

Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón
Milan, October 26, 2016

Reference text: J. Carrón “The form of witness,” *Traces*, September 2016, pp. I-VII,
<http://www.tracesonline.org/2016/09/page-one-the-form-of-the-witness/>

- *Ser poeta*
- *Žemè miega*

Glory Be

Welcome everyone! This year the video connection is available also for those who live abroad – as many have asked us—because we have solved the problem of having simultaneous translations in English, Spanish and Portuguese. We start our journey with the awareness expressed by the two songs we just listened to, “To be a poet is [...] to be a beggar,” that is, “to have in your heart a blazing star,” “it means to be hungry and thirsty for the infinite!” “It is to be longing for the blue sky,” like the second song was saying about the stars: “They seem to speak to me as to a brother, as if they wanted to say, ‘Go farther.’” We cannot but start from this awareness after Beginning Day when, through the pilgrimage, we asked to participate in that mercy that has pity on our being total beggars for something “other.” Yet, our “I” who is begging, as we say in PageOne (*The Form of Witness*), lives in a situation, in a “change of epoch”—to use the Pope’s words—that we all find ourselves facing. A person sent me this contribution: “In reading *The Form of Witness* I was particularly struck by the point that speaks of the change of epoch. I am particularly aware of it, especially at school (I teach in a professional school). The other day when I was talking about thirteenth century literature, I asked my students whether they knew Saint Francis of Assisi and half of the class answered ‘no.’ I was surprised, but not particularly, because I often feel as if I am speaking another language and I belong to a foreign mentality. Even certain values can absolutely no longer be taken for granted.” From this the whole question arises: what are we in the world for, what does it mean to face a challenge like this? First we need to understand what is happening. Zygmunt Bauman says that “bridging the gap between the reality in which we live and our ability to understand it is not a quickly attainable goal” (“*At the Roots of Insecurity*,” interview by D. Casati, *Corriere delle Sera*, July 26, 2016, p. 7). If such a keen observer as Bauman says this, we can also take the time to understand it, because it is not immediately clear. That is why for many people the question arises as to what knowledge is and what facts like the one just mentioned are telling us to introduce us to a knowledge of what is happening.

I wanted to ask you a few questions that arise from what I am living during this beginning of the year. In particular, when I hear you telling us and repeating facts several times, some specific facts (like that of the woman suffering from HIV that Rose met, or that of the inmate who looks at his jailers with mercy), I see that you apply a dynamic of knowing that is very different from mine. You feel the need to go back to and safeguard facts that clearly accompany you and make you discover reality not only at the beginning, but all the time. Then I understand that there is a dynamic of knowing deeper than mine that I absolutely want to participate in, that I realize I need so as not to throw my life away. This is why I ask you two questions that are extremely important to me. First: what does it mean that a fact keeps you company, or better, what is the true meaning

of knowing, and how can one avoid burying the facts? Even when I think that facts are good, it happens that after classifying and analyzing them even in depth, for me I am done with them, I turn the page, I go on to something else. It is different, instead, how facts can accompany one's life as a true, I dare say, vocational relationship. For me knowledge is a bit like something disposable, it is about consuming what happens, even with all my Christian good will. For you, instead, it is a constant companionship, like a friend in whose company one understands a meaning more deeply and makes a journey. An example of this is the attitude towards the upcoming referendum. I became involved in a beautiful and exciting work, especially thanks to the friends who asked me to participate. I realized that the more the questions at hand became clearer to me, the more I—not the others, but I—reduced the content to a position to be taken. Why does this happen? Lately I think more and more of Mounier's phrase: "It is necessary to suffer so that the truth not be crystallized in doctrine, but be born from the flesh." Two things are clear to me: probably this suffering is also the mortification—a positive word in my experience—of experiencing a limit in order to truly gain a humility that allows you to start learning. Second, I understand that the mercy we receive is exceptional when it is the possibility to become involved—with one's own full truth—with people who, by grace, are able to break the cycle of repeating oneself endlessly, that is, the cycle of 'lack of knowledge.'

