of 1980. For some months a group of friends had been working on an idea, an idea that was born over pizza during the previous summer; that is, the idea to bring to Rimini, the great vacation capital of Italy, everything that was beautiful, true and interesting in the world—artists, personalities involved in the struggle for liberation, witnesses to the faith, scientists, those who were building new realities in the world.

Why did we want to encounter these people, and why did we have the presumption that they would accept our invitation? I think the answer to these two questions is the thread that could bind together the things that I'm going to say to you.

First of all, why meet people? Why encounter people? It was the beginning of the 1980s, and we were sick of ideologies, of debates, analysis, and above all we had learned through our experience that what we and all people need is an event of liberation, a present time that is already saved, and not the utopia of a future that still has to be built. Because we were already living this liberation; it was something present. We lived it in the friendship of Fr. Giussani and the movement of CL, in our friendship, and we truly wanted to go public so that everyone would be able to know it and encounter it.

In the face of the enemy of those years, which was ideology, just as in the face of today's enemy, which is nihilism, the most useful and true thing that people can communicate to others is the strength of their own experience, and of a capacity to build, which is an action. So for this reason, from the beginning we wanted to invite witnesses. That first year, those who came to Rimini were the Russian dissidents Maximov and Bukovsky, Abbé Pierre, the painter William Congdon. And in the following years, Eugène Ionesco, Tarkovsky, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, John Paul II, the Dalai Lama, Michelin, Lech Walesa, Cardinal Ratzinger, Li Lu from Tiananmen Square, and many others.

In recent years, people who have witnessed and have been guests and authoritative speakers at the Meeting, among them are some of the people I have had the honor of speaking among today—Professor Weiler, who by now is a better expert on the Meeting than me, Professor Sulmasy, who in 2004 gave us a beautiful witness on his medical profession, Professor Gregory, who last year spoke on the subject of education. I thank them for their presence also this evening. In the same way I want to thank the President of New York University, John Sexton, who has truly honored this presentation, and I really want to thank him sincerely for it.

It would take too long a time to list all the American guests of these recent years, but I'd like to mention some of those who, with their participation in the Meeting, allow us to boast of a friendship with your country: Justice Samuel Alito, Chaim Potok, Edmund Pellegrino, John Mather, Mary Ann Glandon, and many others.

From the very beginning, the Meeting has been an event of friendship. The word "friendship" which we inserted in the title of the logo of the Meeting—Meeting for Friendship among Peoples—expresses the certainty that dialogue, pluralism, which were themes that were very much in fashion in the 80s, and still are today, are important values, but friendship is something more. It comes before everything else because it's a free and open respect for the difference of the other, and it's the recognition that can make people meet one another, and is

above all that which they have in common, the desire for happiness and beauty, the thirst for truth and positivity in life. What Fr. Giussani and many of us call *the heart*. It's not by chance that the title of the next Meeting is: That nature which pushes us to desire great things is the heart.

There is a title to the Meeting. The title is a suggestion, a provocation with which those who participate in one way or another are called to compare with their experience. We ourselves are provoked to experience what the title suggests because if it's not true for us who work there, who meet people and invite them to come, if it's not true that what defines us is this striving for great things in the Meeting and in life, we wouldn't be able to give witness to the content of our proposal.

And each year, starting from the provocation of this title, in the last week of August in Rimini, we create a space and a time in which, thanks to the miracle (and it is a miracle!) of the free gift of over 3,000 volunteers, the experience of Christian faith displays its energy for encountering and for true dialogue, and, in this way, in action we see that one of the great dogmas of modern culture is proven false; that is, that identity is the enemy of universality.

The volunteers, (and we see that the opposite is true), is an identity that creates the capacity for encounter, for dialogue, for friendship with everyone. The volunteers, that is, these more than 3,000 people, come by now from many, many countries in the world. And this year, a group of American students will put together a display on the life of the great writer Flannery O'Connor, and so we consider these young people volunteers at the Meeting. And the volunteers are the most expressive point of the Meeting because it is precisely the lived experience of their charity, that is, of their affection towards Christ, which creates that human ambience where it's possible for everyone to feel welcomed and embraced. In 1982, when Fr. Giussani met with the volunteers of the Meeting, he said that the gift of self is the only way that man has to imitate God.

