

Notes from School of Community with Fr. Julián Carrón
Milan, October 21, 2015

Reference text: D. Prosperi – J. Carrón, “In Your Eyes Shines the Strangeness of a Sky that Isn’t Yours,” *Traces, October 2015, pp. I-XVI.*

- *The Things that I See*
- *E se domani*

Glory Be
Veni Sancte Spiritus

We will begin by working on the Beginning Day. I will start by reading a letter that a person wrote to a friend (who then sent it to me). I think that it is important from the point of view of the method, since it clarifies what it means to work on the Beginning Day, because a grace is given to one person for the benefit of everyone. “I was at dinner with some people, discussing work-related problems. Since we all belong to the Movement, we usually discuss matters related to CL as well, and on that occasion, the theme was the Beginning Day, which had taken place a few days earlier. As you know, it’s been almost 20 years since I have participated in an event of the Movement. Even if I am – let’s say – a supporter of the Movement, I can’t do more than this. On that evening, just before dinner, I printed the text from the website. I had not read it, but I was very interested and curious to know from the others who were at the dinner what directives the Movement wanted to give for this year – also because, to be honest, if I had been given the chance or if someone had invited me, I would probably have attended the Beginning Day. The discussion was full of quotes and explanations of some concepts that Fr. Carrón had brought up. As usual, there was no shortage of erudite (or not) analyses of the difference between Giussani’s and Carrón’s approaches, such as: ‘However, Giussani would have said this in a different way,’ ‘In this context, Giussani would have said this,’ ‘This point is very beautiful,’ ‘This is very beautiful as well,’ ‘What he says here is really true.’ These are all things that are certainly correct from a theological point of view, and intellectually profound as well, but that didn’t satisfy my curiosity. While I was listening, I thought: why should I start to be interested again? Why, for the past 20 years, haven’t I stopped wondering whether it is worthwhile to let myself be drawn again into an experience that changed my life, and to which, many years ago, I gave all of myself? Why should I get involved again? Only to be able to say my piece during these discussions, which are not interesting at all? I got home late at night, disappointed. Allow me a daring quote from the Gospel, of the disciples of Emmaus: ‘We were hoping that he would be the one, and instead...’ I, too, was hoping that something would happen for me during that dinner. Then, I started to read the notes that I had downloaded, very attentively, unwilling to believe that it could really end like that, and I was literally transfixed! I read and re-read Fr. Carrón’s lesson, and the more I read those words, the more I was moved. He was really speaking to me, to my situation of persistent resistance to the attraction of that beauty that had overwhelmed me years ago, and that I was almost no longer hoping would be possible for me. I

don't want to risk repeating or interpreting the Beginning Day, but suddenly, finally, I started to understand, like the man born blind. I understood and I saw how simple this attraction ultimately is, how it corresponds to me, and how I can no longer deny it. It is simple. Because, as it says at one point, you cannot 'think [...] that the method you imagine could be more incisive than the one chosen by God [...]. We cannot [...] recover with our activism what we have lost in life. This, therefore, is our responsibility: to not resist the method of God' (p. XV). It's simple – we don't have to invent anything else. Indeed, it is God's method. Forget the discussions about Carrón and Giussani, and whether this is the correct and authentic interpretation of the charism, etc. etc.! It is all there in the Beginning Day. Perhaps I am not able to repeat and explain it – reading it is enough – but everything is clear and simple. Like the man born blind, I can say, 'I know only one thing: I was blind and now I see.' I think that an attempt to summarize the entire Beginning Day could be – if you will – those beautiful closing words in Fr. Giussani's book *Decisione per l'esistenza* [*Decision for Existence*], which have been burned into my mind from the very first days, 40 years ago, when that attraction took hold of me: 'The way of the Lord is simple, as it was for John and Andrew, Simon and Philip, who started to follow Christ, moved by curiosity and desire. In the end, there is no other way, except this curiosity full of desire, awakened by the presentiment of the truth' [now in L. Giussani, *Alla ricerca del volto umano* [*In Search of the Human Face*], BUR, Milan 2007, p. 125]." I think that this letter brings up an essential matter of method for each of us, for the way in which one works – now on this text, tomorrow on *Recognizing Christ*, the day after that on *Why the Church?* – and the way in which he faces things. What we said to each other at the Beginning Day, what Fr. Giussani insists upon, is the absolute primacy of the event of faith. I believe that no one would dare to question this point, otherwise he wouldn't be here, and he wouldn't be loyal to the initial experience that brings him here. However, once this has happened, we can change the method – as if afterward, the event were not needed to reawaken all of the attraction that causes us to participate. Disappointment (witnessed by the letter) arises because one changes the method, because one resists the method. I think that it is crucial to look at this, because it is a fundamental correction that Giussani makes to us, indicating the nature of Christianity. Without this, we can make all of the comments, but the person who is listening to us cannot help but go home disappointed: "I was hoping..." It's not enough to say, "It's like this. It's not like that." We can discuss for hours, but what is not ours to decide is what takes hold of the other person, what can correspond to the other's yearning. It happens when it happens. The event – we know this, don't we? – happens just as our friend recounts in the letter, and all of the people who participated in that disappointing dinner would be able to say the same about other moments in their lives. Because "if the event of faith [...] is accepted as obvious, and everything is reduced just to explanations or dialectics or ethics [...] what interest can it evoke in us?" We already said this at the Beginning Day. "It will not hold our attention, not even for a minute [an instant]. None of our attempts can produce the human newness through which Christ fascinates us and makes us interested in Him" (p. VIII). Just as it happened to Abraham: he wouldn't have been able to produce a single instant of that newness that entered into his life. Thus, it seems to me that this contribution offers us a suggestion, a confirmation of the road.