You have become aware of what we started from that brought us to this situation of epochal change. Because, as we have said on different occasions, the men of the Enlightenment believed that they had already reached a kind of knowledge that allowed them to grasp the full scope of reality using only the evidence of reason, without the need of anything else. However, this attempt failed, says Benedict XVI. What you are saying demonstrates it: we find ourselves realizing that the facts that happen are not lived in a way that allows us to know, and therefore they don't keep us company. Then, after a while one turns the page, as if nothing had happened. You used the expression "For me knowledge is a bit like something disposable." What does Fr. Giussani say, instead? What do we need to recognize and learn? That a fact is the path to knowing if it truly becomes experience. Unlike the men of the Enlightenment, Fr. Giussani states that the journey to truth is an experience, a journey of facts. "*Experience is living what makes me grow.* Experience, then, brings about the growth of the person [...] [and] therefore [always] implies the fact of *being aware that one is growing.*" Everything is in this word: "being aware" of growing. Because "what characterizes experience is our *understanding* something" (L. Giussani, *The Risk of Education*, The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York, 2001, p. 98), discovering the meaning of something, which is why, then, it keeps you company. If we don't learn this, the facts are useless for living and history is emptied, and on the other hand, the truths, as the first contribution was saying and we will also see shortly, are no longer visible. Let's leave this question open and listen to the facts of our experience to let them teach us.

Hi.

Did you learn something from your experience?

Yes.

Good!

At the beginning of last year, a freshman joined our university. She had participated a bit in GS during high school and she started to stay with us, to be part of the study groups, to go to class

with us. After a few months, we had coffee together and she told me, “Look, I don’t want to offend you, but to be honest, to me you seem a bit fanatical, delusional, you keep talking about God, but I don’t believe in Him, because if God exists he is a puppet master and I prefer to live without Him.” In the face of such determination and conviction...

This is how Christianity ends up being thought of if one doesn’t understand the importance it has in educating and helping us to know: “You seem delusional!”

In the face of such determination and conviction, I made some timid attempt to argue from a theological point of view, but stopped quickly and started to ask her about herself and her experience.

Why did you stop?

Because I realized that I was in front of a wall, that I didn’t have a chance of speaking with her, because in front of not only...

Do you see how we discover the path? There are certain ways and certain attempts that are useless. Reality itself offers us the possibility to understand. And so?

So, I started to ask her about herself, whether since she had arrived at the university she was happier, if she could think of some days in her life when she had been happy. In front of all these questions she kept answering consistently, “No,” in a very indifferent way. I felt as if I didn’t have any ground for a dialogue with her and each time we spoke we reached a dead end. Thus, I started to invite her to study with me when I was going away for the weekend with other friends and to involve her in the life I was living every day. Each time she accepted the invitation and came back. So, day after day, month after month, very slowly, she started to become involved and she became so captivated that she...

Why did she become captivated? Was it because she “turned the page”? Perhaps because the facts didn’t keep her company? Or, because she started to understand something?

She started to see that the life we were living was also for her.

That is, she made a journey that brought her to know something. What?

After some resistance, she decided to come to the CLU vacation, when at the beginning she had said that she wouldn’t come because she didn’t like what we did. In the end, she came and she was very happy. I realized that something was changing in her, not only because she had decided to come to the CLU vacation, but because she was starting to become aware of what was happening to her, she was starting to say when she was happy and when she wasn’t.

“She was starting to become aware of what was happening to her.” This is true also for you who were becoming aware of what was happening.

When after the CLU vacation we went on vacation to the beach with some friends, she told one of us, “I am happy about these days, because unlike all the other vacations, where after a couple of days I had had enough of the people I was with, I am not tired of you.” So, in the relationship with her I truly discovered that not only a dialectic approach, the attempt of having a discussion with her, was getting me nowhere, but also that my only chance to show her what I have encountered was to involve her in the life that first won me over. Therefore, now it is still a work in progress, we no longer have conversations about God and I don’t know yet whether she will be able to say that He is not a puppet master. Yet, I am certain and I see that she no longer thinks that we are delusional since she has never left us.