The second question is: Why do these people come? Why have so many people accepted our invitation? Why did we have the presumption to believe that this could happen? Why has the Meeting grown? We always have had one strength, that is, starting from reality, starting from what is already there, and what was already there and what is still there is our friendship, our history, and the web of relationships that this history has woven in the world, because whoever comes to the Meeting usually does so because some friend of his or hers has spoken to him or her about it. Professor Weiler knows that because he has spoken to so many friends about the Meeting, but in any case they come because there's some thread that binds them to Rimini, and so, therefore, their relationships become stable—stories of people who continue to grow together, initiatives that are developed like the relationship with the Templeton Foundation or with Gene Stavis and Salvatore Petrosino at the School of Visual Arts, together with whom, for the last three years of the Meeting, we've organized a very successful short subject international film festival. And I see also Simonetta who has been a great mover and shaker behind this whole thing.

We've never made great calculations on these relationships. Relationships grow because friendships grow because experience has proved right away to us that only in focusing on the heart and on experience can people truly get together and become friends. And so many of us have become friends. And I assure you that being here this evening is truly for me a great emotion because to be here is truly to see this friendship and how it grows. And some of my ex-students are here, and it was hard for me not to mention them this evening because they are like sons and daughters for me. And to see so many friends from Italy, and Americans who have come to the Meeting in these years, is truly to physically see what so often we say, that we believe, that when one joins together around what is true, it creates friendships and relationships that have no limit. And those who participate in the Meeting, have the experience of meeting something that has no boundaries, and for us what makes all this possible is the gratitude for the encounter with Christ. That's the identity that makes this ecumenism possible for us. And this makes us truly companions to all people and to all of the expressions of

their search for truth and for beauty, and in these years we've met Jews, Muslims, non-believers, Christians from other denominations, Buddhists.

Those who participate in the Meeting, even the ones who maybe came just for particular interests, like a sponsor, and there are many sponsors, (thank God!) or an artist who comes for his or her exhibition, or an academic invited because of a specific scientific contribution, or a politician or a head of state, usually is struck by something more that he or she encounters, and that something more is this environment, this human fabric in which he or she experiences that what is at stake is his or her own humanity, his or her very self. And this makes a person feel at home. The great playwright Eugene Ionesco, who came to the Meeting in 1987, used to speak about his own experience this way. And he came by chance. We had never managed to get him to come, but sort of by chance he managed to come, and he came with an amazing diffidence because he had only heard the Meeting spoken of badly. And at the end of the Meeting he said, "It would be my desire to be able to live in that environment of fraternity and spirituality for the rest of my life. Each person lived his or her own interior life while managing to encounter all the others, and sharing it with them. The phenomenon of the Meetings in Rimini have brought me the equilibrium of serenity, a sort of wisdom, and perhaps more than that."

We would have never had the audacity to invest in the heart the presumption to be able to meet the others, to love others, to be interested in their life, to become friends with them, if we hadn't first felt ourselves beloved and esteemed in our own humanity. Fr. Giussani was this one who loved us. He loved me, and all of my friends, each and every one of them. I experienced the warmth of this affection and this interest in my own person from the very moment in which I encountered him. I was sixteen years old, and he simply said to me, "Now you are here; that is, you're with us." Giussani from the very beginning had esteem for the Meeting. He accompanied us, he corrected us, and when I see that today Fr. Carrón does the same thing, I am moved and full of wonder and gratitude because all this goodness that I met was completely a free gift, something completely unmerited, something that perhaps could have never been. And to live without the fear that all your errors could take away the love and respect of the people that you hold dear is the most beautiful gift and experience that a person can have.

The experience of this goodness made our heart open and willing to accept the great mission that John Paul II gave of in 1982 when at the end of his speech at the Meeting he said to us, "In order to not agonize, in order to not kill oneself in unbridled egoism, please build a civilization that can be born from truth and love." We are not better than the others. We are people who struggle every day against the temptation of individualism, of one's own interest because, as Fr. Carrón recently said, "This temptation is always lying in wait. But we are also people who have encountered an affection that is more satisfying than any individualism—Jesus, the Mystery that has become flesh. Only the one who has the grace to encounter such a gift can understand that satisfaction that allows one to bear all of life."