Hi.

Hi. What do you do in life?

I am a musician. My question is about Kierkegaard's story of the clown and the village. Even after discussing it with my School of Community group, it is still not completely clear to me. Or better, the story itself is clear, but I don't understand its significance in connection with the first point of your lesson ("The circumstances and the form of testimony"). In addition to the story, I will quote two of your sentences: "And in order not to appear like a clown himself [Fr. Giussani], from the very beginning, he sought to show the pertinence of faith to the needs of life." Or, "He [Fr. Giussani again], someone who knew Catholic doctrine very well, had to reflect on the best way to communicate the truth, the same unchanged truth, in a context that was rapidly changing" (pp. V-VI). Therefore, after this passage, I would have summarized the challenge like this: how, or with what strategy, can I witness the truth of Christianity without looking like a clown? But I don't believe that this is the only thing that is at stake, right?

Indeed.

In fact, I was thinking of the lives of many saints – St. Paul, for example. When he speaks in front of the Areopagus in Athens, the Acts of the Apostles report, "When they heard about resurrection of the dead, some began to scoff [same verb], but others said, 'We should like to hear you on this some other time'" (Acts 17:32). Thus, I would say that Paul, too, somehow looked like a clown. Yet, the text continues, "But some did join him, and became believers." Jesus Himself looked the same, or worse, if in the Gospels we can read, "They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him [again], saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" However, He went ahead and saved the world all the same. Thus, looking like a clown seems almost inevitable. Why, then, this emphasis on the character of the clown?

Why do you think that Fr. Giussani insists that the circumstances are crucial for defining our witness? Let's be careful not to get confused. The examples that you gave from the New Testament indicate a very true point: it is always possible to refuse the truth as such. In relating with St. Paul, with Jesus, with you or with me, people can adhere or not. But before getting there, I – I – have to ask myself whether the way in which I present the truth is adequate to the people or not, as Fr. Giussani used to do. When they encountered Fr. Giussani, many who had received the preaching of the Church had already rejected it. They said it, and Fr. Giussani said it: when he went to the Berchet High School, many students were the children of Christian parents, they had participated in the life of the Church in some way, and they had given it up. So why, later on, did they feel called again by the way in which Fr. Giussani witnessed the faith? Because they perceived that this witness was more relevant for responding to their life's needs. They had already received the Christian announcement, but they no longer perceived it as relevant to life. That is why Fr. Giussani insists that all ways of witnessing are not equally relevant. Why? Because faith enters into a concrete historical context. The whole effort of the Second Vatican Council was not about changing the doctrine, but about finding a more adequate way to communicate it in a historical-cultural context that had changed. Do you understand? This doesn't mean that, even in front of the truest witness (like those of St. Paul and Jesus that you mentioned), one cannot say "no" – of

course he can. Every challenge to freedom can be rejected, because it is addressed to a person's reason and freedom. However, before blaming the others because they reject it, I often wonder whether the way in which I announced it to someone else was the most adequate way. I want to be sure that they are rejecting it, not because the way in which I proposed it was inadequate, but because they are rejecting it as such, due to a free choice.