I am surprised that often our friends who are in college realize that others don't see what they are seeing and start to experience that a dialectic approach doesn't take them anywhere, doesn't help them to make the other understand something that he doesn't understand, to get to know something. They start to learn that some things are useless and thus they no longer use tools and methods that have already clearly been shown to be a failure. "I truly discovered." This is the point! "I truly discovered that not only a dialectic approach, the attempt of having a discussion with her, was taking me nowhere, but also that my only chance to show her what I have encountered was to involve her in the life that first won me over." What does this mean? We must start by understanding what this means in order to respond to the challenge of the epochal change. Because, while rationalists said that historical facts cannot bring us to the recognition of truth, here we start to see that only a historical fact ("to involve her in the life that first won me over") brings one to recognize something that one didn't know before. From where does such a gaze originate?

I will tell you a simple fact that happened to me a few days ago. I left my home in the morning, it was raining, and in an alley I met the usual homeless woman who has been there for years, crouched against the wall and begging. I walked by her and I gave her a coin. As I kept walking, I heard a loud shrilling voice from behind me in the alley, the voice of a woman who said, "That's easy! If each person who goes by gives you a dollar, I am going to switch places with you!" I whirled around because I felt provoked and I saw an elderly lady, quite old, who was mocking the homeless woman. I got really angry out of a sense of justice and I thought, "Now I am going there and sticking two dollars in her hand, and will tell her, "Now, lady, you sit down here, stay here all day, and when I come back this evening you tell me about it, eh?!" I took a step forward, I was going to make a sort of melodramatic scene, but as I was taking that step I felt within myself something like a spike that pierced through the anger that had taken hold of me. I became really moved, because I looked at the elderly lady and I thought, "This woman, who is quite old, must have seen and lived many things in her life. I wonder what she lived and experienced, what did she encounter to have such a bitter and resentful heart?" Then I realized, "But, look at Whom I—I!—have encountered!" This made my anger crumble and I was moved and felt a great sense of tenderness in looking at those two women. Yet, I must say that I was more moved by and felt more tenderness for myself, due to this Other who has come to save me. Perhaps it is what you said at the Fraternity Exercises and repeated a few times about the inmate who entered the prison and was humiliated by two prison guards who searched him, but looked at them with mercy. I think that this is experience. I was struck by a sense of lightheartedness, of true happiness. I told them, "Good morning, have a good day," and kept going, happy for all of this.

You were filled by a sense of tenderness. Is it only sentimental? Or, is it a judgment, a true knowledge that originated from becoming aware that you had been saved? So much so that you were more moved. This made you look at the other wondering what she may have encountered, or what she didn't encounter, to have such a bitter heart. We know ourselves and we know the other because we recognize that something we have—our belonging, what we live—is the origin of our cultural position, without many words, without making great resolutions, almost being surprised by that origin that moves us, because Another came to save us. We don't reduce it to something sentimental, but we recognize that it is something that shapes my "I" so much that I can't but recognize Christ also in the way I look at the other. I wonder what that lady did not encounter!

While, instead, the inmate happened to encounter something. That a fact, an encounter, becomes companionship is shown by the newness with which I find myself facing the circumstances, the challenges of reality, the things I run into.