This allows us to love the others starting from a satisfaction that we have in life, and in this way, freely, the Meeting has grown as an event, as a human experience, as something that continually changes our life, and changes, in freedom, all those who participate in it. I am ever more certain that if the Mystery of God asked me, as it did Marco (the one in charge of programming all the collaborations of the Meeting who is here with me. Marco has already been to America. I'm the only one who hasn't been here before), the Mystery asked our friends who work with us to serve it in this way, at least up until this moment, after this moment we don't know, if it's true that we have been asked this, the grace that He gives us with the event of His presence is the indication according to which we must work.

Many years ago, at the beginning of the Meeting, Fr. Giussani, as I was leaving a meeting room full of priests in which I had presented the Meeting, he called me and he yelled to me, "Emilia, pray to Our Lady that she may conserve this energy that you have." I never forgot that, and I've never forgotten that what I am, and the energy that I have, is something that someone else has given me. Our energies aren't ours, just like the Meeting is not

ours. Everything is given to us, even the temperament that we have, because it's probably necessary to have a certain temperament to be able to facilitate the Meeting.

Everything we have is a gift that we've been given, and I want to conclude here because I have this consciousness, this awareness that I have received, and we have received a great grace, a great stroke of luck, I call it. A great stroke of luck meeting CL, to meet Don Giussani because such an intense and beautiful human experience I would have never been able to imagine, and I would never have been able to imagine it even when I desired great things when I was young. And I was thinking about this as I wrote this speech, that when I was fifteen years old and I was moved as I read *The Diary of Anne Frank* when she said, "I hear the roar of the cannon that will kill us too, but I cannot give up on hoping that what I desire may take place." And I asked myself, fascinated and incredulous, how I could have such an unshakable certainty.

Now today I don't have the naïveté of fifteen years old, but now I understand much better that the desire of the heart never stops, not even in front of the roar of the cannons, and I understand because I saw in my life a passion for reality, a passion for people, an interest for the world, a fascination for beauty that I would have never imagined, and I've seen and met so many people animated by the same passion, pushed by the same impetus, moved by the same longing—need for the infinite.

And therefore, I believe that this summer will be beautiful once again to see in action this heart that pushes us to desire great things. Therefore, Marco, I myself, and all the friends will be waiting for you at Rimini this summer. Thank you.

Bacich: And now to give an idea of the breadth of what Emilia just presented to us, we'll have another short video that will quickly run through some of the things that have taken place at the Meeting of Rimini over the years.

Second video is shown.

Bacich: So we'll finish this evening with three brief witnesses about the experience of being at the Meeting of Rimini. First we'll hear from Professor Brad Gregory. He joined the history department at Notre Dame in 2003 after seven years at Stanford University, where he received early tenure in 2001. He earned his Ph.D. at Princeton University (1996) and was a Junior Fellow in the Harvard Society of Fellows from 1994-1996. In addition to his training as a historian, he has two degrees in philosophy, both earned at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. At Notre Dame, Gregory teaches undergraduate courses on Christianity in the Reformation era and the Catholic Reformation, as well as the Honors Humanities Seminar for first-year students in the University Honors Program. He also teaches graduate courses on early modern Europe. His recent publications include: *No Room for God? History, Science, Metaphysics, and the Study of Religion, History and Theory*, 47 (2008). Co-editor (with Alister Chapman and John Coffey) of *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009). He is currently writing a history of the Reformation era and the makings of the modern Western world, which is under contract with Harvard University Press.