But in that case, don't we run the risk of measuring ourselves against the success of the announcement?

It's not a problem of measure. It's about being full of anguish for the other. Wouldn't a father want to communicate the truth to his son in a persuasive way? Or think of yourself: when you teach music, don't you want to do it in a way that awakens a passion for it in your students? How many people do you know who reject music because they were introduced to it in an obviously inadequate way? You know this perfectly well. This is the problem, and it is a real problem. The other thing is that, even if one has the best music teacher, he can still reject it. The ultimate freedom of the other is unquestionable. However, this doesn't eliminate your desire to improve, and to continue to verify your way of communicating it, in order to awaken passion in your students. Yes or no?

Yes, thank you.

And people understand this.

I am a nurse. A few weeks ago, before the Beginning Day, I had some days at work in which a question kept filling my heart, a question about the meaning of the time that I spend in my ward, which demands an ever-growing portion of my life. At times, though, this question was turning into a doubt: is this the right place for me? Am I really building something? One morning, the head nurse called me in to discuss a study proposal, and before I left her office, she stopped me and said, "Wait, I have to tell you something important." In my stupidity, I thought: she must have caught me...

You must have done something wrong!

Exactly. Instead, she looked at me and said, "I have observed you a lot during these first months of yours here, and I have noticed one thing: when you are here, there is a different climate, we work together. Everyone, from the woman who cleans the rooms to the other nurses, to the surgeon, desires to be carried away by your love for life. And this is without you doing or saying anything in particular, also because you are the last person who joined this ward, and you obviously still have a lot to learn. What we have always painfully lacked here is teamwork. Everyone is good and prepared, but they are often unable to embrace the other. You are the gift that we were so looking for." I was speechless. In that moment, a doctor came in to ask me to do a transfusion, and in the blink of an eye, the life of the ward took over again. Impulsively, I found myself thinking: this is the measure with which You look at me; not the measure that I would use to look at myself, but the measure with which You look at me, and I am as amazed as the head nurse by what You do with my life. But it's not enough – I would like to love this woman more, I would like to love my coworkers more, I would like to love this place more. The more life is a sign that the relationship with Him is infinite, and the more I recognize Him before my eyes, the more I want Him again and even more. The witness has to coincide with this amazement before Him, and with this need to be with Him again and even more, precisely as you were describing at the Beginning Day in talking

about the Apostles: not a “doing,” not the right words, but letting ourselves be overwhelmed by this amazement. Because I see that this is what is making me generate, right where I am.

This doesn't mean that you shouldn't continue to do your job, because it is precisely the way in which you work that amazes people. Witnessing is not “not doing,” but rather doing the usual things differently, with the newness that looking at Him introduces into life. Then people recognize it, because, as we said before, they don't perceive you as a clown, but rather as the gift they had been yearning for. Encountering a person who lives like that – because you are the only one who knows the origin of the newness that you are carrying – is for everyone. This is how a witness takes place: it is a presence that is relevant to the needs of what the others are living.

I would be very grateful if we could elaborate on the point that circumstances are an essential factor, fundamental for our personal vocation, because I cannot get it out of my mind. I need to understand what it means that circumstances, particularly those that are the most painful, are precious, because the Mystery calls us to Himself through them. More than a need to understand it, it is really a need to be able to accept it.