A few days ago in class, a young woman proposed revisiting the topic of dialogue starting from Socrates. She did it by saying, "I am interested in the question of dialogue in order to understand what the dialogue Socrates speaks about has to do with life, with the questions life poses." When she asked this question, I was struck and I thought, "This is interesting." So, I asked the students what they thought about it and a flurry of questions ensued that surprised me, because this class is not very lively, to the point that my colleagues complain about it. In that moment, a discussion started. I thought that I had caught their interest, because each of them somehow expressed an opinion. At one point, one boy, pointing playfully at another classmate, said, "I would like to know his opinion, what he thinks about this." These words said jokingly made me understand that I was getting excited for something that was not a dialogue, but just a discussion, because each person was putting together and expressing their own ideas, and we were going nowhere. So, I stopped and asked everyone, "In your opinion, are we having a true dialogue, or is each person stating their opinion?"—following the mainstream idea that in any case each person has his or her own opinion. The majority answered, "Teacher, with you we can have a dialogue." But one kid said, "No, no, we are only having a discussion, because each of us is expressing his own idea, but then is not paying attention to what the other is saying; is not interested in what the other says, but states his opinion based on the idea that each person has his own truth, and so...." It was true. This stopped me in my tracks, because basically during the first part of that hour, since my idea was that I had to help the class to have a discussion, I had favored the discussion. Thank goodness there was that kid who sounded the alarm, because I realized that man's heart wants more than a simple discussion. In the end, we were not addressing the question asked by the first student, because each person was stating his own opinion. Then I thanked him for his remark and I said, "For the first time in the last few years it became so clear that there is more than Socratic dialogue [because what they were having is ultimately Socratic dialogue: a discussion of ideas], and I actually hadn't realized it as well as you had." Then, in the second part of the hour something different happened. While before people were making the effort to express their opinions, each person was saying what they thought and then going about their own business, now they started to look at each other in the face and have a dialogue, not just offering their opinions, but having a dialogue. I was struck by this, because a remark, in a sense a banal one, was enough to cause a repercussion in my heart and make me understand that these kids want more. I realized that this epochal change is the need for something more, while I was reducing dialogue to a discussion of ideas, and the discussion of ideas for sure doesn't lead one to know himself or the other! As Fr. Giussani says, the emphasis is not on the ideas, but on the person, while I had stressed the ideas and not the person. When the hour ended, I left the class. On the one hand, I was happy: something happened, a small fact had changed me. On the other hand, though, I had gone on for half an hour insisting on having a discussion. Then, I realized how I do the work of School of Community in an abstract way. I asked myself, "How is this possible? I am reading about dialogue in Fr. Giussani, I am reading that dialogue is life, I even participated in the meetings of the "Raggio" [Ray] in those years when we were sharing our experiences, and I would not have realized, if not for that

kid's remark, that we were having a discussion of ideas?!" I said, "Thank goodness, because in any case that remark made me pick up again what was already present in my experience and in my heart." I was very struck by this experience.

You hadn't noticed it and when you did, you realized what dialogue truly is; that dialogue will never truly happen unless one encounters the other because there is interest in the other's contribution. Now we can all start to use this test for our human journey. During the past week, did I have dialogues or discussions? On the referendum, for example, am I having dialogues or discussions? Because, as we can see, man is nothing but what we sang at the beginning: to be a poet is to be hungry and thirsty, and thus it can only go beyond a discussion, "go farther." Then, we are interested in understanding well what we are talking about, because this dialogue can happen in an unexpected way. A person from China (who obviously couldn't come to speak in person!) wrote me that one day the doorman of her building stopped her and her husband and said, "There is truly a great love between you two. I see many couples who are married, but not like this. This love is truly something great; living like this is truly beautiful. I wish for you that you can live this love in your whole life." I asked him how he could say this, since he speaks only Chinese and therefore doesn't understand what we are saying to each other. He only sees us going by in the morning when we go to work and when we come back, when we come back with bags of groceries, or when we go out for any other reason. We don't spend time with him and we don't talk to him about ourselves. He answered, "What do you think? I don't understand the words that you say to each other, but I can see and I have seen this right away since I arrived here. I see the way in which you talk to each other, the tone of voice you use, that what keeps you together is not money." We haven't said a word about our relationship and the doorman sees this, becomes aware [the truth of this expression is striking: "to become aware" is the expression that Fr. Giussani uses to describe experience] that the marriage we live is not like that of others. I was struck by the fact that one can witness something without saying a single word." It is a dialogue, because it is the communication of oneself to another, even if we don't speak the same language.

I started to read PageOne and your address in Caravaggio (where unfortunately I couldn't go) and I found them unexpectedly related to what I am currently living. I say unexpectedly because I found that I was truly understanding how what you said has become an immediate point of comparison with what is happening to me, without any effort, and without a "yes, but I already know it," and when this happens it is truly beautiful. I will explain. I will tell you briefly two simple facts that happened to me this month. I am a nurse and I have gone back to work after a year off. I was assigned to the last ward I would have wanted. At the time, I was really sad and I was seeing reality as an enemy, ultimately the circumstance was something that blocked my journey. Then, one day I told a friend about this period I was living, telling her something beautiful that I had seen, but in the end the last word was the difficulty I was experiencing. She listened to me and at one point she asked me, "What allows you to live, then? Is Jesus truly that relationship that saves you even when everything seems to be against you?" This threw me off, because ultimately I was finding only excuses to avoid answering these questions. Starting from that everything changed, not reality, which is still very hard, but how I started to look at it. I read PageOne where you tell us that the ability to encounter the other is born of an existential certainty generated by faith. In my ward a nurse has taken a liking to me and a very free relationship has begun, so much so that