Then we'll hear from Dr. Daniel Sulmasy, a Franciscan Friar, who is the Kilbride-Clinton Professor of Medicine and Ethics in the Department of Medicine and Divinity School at the University of Chicago, where he serves as Associate Director of the MacLean Center for Clinical Medical Ethics. He has previously held faculty positions at New York Medical College and at Georgetown University. He received his A.B. and M.D. degrees from Cornell University and completed his residency, chief residency, and post-doctoral fellowship in General Internal Medicine at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. He received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Georgetown University in 1995. He has served on numerous governmental advisory committees. His research interests encompass both theoretical and empirical investigations of the ethics of end-of-life decision-making, ethics

education, and spirituality in medicine. He is the author of four books—*The Healer’s Calling* (1997), *Methods in Medical Ethics* (2001; 2nd ed. 2010), *The Rebirth of the Clinic* (2006), and *A Balm for Gilead* (2006). He serves as editor-in-chief of the journal, *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics*. His numerous articles have appeared in medical, philosophical, and theological journals and he has lectured widely both in the U.S. and abroad.

Finally, we’ll hear from Professor Joseph Weiler. Professor J.H.H. Weiler is University Professor as well as holder of the European Union Jean Monnet Chair at New York University School of Law, Director of the Straus Institute for the Advanced Study of Law & Justice, and Co-Director of the Tikvah Center for Law & Jewish Civilization. Weiler is also Professor at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium and Natolin, Poland. He holds degrees from Sussex (B.A.); Cambridge (LL.B. and LL.M.); and The Hague Academy of International Law (Diploma of International Law). He earned his Ph.D. in European Law at the EUI, Florence. He is recipient of Doctorates Honoris Causa from London University and from Sussex University, and is Honorary Member of the Senate of the University of Ljubljana. Weiler served as a member of the Committee of Jurists of the Institutional Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, co-drafting the European Parliament’s Declaration of Human Rights and Freedoms and Parliament’s input to the Maastricht Inter-intergovernmental Conference. He is a WTO and NAFTA Panelist, and a founding editor of the European Journal of International Law, the *European Law Journal*, and the *World Trade Review*. Weiler is author of articles and books in the fields of international, comparative, and European law. Weiler’s research focus is on issues of European integration, globalization and democracy.

So we will hear from our speakers in that order.

Gregory: Thank you very much, Chris. It is a great honor for me to be here this weekend, and I am particularly conscious of being at the far end of the spectrum compared to Emilia who has been at the Meeting ever since the very beginning and I just experienced the Meeting for the first time this past summer.

Nothing really can prepare you for your first experience of the Meeting. I had heard about this famous annual gathering in Rimini before accepting an invitation to speak and attending for the first time this past August. It was one of the most remarkable weeks of my life. When I got back to Notre Dame, I raved about it to friends and colleagues—but I found its scale, its variety, and its character difficult to describe. I know of nothing else like it. It’s much more than a conference, more than a festival, more than a series of concerts and wide range of exhibitions and delicious offerings of regional Italian cuisine spanning the peninsula from the Alps to Sicily. It includes all these things and more—nearly 800,000 people more, in fact, of all ages from infants through high school and college students to adults and older folks in wheelchairs. But the Meeting far exceeds the sum of its parts. A list of everything it encompasses doesn’t do it justice or capture its heart. Nor can I hope to do so with a few brief remarks, but I’ll say something about the Meeting as a highly effective and attractive public expression of Catholicism at its best.

Whether they are religious or not, Americans and Europeans today tend to think of religion as a matter of private, interior feelings and intimate, personal choice. To the extent that it is shared, religion remains something that happens behind the walls of churches, synagogues, or mosques, separate from the “rest of life”—the public, day-to-day interactions of the workplace, marketplace, and educational institutions in which most people spend most of their waking hours. So even most *collective* expressions of religion remain private and sequestered. Religious people are supposed to have the good taste and good manners to keep their religion to themselves (as Italians have recently learned, in being told by the European Court to take the crucifixes off the walls of their public schools, where they have hung for centuries). Heaven forbid any religion should actually influence or even make an appearance in the rest of life! Even more in Europe than in the States, the *laiciste* logic of Western modernity tends to make the public square secular and sterile in the name of a putative neutrality.