First and foremost: to be able to look at it. Before anything else, circumstances happen. They are the way through which the Mystery calls you to respond. Good or bad, circumstances call us. For this reason, Fr. Giussani always introduced us to life by saying that life is vocation, that life is the call of the Mystery through circumstances. That is why they are the essential factor in the way in which we are called. It's not that God gives you certain circumstances, and then He calls you somewhere else. He calls you through the circumstances that He places in front of you. What are the simplest, the clearest circumstances? Those that are inevitable, because, since you didn't choose them, you can be sure that the Mystery gave them to you. The Mystery doesn't first prepare you for something that is going to happen and then give it to you. He allows an illness, for example, and then He gives you all of the time to understand its meaning. He calls you. Otherwise, we will never discover it, because no one enters into these things with his imagination, but rather because life calls him to live them. Thus, if one agrees to recognize circumstances as the call of an Other, then he can discover, not a series of ultimately faceless factors, but rather that, behind reality – and this is the first point – there is the face full of goodness of the Mystery who is calling you. You don't yet know where it will take you, it may seem “against” you, you may not be able to understand. However, because of what happened in your life, you cannot help but recognize, in living those circumstances, the Presence that is giving them to you. This opens “new processes,” as the Pope says, it opens the journey. Faith doesn't spare you the relationship with reality, faith gives you the companionship of Christ present in the companionship of the Church to help you to discover the meaning of what you are living. This is crucial. What does it mean for you in this case? That the more circumstances hurt you, the greater the disproportion that you feel, the more you are called to recognize the Mystery who is giving them to you, and who allows you to live them in a human way. Who would be able to live the deepest wounds – as you said – without the companionship of an Other? And how do you discover this? Through circumstances, because it is when life corners you that you have the possibility – nothing is automatic – to open yourself to the Mystery who also makes Himself known through this. Through a You.

As I wrote to you, if there is something that I instinctively cannot stand, it is hearing songs that were written for a man or a woman being interpreted with a “higher” meaning.

No, no, no! I want to explain this well. They are not transposed onto something else. I ask that they be sung in order to explain – and then you can go on with what you wanted to say – that, already at the basic level of our life, we have the very clear perception that the presence of a “you” (lower case “y”) is not something that hinders the autonomy of the “I,” but rather makes it more itself. We already know this at the elementary level of human experience, well before God becomes a You that we can encounter. I do not ask that *La mente torna* [*The Mind Returns*] be sung so that you immediately think of Christ. No. I ask that *La mente torna* be sung so that you think, first of all, about what we sing. Because we live in a mentality in which the person is closed in himself, conceived of in an individualistic way as total autonomy, without ties. On the contrary, we need to start seeing that, in the common experience, everyone recognizes that “I am not, when you are not there.” If this already happens in the common experience, then imagine when the problem of living starts to get bigger and life becomes more pressing.

And the Beginning Day starts with that kind of song, just like tonight...

Tonight, too – it was for you!

Then, I immediately react by feeling a little uneasy, and I think: what a fascinating experience Battisti and Mogol had in writing these things for a woman – this is a concrete, real, and desirable experience. Instead, thinking of a You with a capital “Y” seems like “less.” Then the Beginning Day went on, and I very quickly set aside this sense of discomfort; I listened, I was there with some of my friends, I was struck by many things that you said, and therefore everything went well, I was very happy. When I started to work with my School of Community and we went over the text, I felt that uneasiness again, and I thought: why does a You seem like something less to me? Recalling the example of the clown, I felt a little like a clown to myself, as if my experience of faith were not believable (not even for myself!). This is my question. The first answer that I thought of is a rather silly proverb, which doesn’t even say exactly what I mean, but it came to mind: better an egg today than a hen tomorrow [a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush]. Besides the fact that it doesn’t reflect exactly what I think, it made me think immediately – this point about today and tomorrow – that for me, in any case, the You is not a Presence today.

Recognizing this is already a step. The first point is to leave this uneasiness open and start to have the freedom to look at it, as you did today. If you continue to leave this question open, without setting it aside, then we will see what you will discover. Because the more a question is alive, the easier it is to recognize the answer. If you want a suggestion – start to examine your life, looking back at when you had the experience of a “you” that created an opening toward the You. In fact, we see in the Gospels that the encounter with Jesus often made people open to something else. They saw a miracle and they said, “We are grateful that God...” Why did they think of God if they had only met a human “you”? There are moments in life when that “you” carries something so overabundant that you cannot put it off to the future; it is so present in the experience that you are having that you are helped to recognize it. We are often not aware of this. Why? Because we take everything for granted. Many of the things we that tell each other every day – for example, as we just heard, the amazement of the coworkers in front of a different presence at work – demonstrate an overabundance that the others see. They may not recognize the You immediately, but they cannot help but recognize a difference that is the sign of this You. How can the Mystery express Himself in a way that can be recognizable in a present experience without having to do mental gymnastics? Through the overabundance that appears in a human experience. But we often start to reduce things as we listen to them. That is why, afterward, when we face a claim like that of the You with a capital “Y,” it seems to us like a fairytale, as Fr. Giussani says. Therefore, I quoted his