she wanted to share with me a painful situation that she is living. I am struck, because it is really true that the point is not how good I am dialectically in showing her how much life is livable. In fact, what allowed me to start a relationship with her was beginning to live my relationship with Jesus in my life first-hand and therefore at work, washing the patients with her or organizing medical records, asking Jesus every morning to make me His. Another simple fact happened one morning. I had to wash about twenty patients and I was all in a frenzy trying to do a good job. At one point, I ran into a lady who asked me to accompany her to the bathroom. My coworkers had told me that once she was taken to the bathroom she could wash herself. While I was taking her to the bathroom she said, "Look, I cannot wash myself without help." I brought her to the bathroom totally absorbed by my concern of being behind in my work and I started to wash her. While I was helping her to undress, she told me, "It is really bad to have to depend on everyone and on everything." Right then I was reawakened and I started to look at her. I thought of a thousand things I could have told her about what I have encountered in my life that make me breathe every day, perhaps being able to stop her outcry. Then, I thought of what you say in The Form of Witness, that a true dialogue is to show the experience I am living. Therefore, I told myself, "The truest way of staying before her now is to respond to the circumstance I am living, to wash her how I would want to be washed." We spent a long time together. There was almost a familiar atmosphere. In the end, she looked at me and said, "After this bath I feel like a new woman." I was truly moved, because after that encounter I felt that I was reborn as well, simply because in her need I discovered that I was like her: a beggar in need of everything. I too need to depend on the only One who makes me in every moment, so much so that if this doesn't happen, everything annoys and crushes me.

What does this mean with regard to communicating to the other in this change of epoch in which no one sees (you didn't see either, so much so that you perceived reality as an enemy)? What made you make the journey that allowed you to start seeing things differently and do what you did? *I started to ask myself some questions and I understood that I was running away from what allows me to live. Once I understood what allowed me...*

First point. We cannot convince others with our explanations, because not even we are convinced. In fact, I can have all the explanations and still perceive reality as an enemy. Like your friend told you, reality is the opportunity, the occasion to see whether Jesus is the relationship that saves you. Without making this verification, in the end you wouldn't have been able to make that gesture. Why? Because, as you say, it is only the existential certainty gained while trying to live following your friend's suggestion that allowed you to enter into relationship with reality undialectically: "To begin to live my relationship with Jesus in my life first-hand, and therefore at work." We can introduce others to reality, to the point of making a woman feel like new, only through a history, a personal experience, a human experience, through ourselves, so much so that what before could not be seen now starts to be visible.

In doing this work a question that I believe to be essential came up. The question that almost exploded is this: what is the form of my belonging, that is, what is the gesture, the way in which I actually live the experience of a belonging? Many answers came to mind, all reasonable and probably acceptable: this long history I am part of and that I am happy to be with, all the tradition I love and appreciate, a rule for my life, all in all a faithfulness to this companionship at least over

time. Yet, the fact that I had that question made me understand that these answers were not enough, because I think that the way in which my belonging is concrete, true and fruitful, is only one: it is the “yes” of Peter. It isn’t the history I am carrying with me, it isn’t the rule I obey, the tradition I am part of, it isn’t the friends whom I continue to be attached to: the true sign of belonging is the “yes” of Peter! The rest is a consequence. Otherwise this history, this tradition, this rule, this companionship—as Fr. Giussani told us clearly and the Pope repeated almost identically—gets silicified, that is, it becomes stone, “petrified,” it is no longer blossoming and producing fruit, neither in me, nor in society. I will add something else very quickly. How does one see whether this is the way in which I belong? The other thing that you recalled from Fr. Giussani in PageOne made me understand: This is the criterion! Then I understood what it means that the cultural expression is what shows, makes clear what one belongs to. I asked myself, “What is for me and for us the clearest, most gigantic—I would say— cultural expression? It is our unity, our companionship. But, how do I live within this companionship? Am I building it? Is this companionship a cultural expression of mine? Is it something I am living in?” I think that I have intuited that the only way through which I make possible this impossible unity—as Fr. Giussani always told us—is to say “Yes” to Christ present here, today, in the way in which He is present here, today. Ultimately, any other way is partial and fruitless.