Now I don't know whether there is a conscious plan behind it, but intuitively, the Rimini Meeting has for thirty years and counting recognized that this model of individualized, privatized religion is inimical to the Catholic faith. Catholicism is not a private, subjective set of feelings or interior beliefs: it is a shared, inherited, sacramental worldview that makes truth claims and demands witness through practice, not only in private but in public. Hence at the Meeting more than 3000 volunteers cheerfully park cars, cook and serve food, pick up trash, and provide the most gracious, attentive hospitality for a whole week—and they *pay their own way* to do so. If Catholicism is what it claims to be, then it must be compatible with everything that really is true, really is good, and really is beautiful. Again, this is manifest everywhere at the Meeting. Exhibitions devoted to Galileo, Pavel Florenski, and Paraguay's seventeenth-century *reducciones*? Great! Concerts featuring orchestral, folk, blues, jazz, and rock music? By all means! Presentations and lectures about epistemology, refugees in Africa, education in the United States, politics in Europe, and the sciences from physics to physical anthropology? Yes, please, all of the above! Once we are seized by the truth that the world we inhabit is *not* a random result of meaningless matter grinding on its way to nowhere—neo-Darwinian ideology notwithstanding—but is rather God's *creation* and the theater of his grace, we cannot be indifferent to ourselves, or others, or anything else. Those who organize and support and participate in the Meeting understand this. And they understand that although a huge convention center lacks a tabernacle or episcopal regalia, it's much more versatile than a cathedral when it comes to expressing the faith and sharing it publicly.

Nothing should be uninteresting to a Christian; every moment is a gift, and every person bears the image and likeness of God. That is why the real secret to the Meeting's success, I think, woven through all the lectures heard, the meals shared, and the conversations had, are the countless *meetings of the Meeting*: the hundreds of human encounters among the people who attend, who greet strangers with smiles, make new acquaintances, forge new friendships, and renew old ones. It is Father Giussani's vision, inescapably social, unavoidably public, and necessarily shared. In the meetings of the Meeting one senses what Giussani meant when he said: "Don't daydream and aim for perfection, but look Christ in the face: if one looks Christ in the face, if one looks someone one loves in the face, everything is straightened out, everything falls into place." Thus is the Kingdom of God built, in the public sphere; not by wearing the tokens of the faith on our sleeves, not by haranguing or condemning those who do not share our convictions, but by sharing what we have seen, pursuing holiness through acts of love. At the Meeting, the faith is beautiful. Not once during the whole week, amidst thousands of people, did I hear anyone raise an angry or disgruntled voice. Everyone is welcome, and I hope all the non-Catholics there felt that way. The Meeting is a gigantic, week-long, shared feast for the embodied souls we are.

St. Paul wrote to the early Christians of Philippi: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Phil 4:8). That is exactly right, but of course not the whole story, as St. Paul elsewhere made so clear. In a powerful way, those at the Rimini Meeting also understand that it's not enough just to *think* about these things, any more than we can or should hide our faith under a bushel basket. What is true, honorable, just, and commendable must be externalized, embodied, concretized, made manifest. Our faith must shine! How beautifully it does in late August every year on the northeastern coast of Italy.

Sulmasy: Well, there's going to be a lot of overlap, but I'm going to try and concentrate on two aspects of The Meeting. One is to talk about it as a cultural and educational event, and then I'll also add in my two cents about the spirit of volunteerism.

For any serious student, and I hope that includes all of you, I hope that includes your professors, I suspect that the President of NYU claims he's making life-long learners, and I hope that's all of us—going to Rimini is like being a kid in a candy store. It really is. And I want to try and make this a little more concrete for you by just trying to go through my recollection of one day I had there.

I got up in the morning, and then after breakfast went to a debate on the future of Europe where there was one scholar presenting Dante's Beatrice as the model, and another presenting Petrarch's Laura as the model of the future of Europe. Following that I went to a lecture on the Big Bang and cosmology. After that I went to an exhibit on contemporary religious art. And then I had lunch, and the food is good. After that I had a trip to the bookstore. Then I went to a lecture on genetics, and I'm a physician so I knew everything that the professor was saying, but I was amazed at seeing a master teacher talking to a general audience of educated people, taking them from Mendel's Peas to three-dimensional gene-gene interaction mapping in the space of forty-five minutes. It was just amazing to watch that. Then I went to a lecture with a performance of a Rahmaninov piano concerto. Then I had supper. The food is good. Did I mention that? The food is very good. And then after that I went to a fully staged performance of *La Traviata* sitting between a Buddhist monk on one side and my favorite Italian-American neonatologist, Elvira Parravicini, on the other. And that was one day, and then you get up the next day and do it all over again! It's really remarkable.

