

# A Faith Encounter

## ***New York event gathers thousands around the beauty of human experience***

What is your greatest hope, your highest aspiration in life? Do you reach to achieve, or seek to receive? We don't often give deep thought to these questions, yet our Catholic faith is immersed in them and so many other issues that give purpose and meaning to life.

Such issues are at the heart of a popular three-day Catholic gathering called New York Encounter, founded and hosted by members of Communion and Liberation. Scheduled for January 13-15, 2017, the ninth annual Encounter will be held at Manhattan's Metropolitan Pavilion, on the theme, "Reality Has Never Betrayed Me," a saying of Msgr. Luigi Giussani, founder of Communion and Liberation.



Fathers for Good spoke with Maurizio Maniscalco, president of New York Encounter, about the faith extravaganza held in the heart of Manhattan. Born in Italy and living in New York for the past 23 years, Maniscalco is a musician, writer and human resources professional, who runs a school for English as a second language. Married for 37 years, he and his wife have three grown children and nine grandchildren.

**Fathers for Good:** When a person comes to New York Encounter for the first time, what do you hope he or she will experience?

**Maniscalco:** That this person may experience a "human encounter" in which hope and charity are the dominant, visible, perceivable factors, and faith the engine. If you allow me a simple allegory, you can look at the Encounter as a beautiful car, unexpectedly simple to drive. You sit in there and you feel at home, but the complexity of the engine is not in plain sight. Hopefully, the attractiveness and simplicity of the car will open up your door to curiosity and desire to discover what makes it all work.

**FFG:** Where did the idea for New York Encounter come from?

**Maniscalco:** Gratuitously we received, gratuitously we give back. Bringing our faith to the public arena, following in St. Paul's footsteps when he invites us to test everything and retain what is good, being aware that the intelligence of faith has to become the intelligence of reality, and bringing all this to the peripheries of this world – this is how we want to live. This is the journey I've been following since I met Father Luigi Giussani and the movement of Communion and Liberation at age 19.

When you love something, and when you belong to what you love, creativity is not an issue. When we started nine years ago we had no idea, no strategy, except offering our witness to this world. Same as we've been doing by following the Cross over the Brooklyn Bridge on Good Friday for the past 22 years. It's the same group of friends that started both.

**FFG:** When I look at your printed materials and website, I think: HEART/ART.

**Maniscalco:** I would say HEART/BEAUTY. Beauty is the reflection of the truth. Beauty will save the world. Beauty makes your head turn, makes you change direction. That's the meaning of "conversion." The human heart has infinite need for love. As you get older you understand that that's not sentimentalism, that's the truth. Only this love must be real! Where can I find it? Beauty always points the way.

**FFG:** This year's theme deals with "Reality" – yet people today think they can make their own reality, or invent virtual reality. What is the message for them?

**Maniscalco:** Come and see the faces, the humanity and beauty of the faces. Come and see how people theoretically so far apart can share their deepest hopes. Come and see if, in this piece of new world within the world that is the Encounter, there is something for you. Something worth embracing and willing to embrace you for who and what you really are. Come and see!

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