words: “When you wake up in the morning, when you have difficulties or disappointments, anxiety or obstacles, the image of an Other [with a capital “O”] who accompanies [your life] [...], who reaches all the way down to you [just as you are] to restore you to yourself, is like a dream” (*Alla ricerca del volto umano [In Search of the Human Face]*, op. cit., p. 27). Thus, recognizing the uneasiness is the first step, because this is the problem of faith, as you said. This is the main reason why we are together: to help each other to recognize this You. This is the same thing that is expressed by another question that many people asked me: What educates memory? As a university student told me a few weeks ago, “I had to stop and look at what was happening.” It seems to me like the secular definition of what we are used to identifying with the word “memory” (often filing it away as “already known”). To stop and see, deep down, what is present in the experience that we are having, in the relationships that we have, in the things that we tell each other as a witness; to stop and look, without replacing this looking with our abstract thoughts. No. We have to look at what is happening, like the first letter that I read this evening said: before I couldn’t see and now I can. Then, I start to see what is present, I don’t have to invent it, nor do I have to do mental gymnastics in order to think of it. It exists! But it often eludes me. That is why the work of memory is necessary: stopping and looking. This is the work of memory: stopping and looking. I ask you: how much time do you dedicate to this work? Who is amazed when he stops and looks? Without this work, everything disappears, and the things that we are told don’t increase our awareness of the concreteness of this You. Then, when the time of trial comes, we notice that everything else seems more concrete than this You! Think of the disciples: was everything else in their normal human experience of life more concrete than that human difference that they were seeing when they were with Jesus? Don’t we have the same difference in front of us constantly, and among us on many occasions? Or do we imagine it?

I am the father of four children. The youngest, who is four years old, was born when I was 50, so a beautiful gift. For us, it was a surprise that threw us off-balance from the very beginning, requiring daily effort, but it is definitely also a daily gift. On a normal day, tiring and full of various concerns, our little one asked my wife to play with her. My wife was busy doing something else, but, making an effort to get away from what she was doing, she sat down next to her and started playing, all the while thinking of the problems that always arise in a family of six. At one point, our daughter said, “Mom, can you take care of me with a happy face?”

She does not settle for anything! Do you see? This is the point. Children recognize it right away – anything but dolls without a brain! Their detector works from the very beginning!

My wife, who up to that moment had felt that she had a clear conscience because, in spite of everything, she was able to give some time to everyone, including the youngest, was taken aback by the question. As you say, we were immediately decentered and amazed. That evening, that question changed us, it literally changed our way of being with her, as well as with our other children. In her own way, our little one had expressed my need, too – and I am convinced that this is also everyone’s need, as you tell us. It is really like this: witnessing doesn’t mean becoming a better person – anyone who knows me is aware that I always fail in this respect – but it is being happier, or more joyful, as the Christian tradition would say more correctly. This also causes me to understand that it’s not something that depends on my doing, but it is a being, a gift. I wouldn’t be able to make myself happier for a single second. This comes from an overabundance, from something that comes before. It is being happy because one recognizes a gift. It is something structural, it is what I am. It is not guaranteed by superstructures that help the “doing,” but that,

in any case, don't make you happier. As you have been saying lately, this episode caused us to experience first-hand that witness is born of a freedom that finds something so fascinating that it makes one want to move from his lethargy, from boredom, and also from the feeling of having a clear conscience. It comes from a You who makes one passionate about his own "I," a You who makes my "I" fascinating to myself, first of all.

Thank you. "This comes from an overabundance." It is this overabundance that witnesses to the presence of an Other, because we can't help but recognize that we are not giving it to ourselves, that we do not produce it. It is a gift, and the others recognize it. Someone was telling me that one of his children had been to a conference in the U.S. and, as soon as he arrived, one of the people there asked him, "Do you belong to CL?" "Yes, how did you know?" "Because you people are always glad." People do recognize this difference right away, this overabundance, which is obviously present, not because we are good, but because of a presence that testifies to the You through a way of being in reality that would otherwise be impossible. People who meet us "find something so fascinating that it makes one want to move from his lethargy." Morality is born from this. One starts to desire to become active, to engage with things, to change.