I think of it as a genuine *cultural* event. T.S. Eliot says that religion and culture are both the same thing and yet different. He argues both that religion and culture are aspects of one unity, and that they are two different and contrasted things. And he goes on to say, however, that without a religion there really can be no culture in the deepest sense of both words. There can be a society and maybe a civilization, but not a culture without religion. He says essentially culture is the incarnation, so to speak, of the religion of a people. That's what a culture is. And what one finds at Rimini, I think, is the instantiation of a culture, of the renewal and the recreation of a culture. One that is truly Catholic, as you've heard from everybody, this diversity of people predominantly Catholic Christians, but people of all faiths and people of no faith, an incredible diversity of interests. Everything truly liberal arts education ought to be, and we talk a lot about that in our schools, but I think it happens in a concrete way in Rimini. It is education and not just instruction. It is characterized by a truly Christian sense that I think is as the philosopher Bernard Lonergan says "the uninhibited desire to know," to know what is true coupled with a sense of our inadequacy of any way that we can actually come to know everything in the infinity of what we want to know.

Rimini communicates a Christian sense of culture. One finds at the Meeting a gathering of people who are sufficiently suffused with their faith, and sufficiently self-confident with their faith that they are not continually announcing that faith with a bullhorn. But they are simply living it in all aspects of life and learning and art, a culture.

Eliot says that the relation between religion and culture that he describes holds good only in the sense in which people are unconscious of both their culture and their religion, not in the sense that they don't ever think about culture, or think about religion, but this other sense, that you are just living it; it's just a way of breathing; it's natural; they come together. And that's what I think I experience at Rimini—a real sense of what a culture ought to be, that civilization of truth and love.

Now I have just a few words on this different aspect of that culture, which is the spirit of volunteerism. Thousands of energetic, young volunteers, for example, the guide I had...this is just amazing to me...I would never think that a professor would do this, but the person who was guiding me was a professor of veterinary medicine who does research on virology on poultry viruses. He was a volunteer driving me around, taking me to places, introducing me to people—just amazing! People who were drivers, who were exhibitors, clean-up crews and more, none of them is above the work. There is no ego. It's just pure service. This is how community happens, it's how communion is propagated, and it's how a culture forms, through the increasing circles of true Christian friendship. In a word, especially for you young people here, it is really cool.

So I'd say, if you can, go, and if you can't, maybe we should think about whether we can do it here. Thank you.

Bacich: I want to conclude with the words of John Sexton. The other, meeting the other, the inscrutable other, and how in the things that we heard this evening, and saw in the video, how that's exactly what the Meeting of the Friendship among People is about, meeting the other. And in fact, I think the spirit of New York Encounter is nothing other than to do exactly what Dr. Sulmasy said, to bring it here, because in the end it's the value given to that encounter with the other. This is for me the most impressive thing about the experience of the Rimini Meeting, and the reason why we want to have the same experience grow here in New York City for exactly all those things that John was talking about before, about what New York City is, about the fact that there is sitting somewhere in a classroom in New York City a child born in every nation in the world. It is the possibility of meeting, coming to know, establishing the relationship with another, a relationship of friendship. This is ultimately what the Meeting is, and this is what we want to do with New York Encounter, and so I invite you into this adventure with us of the proposal of this experience here in New York City in the year 2010.

So I want to especially thank our speakers: Professor Weiler, without whom an evening like this frankly would not be possible from many, many different points of view. I want to thank Emilia for coming all the way from Italy. Of course I want to thank Brad and Daniel, and a big, big thank you to John Sexton for coming to be with us this evening. So thank you to all of our speakers. We beg you to help us live this kind of experience here.