

"When I arrive, will you come get me?"

Luigi Accattoli writes: Giovanni Fallani (1921-1999, journalist and director of Catholic associations, one of the promoters of the Italian Catholic press, the Italian Federation of Catholic Weeklies and the Service of religious information) was a simple and shy man, who dearly loved his wife Maria. She was with him for 39 years, from 1953 to 1992. After her departure, John lived another seven years in a tenacious dialogue with her, as he said in the last letter that he wrote with a true spirit of betrothal, i.e. with the attitude of those who wait for the moment of encounter. When I told him that his love story had to be told, he informed me that he had already talked about it in a "notebook," of which he had only ten copies, for their four children and their grandchildren. He had given it the title: *The Book of Fiancés*. The last letter, under this title says:

I went to reread the letters we wrote when we were engaged, and it took a while! I also counted them: 587. With this one, there are 588. Now, we find ourselves in the same situation: the fiancé is still waiting for the weekend to hold his beloved tight in his arms! The love these letters talk about has not changed; it is always a burning fire.

The heart cries out its lament over the separation and, at the same time, its hope: when I see her again, she will be with me again with her body. In the meantime, what I love does not stop being very close to me; and you are there in front of me, looking at me; I know that you are gazing at me.

Yes, I am waiting for the day when we will meet again. I cannot tell you the date and the time of the train's arrival, as I did when I was your fiancé; but you certainly know. Will you come and get me?

Death, therefore, does not separate us; it is not stronger than love. Moreover, already in a letter dated 4 May 1952, with euphoria, I wrote this: "Even if we were to die (who will go first, me or you? We do not know), what we feel for one another will never cease. This love is not enclosed within life; this life, but it is—by its nature—eternal and if we ever weep, we will weep with the tenderness of love." I share these words written forty years ago. Nothing has changed in my heart.

I am also convinced that there is a way to remedy the deficiency of affectionate words that we exchanged in the last days of your life. Now, this way is to abandon myself to the omnipotence of love that, having been all-powerful, is able to go back in time and be present in the hora mortis, at the hour of death. We have received the promised that every tear "will be dried." Every tear, shed at "every" moment in time. So, the Spirit will race back through time to dry them all. I ask this in prayer. And I ask insistently that he may come to you with a tender touch. So, I think that the Eternal Lord has always been close to us. He always walked with us, like the mysterious traveler who joined the disciples on the road to Emmaus; and now He brings these words to you and brings me your gaze, which is so tender that it does not need words.