

# "HERE BEGINS A NEW LIFE"

— Dante Alighieri

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ENCOUNTER X

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**W**e “modern” men and women have a difficult relationship with the past. We are told that it was rife with injustice and oppression, and that tradition is a straitjacket restraining our freedom. We tend to think that everything old is, by default, obsolete. We like reinventing, or “rebranding,” our persona, leaving behind the history that shaped it. In the name of a better future, we risk losing memory of the past.

We are paying a price for this loss. In school, education is increasingly about securing a well-paid job, rather than awakening curiosity and handing down a common heritage. At work, different generations no longer seem to share the same ideals and have a hard time communicating. In social life, we stick with our online tribe or we “bowl alone.” Ignorance of history opens the door to manipulation by the powerful. Above all, the lack of roots generates a feeling of precariousness. It fills the present with anxiety and empties the future of its promise. Is there hope?

Recalling his first meeting with Beatrice, who, for the rest of his life, would embody beauty itself, Dante Alighieri writes:

*“In that part of the book of my memory,  
before which little can be read, there is a  
heading that says: ‘Here begins a new life.’”*

The encounter with a great love gives us a glimpse of a mysterious presence—the ultimate Beauty and Love—whom we always expected but never met. The awareness of this presence, its memory, can heal our relationship with the past and give reasons to hope and to build. Within this experience, *“whatever you remember is a fragment of being that rises from the sepulcher, and the different fragments, coming together, rearrange themselves into a design that is no longer just a promise, but a promise that is already being fulfilled”* (Fr. Luigi Giussani). All that is needed is our attention.

Join us on February 14–16, 2025, for a weekend of public discussions, exhibits, and live performances to explore how memory and hope shape daily life: work, education, affection, and society.

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