

This past January 17 – 18th, Crossroads Cultural Center was proud to initiate the First Annual New York Encounter, two days of public meetings and cultural events concurrent with the CL National Diakonia in New York in an effort to publicly engage the questions brought out among us in light of what is happening in the world around us. The first event, which took place on Saturday afternoon at NYU's Skirball Center for the performing arts was a discussion of hope in light of the recent publication of the second volume of Fr. Giussani's *Is it Possible to Live this Way?* The panel consisted of Fr. Carron, John Allen Jr., Senior Vatican Analyst for CNN, and Edward Nelson, Professor of Mathematics at Princeton University. Introducing the event, Rita Simmonds of Crossroads stated, "Hope has been a recurring theme in public life for the past year," explaining to the audience that "the reasonableness of hope and the possibility of pursuing an idea that is not utopian" would be the content of the discussion.

In the opening speech, John Allen told the audience, "We gather at an especially fitting moment because we are just three days away from the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States." He went on to state that "his eventual place in history remains to be seen," and from there focused on the difficulties Catholics have in ascribing to Obama's idea of hope when it comes to the issue of the unborn.

While Allen spoke of hope in relation to politics, Professor Nelson addressed the question of mathematics and science. "Science," he stated, "must follow reason." He went on to attack the prevalence of "scientism," i.e., an outlook deduced from the violation of logic that assumes that all science is rational and therefore all that is rational is science. "So mathematicians proceed without certainty, hoping that the foundations are consistent. But this is not the kind of hope that Monsignor Giussani speaks of in the book that we are celebrating today."

Fr. Carron elucidated the basis of how hope is defined as the consequence of faith in *Is it Possible to Live this Way?*, and went on to state: “Hope is the most basic test to ascertain if our faith is an experience—an experience of certainty which is so real that we can base everything on it. It is not a vague, unsubstantiated hope, some sort of irrational optimism that goes against the factual evidence. On the contrary, its reasonableness is based on a knowledge which is verified in experience. For this reason we can say it is based on something that has already been given.”

That evening at Symphony Space on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, pianist Chris Vath performed Beethoven’s Emperor Concerto with the Metro Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Philip Nuzzo, and the following afternoon, Dr. Lewis Alexander, Global Chief Economist for Citigroup, Professor Seth Freeman of NYU’s Stern School of Business, and Economics Professor Dominick Salvatore of Fordham University provided a lively exchange regarding the financial crisis, debating everything from whether or not the collapse of the housing bubble was something economics and financiers could have predicted, to whether it was the failure of trust within the finance and investment banking industry that precipitated the collapse of financial markets. The event was moderated by Anujeet Sareen, a portfolio manager at Wellington Management Company of Boston, who concluded, “If expectation is in the structure of man, and the only thing that satisfies us is the infinite, we need to look at our experience from what offers that fulfillment, rather than forcing reality to fit our idea of satisfaction. The certainty of faith points to a truth that does not depend on the particular swing in cultural sentiment. It is this hope that guides our conception of work and needs to guide our engagement of economic policy, in a new way.”