What does this “Yes” of Peter, this gesture of belonging, mean? Why do you think that it is so crucial for answering this change of epoch? How does this “Yes” help to answer exhaustively the challenge we are facing?

Because I think that it is the only source of newness and the only possibility of newness that is given to me, not by the circumstances, but within the circumstances, even if they have completely changed. How can I be new in a new situation? If I say “Yes” to Christ in the way in which He is present in my life today. This also allows me to understand which steps to take, which gesture to participate in, which work to carry on, etc. I think that this is the origin of the newness, there isn’t another one. The others are all things that can make you active, generous, present in society, in the scientific world, culturally, etc., etc., but where does the newness come from? I think it comes from saying ‘Yes’ to a Presence today.

All this needs to be understood. I leave the question open, because in your contribution truly lies the answer to that epochal change that we are living. Why? Because, as I was saying at the beginning, for us many times it isn’t a historical fact that brings us to “know” the truth, to the knowledge of truth. We saw in all your witnesses that only by becoming aware of what is happening can one stay in reality in a different way. Now you add the “Yes” of Peter. If we go and re-read what Fr. Giussani says of Peter’s “Yes,” we see why Christianity represents the possibility for answering the cultural challenge of the present moment adequately: a “particular story [...] is the keystone of the Christian conception of man, of his morality, in his relationship with God, with life, and with the world” (L.Giussani – S. Alberto – J. Prades, *Generating Traces in the History of the World*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010, p. 59), that is, of reality and history. What each person experiences is that when one lets Christ enter his or her particular story, within the arms of the Christian community, something starts to happen that allows one to put into reality a kind of experience that responds to the epochal challenge in daily life, when we invite others to study with us, when we care for a patient, when we speak with students, when we meet a beggar. Then, others begin to see what they didn’t see before. Because Christianity began like this and will continue in

this way, never separating the particular story from the truth. If our friend hadn't accepted facing the reality that she perceived as an enemy with the hypothesis of Christ, she would have not been able to treat that patient like that, with that simplicity. And so on. We still need to understand all of this, but we see that we are beginning to realize that it is very easy, like with Jesus at the beginning: He came and created Christianity. It begins to happen and the others begin to see what they didn't see before. This is documented in the cultural expression, because we enter reality with a new awareness, since we become aware of something that, even unknowingly, we carry "in our blood." We started to understand that a dialectic approach isn't the way to encounter the other, and that it is not something abstract that can rouse him; but it is by becoming involved. Jesus involved us in an experience—as you said—in a new life that allowed us to recognize truth. Only in this way can we identify ever more the form of witness that allows one to communicate not something sentimental, but the truth, a new perception of reality, a new perception of things. This truly becomes a significant contribution— as we see through many things that we tell each other—for those whom we meet in the street, no matter the situation they find themselves in. Then, history is not emptied, we follow the path of knowledge, we know more and more and we see that it remains as companionship within us due to the way in which we re-enter reality and stay before everyone with all the existential certainty we carry within. We even become amazed, moved by what the Mystery continues to do now, not in the past, but now! That is why Jesus comes and asks us, "Do you love me?", "Yes." This "Yes" is not something strictly private, but rather something that encompasses our entire life and is expressed in everything we do. If this belonging grows, if we don't separate ourselves from it then we will be able to bring a newness into reality, making it a possible experience also for others. In fact, we were chosen so that, by participating in a companionship like ours, others at a certain point may see, and at the same time we may be enriched by what the others offer us, because through them we discover many things. The referendum is a beautiful opportunity to be educated to this. Either it is a dialogue, or it is a discussion. It is necessary to become aware of the other with his own reasons so as not to dump my responsibility on someone who tells me what to do, so that I may participate first-hand in the adventure of knowledge. This is the meaning of the flier "*To recover the sense of living together*": not missing the opportunity to learn, also in this circumstance. So, at the end of this path we will be able to verify whether we engaged ourselves, whether we sufficiently clarified to ourselves the reasons that allow us to respond to the questions we are asked. Otherwise, it will have been useless, both for us and for others, like many things that happen and leave no trace because they don't build our co-existence, they don't build a place of dialogue. This is how we discover the reasons for staying together. I think that we have a good opportunity and I hope that we will not waste it.