I am starting my last year of college, and little by little, I am discovering how different a year can be depending on how I face reality. It is really a time of transition. I see my best friends graduating and getting married, and suddenly the daily relationships that were present before are no longer there. I have also started to really wonder what makes the gestures in which I almost automatically participate new and meaningful. I came to the Beginning Day, and I felt terribly jealous of the protagonists in the examples that you were recounting. I glimpsed an exceptionality that made me desire to have such simplicity of heart. Thus, I started and I am continuing to work on the text of the Beginning Day, precisely in order to better understand this exceptionality that, after years in the Movement, has filled me once again. I could quote all of the passages that I found meaningful recently, but I was particularly struck and challenged by this: "When we complicate life and experience the relationship with reality like a form of violence, it is not [...] because everything is mistaken or bad. No, no! The problem is that the You is missing, that You that makes possible for everything – everything! – to become friend" (p. XI). This seeking the You as the central point has concretely clarified what is asked of me, triggering in me the desire to see the signs of His presence in the flesh, in what exists, with those who are still at the university, with those in front of me. I felt personally called right there, as if, in that moment, Jesus wanted to make me walk precisely there. In the past few days, I was introduced to a freshman who didn't know the Movement and had just moved to my town. We had a long talk, and at the end of our conversation, I invited her to School of Community, because I was struck by the enthusiasm that she had in doing everything. At the end of the meeting, she came to me and said, "I don't ever want to leave this, because I feel like the protagonist of a vast history." She decided to follow me everywhere, she started charitable work with me, and she was the first to register for School of Community, because she is grateful for the encounter that she had. If I think back to how I started the year, I realize how God's method is really much more suitable than mine. By entrusting myself to His work, I rediscovered that, in answering my questions and my fears, He – unlike me – does not support my reasoning, but rather imposes His greatness through some facts (like the encounter with this girl). Through this girl's enthusiasm, I recovered the enthusiasm to begin again. Through her eyes, I rediscover the greatness of the history that I have encountered every day, and what a great help it is for my life. This is increasing my understanding of the value of the witness that you are proposing to us. I

didn't see the three points that you indicated as rules by which one converts the new people whom he meets, but as tools for our own personal conversion first of all, and to help us to be constantly challenged. Only thus can one encounter and let himself be changed by the last comer.

Thank you. This is God's method, which causes us to encounter this young woman and gives her and her enthusiasm to us as a gift: "I don't ever want to leave this," and she immediately gets involved in everything. The change happens in her precisely because of that start, that spark that was kindled in her, which changes her more than anything else. You connected this to God's method. If we only paid attention to how God acts! You would have never convinced her with your own efforts, not even by tying her down. On the contrary, God's method, which doesn't seem effective enough for us, is the only one that truly changes people's lives and generates the Christian community. As the *Acts of the Apostles* say, new members are assimilated into the Christian community, that is, into this friendship that we live. That is why understanding the method makes things easier for us, because otherwise we miss out on what the Mystery is giving to us. Because, my friend, what greater thing could the Mystery give to you in order to start this special year in your life, than a young woman who challenges you and becomes such a witness for you?

A few weeks ago, I met an elderly woman who was sick. I went to see her, and she told me, "I really wanted to see you, to speak to you, to hear from you, because I no longer think about God, except for when I argue with Him every now and then." Then she said, "You know, I have done many things in my life." I looked at her, a bit puzzled, and she continued, "Well, yes, you know, when I was young I had this desire to rebel, particularly from a sexual point of view, and so I was getting tangled up; I did many things that were not right, I even had some abortions." At that point, I was moved by her, I couldn't leave – because God doesn't leave me – and so I went closer to her, she opened her arms, and I hugged her. She told me, "Listen, you are the only one with whom I am free to talk about these things." And she added, "How can one become part of CL? I would like to join it. And you also have to come over for dinner; I will make something that you like." In that moment, I didn't answer, I didn't know what to say. Two days ago, she called me and said, "I wanted to get in touch with you. I miss you. When are you coming back?" I was really moved, because this is the question that life asks my life: is there someone in life without whom you cannot live? So much so that you have to ask, "When are you coming back?" Because if you don't come back, life is not life.

"When are you coming back?" It's all there! All of a person's morality is reawakened by a relationship. Even a person with this history behind her – whom you would think it is impossible to move, even with a crane – can be moved "within" by an encounter that reopens a path. These extreme examples make us understand that, even in situations in which everything has collapsed, where not even the most basic remorse is felt, everything can start again. But how does it start again? We have to look at how God starts it again. In fact, sometimes when we try to make things start again with our own methods, we ruin everything. That is why we spoke of the primacy of the Event over ethics at the Beginning Day – not because we want to get rid of ethics, but because ethics are born from the Event. In fact, when the Event is lacking, all ethics fade. We don't become more moral because we continue to recall each other to morality; it has to happen. "When are you coming back?" We heard it this evening in many examples: where is the desire to move, the desire to change, born? Where is it born in each of us? Each of us has to look at what sets him in motion, where the desire to change his life comes from. Only if this origin happens, can morality be born, as Fr. Giussani always taught us. Morality is born in front of the Presence. Morality is born from

the attraction of feeling embraced like that, like Zacchaeus or Matthew. Or Peter, who, after having erred, finds himself being asked, “Do you love me?” This is a challenge to our mentality first of all. From where do we think we can start in order to change – both ourselves and the others? Only by stopping and looking at what the Mystery does: “Do you think that you can change by doing it your way? I challenge you. It’s not that I don’t know what man’s situation is; it’s not that I don’t know you. If I did what I did, it is because this method is the only way to resurrect the ‘I,’ even from its own ashes.”

The next School of Community will be held on Wednesday, November 18th at 9:00 pm. We will begin to work on *Recognizing Christ*, which is the second lesson of the Fraternity Exercises. This doesn’t mean that we should set aside the many examples that can help us to understand that text, too. We will begin with Fr. Giussani’s lesson, because many of the things that we said at the Beginning Day have to do – as you will see – with what this lesson says. It will help us to understand more clearly what we said at the Beginning Day, about what God’s method is and how I can recognize it. Correspondence – it is correspondence that allows us to recognize the presence of the Mystery. Why? Because it sets the totality of the “I” in motion, because it regenerates my “I.” In this historical moment, in which we see the collapse of everything, the only thing that does not collapse is this “I” that we see, that is the witness of His work among us, and that reawakens people. Thus reality begins to change again. That is why we will now tackle *Recognizing Christ*, continuing along the same lines, on the same path that we are already following. For next time, we will read pages 63-75 of the Exercises booklet.

During the coming months, the Book of the Month will be *La bellezza disarmata [Unarmed Beauty]*. This book is an attempt to offer the reasons of the experience that we are living in the face of many challenges, as I had the opportunity to say, for example, in an interview with Tg2 Mizar [an Italian news channel], which you can see on the CL website. I will present the book in Rome on November 5th, together with Cardinal Tauran and Luciano Violante. Roberto Fontolan will moderate the presentation. The event will begin at 6:30pm, and it will be possible to follow it live on our website.

In order to promote or organize public presentations of the book in your towns, you can contact the Italian Association of Cultural Centers.

This year, the AVSI Tents fundraising campaign has the following title: “Refugees and Us: All on the Same Journey.” We want to embrace Pope Francis’ appeal, which invites us to accept the challenge of the history that we are all living and to welcome the refugees. We are already seeing the enthusiastic response of many people and communities that want to take the initiative. The Tents campaign is a tool and a proposal to become involved in this. The AVSI campaign aims to support some projects, particularly in South Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Italy. AVSI has also created a new and important service called Network#ProfughiEnoi. The topic of refugees is complex and delicate, because there are also juridical issues that are beyond our area of expertise. With this initiative, AVSI plans to collaborate with organizations that are already active at different levels in our country with respect to refugees, and to direct to this entity both those who desire to better understand what is happening and those who ask for advice on how to help concretely. You can find more detailed information about this initiative on the AVSI website.

In addition to the AVSI Tents, I remind you that the Movement places particular emphasis on the Food Collection as a charitable gesture. This year it will be held on Saturday, November 28th.

Finally, I remind you that there is an email address to which you can send questions and short contributions for the School of Community. I ask you to send them by the Sunday before our meeting, so that I will have time to read them. The email address is: sdccarron@comunioneliberazione.org, and I ask you to please use it exclusively for the School of Community.

Let's say a prayer for Pope Francis and for the Synod on the Family, which is coming to a close.

Veni Sancte Spiritus