This year we have a [video connection](#) to [School of Community](#) for the communities around the world, with a simultaneous translation into English, Spanish and Portuguese. In the conversation that we had and that was followed by this decision, we stressed the importance of being protagonists. One can be here as a protagonist, in the same way in which one can be a protagonist in the small groups during the month, or one can be passive in the small group as well as here. It isn't the form that makes us protagonists or passive, but rather the way in which we live reality. We are all called to be protagonists and not simply spectators in front of an "inspirational" gesture, and therefore those who have questions or contributions will be able to send them to us also from

abroad, thus enriching the life of the entire Movement. As I said on other occasions, the gesture is free, it is for those who want to participate, but precisely for this reason I asked the people in charge to ensure that everyone has the possibility to connect. It is important, though, that the connection has the characteristics of a gesture lived in community, as it is here. Therefore, the access will not be given to individuals. Furthermore, the notes will be promptly posted for everyone on the CL website. The email address to which one can send questions and brief contributions on the School of Community is: sdccarron@comunioneliberazione.org. I urge you to use it exclusively for the School of Community. Contributions from outside Italy should be sent by the Friday evening preceding our meeting, while those from Italy should arrive by Sunday evening, so that there is enough time to read them and, if necessary, translate them. I ask you to include also a cell phone number to be able to reach you easily to ask you to give your contribution in person. I would like to clarify why we choose some contributions, because some people say, “Everything is pre-arranged!” No, nothing is pre-arranged! Among the many contributions we receive, we see that in some people the Mystery is making happen something particularly meaningful that represents a richness for all. Also in the way we guide a gesture like this we want to follow—myself first of all—what the Mystery makes happen, to make a gesture that is useful to everyone. I wish to be the first who follows what the Mystery does through the contributions that you send. This is not pre-arranging things, but obeying what the Mystery is doing. There will be other moments in the life of the Movement, or other moments of the School of Community when each person can find a different way to give a contribution. Therefore, it is an obedience to what the Mystery does. We are all making this journey and sometimes the Mystery makes one person blossom, then another one; He makes people live an experience that enriches everyone, and that is why we start from them. Period.

The next School of Community will be on Wednesday, November 23 at 9:00 p.m. We will prepare for it by working on the second part of PageOne, “*The Form of Witness*,” from point 6 to 9.

The Book of the Month for October and November is *Final Conversations* by Benedict XVI. It is a beautiful example of how certainty is born: not as an abstract affirmation of correct and clear ideas or dogmas, but in the dramatic relationship with the Lord. It is striking when he reveals his personal relationship with Christ marked also by moments of struggle. This makes the journey of faith very human and also clarifies the roots of the boldness of Benedict XVI’s way of thinking and cultural expression.

The Tent Drive in support of some AVSI projects in the world can be used in Italy and abroad in ways that are most creative and adequate to each situation. The title of the drive is: #RefugeesMigrants. Let’s get to work to change our approach. This year the main theme of the Tent Drive will be migrants and refugees, with special attention on the issues of education and work. Additional information will be available from mid-November.

In addition to the AVSI Tents I remind you that the Movement places special emphasis on the Food Collection as a charitable gesture. This year it will be held on Saturday, November 26th. It is important that we participate in this gesture, also to support it and to share it with many people.

Out of the 130,000 volunteers who usually participate in this gesture only 30,000 belong to the Movement. Thus, the collection proposed by the Food Bank is an opportunity to share with others the gaze with which we have learned to live this gesture, so that the reasons that inspire it and the ways in which we live it may never be reduced.

Veni Sancte Spiritus