

Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón
Milan, October 25, 2017

Reference text: J. Carrón “At the Beginning it was not so!” pp. I-IX,
http://english.clonline.org/default.asp?id=559&id_n=21674

- *Errore di prospettiva [Error of perspective]*
- *Come my Way, my Truth, my Life*

Glory Be

Veni Sancte Spiritus

Welcome to all, both all present here and those connected by video for this first gathering resuming our work on Beginning Day. The songs that we just sang introduce us to this work, because only if we look properly can we see reality as it is, can we recognize what exists and is present. As we said at Beginning Day, we realize that looking properly is not always immediate and we need a light. Thus, we sang “*Come my Way, my Truth, my Life,*” because You are the life that makes us breathe” (*Song Book*, pp. 17). In fact, without breathing we cannot look properly. So, let’s begin our work.

I wanted to recount my experience in light of Beginning Day’s first three points. Due to the circumstances I am living this year, I realize that I often have the experience of formalism and moralism, and I also recognize the symptoms you describe as true. In these moments of difficulty, I accept that the symptoms you mention are useful for making me beg for Jesus’ presence, for the experience of a relationship with Him, and I notice that in my heart there isn’t despair but rather a certain sense of peace that awaits His answer to the questions that arise from the recognition of these symptoms. The important question, though, is about the return to the origin, that is, about the point of being able to be glad because He answers, exists, and is present. It is true that at the beginning I recognized the attraction of Jesus’ person, but this is a little like when one falls in love: at the beginning it is like running with the wind at your back, but afterwards, as the years go by, there is the work of recognizing the reasons for continuing and remaining in the relationship. I need the Event to happen again, for Christ to be present now in my life and not to be abstract. If He answers, it must be clear and recognizable and I shouldn’t have to make a special effort. In this sense I am not helped by those who tell me that I should be more moral, pray more, work more on School of Community, listen to witnesses, etc. I can be happy for the faith that others witness to me, for their holiness, for Christ being constantly held up as the meaning of life, for other peoples’ happiness, for their gladness, or for the words of the School of Community that are quoted and remembered. Yet, if all of that doesn’t happen within me, it’s no good, it doesn’t work for me. This is the concreteness of Christ that I and many people seek, because I realize that the world is looking for Christ in this way, that is, concretely. That is the essential factor for believing, for life to have a sense of gladness, to have hope. The moral reminder, the personal efforts, and the witnesses of others, the mystical experiences, the good words, are not helpful to me. Rather, in the end they irritate me, because they make me feel even more inadequate.

Is what you describe just a better performance by our friends who are witnesses, or does it have something to do with the Event that happens?

It has something to do with the Event, because witnesses per se doesn't help me at all.

I wouldn't say that it doesn't help you at all. Later we will see what its purpose is. The first issue is whether we catch that He is happening, not only the prowess or the performance of one person or another. The point is whether certain things witness that He is happening before you. This is very important. Let's leave the question open and see whether we can identify the answer more clearly in this evening's journey.

I thank you a lot for the Beginning Day lesson, because it accompanies my days—I wonder why?—much more than usual. I get the impression that this time, for me, what we are working on is truly something that has to do with real life, everyday life and ordinary things. Then, there is the question that recurs, from the first time you asked it until today: How was it at the beginning? After Beginning Day our Prior told a Fraternity group, “Yet, I am having a hard time beginning again,” and while he was saying that I had in front of me the title of Beginning Day: “At the beginning it was not so!” For this reason, I said, “But, at the beginning it was not hard.” Therefore, I found myself thinking often of how the first time was for me, in all its small details, years ago, the very first time, the first impact, because it was truly an impact. Jesus ran into my life and changed it. If it hadn't happened I wouldn't be here to speak before you. I often find myself asking my friends the same question, because this question keeps coming back, and then I think of it again and say: the first time was something both very beautiful and very strange, in the sense that I recognized that something great, striking, was happening, but through normal, even trivial forms (which is why I have some images of several years ago fixed in my eyes: some faces, a person's eyes, a song, an evening with friends), together with that exceptional thing I wouldn't know what to call other than the presentiment of truth. If I think back to that moment, to that very moment, I realize that everything happened so suddenly that it found me totally unprepared. It was truly an unpredictable, unforeseen event, something I was waiting for, but unexpected in the way it happened, in the form it took. In short, I had no defenses in front of what was happening, and I wasn't even interested in having them. Then, as time goes on, you think you are growing up and you start reasoning, making assumptions, you think you know. You understand how things work and, perhaps without truly meaning to, you start using all the good things you have been taught to defend yourself from the unexpected. You even start thinking of the first time by almost doubting it, and you say, “Well, perhaps we were young, and our enthusiasm dominated everything,” and you judge what happened the first time, now with a grown-up, savvy attitude, forgetting the judgment you made—yes, years ago, but it was true. I think that the correct judgment on things is the one made when things happen and not the one elaborated over time. If I am wrong, please correct me. After time has elapsed, you expect or, worse, demand that the event happen, betraying and denying the way in which it actually happened. The nostalgia I have and the greatest difference I see in myself between the first time and now is that wretchedly defenseless (in the good sense of the word) position. He came and He won me over, He took me by storm and I was happy about it. Now, instead, I spend my time erecting barriers to defend myself so that I am no longer struck. I believe there is a mysterious point (this is what I call it) that allows you to lower all your defenses, to be open to everything, that makes everything appealing to you, that makes the unforeseen

appealing to you. I am not interested in going back in time, I am interested in living now like the first time, living my whole life with the amazement of the first time. Yet, I cannot identify, I cannot understand well how this mysterious point is generated. I don't know whether there is a method that can be used so that this position may be the position of every moment. I would like to be helped with this.

I thank you deeply, because you zeroed in on a crucial point. You identified how you were at the beginning and how it happened, but then you added that often it is as if everything that happened to you worked against you to make you defend yourself from what happens in the present. You recognized that at the beginning you were defenseless.

It was like that.

It was like that! So, to what extent does losing this attitude prevent the beginning from happening again? Not “how” it happened the first time, but “what” happened then and happens now before you. In my opinion, this is crucial for a faith like ours, centered on a present Event, happening again in the present. Yet, as you said—you described it in a crystal-clear way—sometimes we think, “I already know how things work,” and we turn an event that happens into a mechanism, because we lack that initial openness. Yet, that is precisely what Jesus constantly asks us to have, so that He may be recognized as He happens! Because, it isn't that He doesn't happen again...

We don't see it.

Because, at one point, instead of continuing to have that openness, we change our attitude. You used a word: reasoning. I would describe it like this: you try to put new wine into old skins. But at the beginning it was not so! It isn't that it doesn't continue to happen, but you try to bring it back to something that you already know. This doesn't mean that you should stop reasoning, the problem is that you use reason poorly. In fact, at the beginning it wasn't that you didn't have to use all your reason's capability of openness in front of what was happening, but now you have replaced that openness with your own machinations: reasoning has taken the place of the event. What is, then, the mysterious point that allows you to lower all your defenses again?

Hi.

It is a great challenge, but only for daring people like you!

After the CLU Diakonia at the beginning of this month, I was deeply struck by a fact. Besides all the things that you said, I was surprised by your enthusiasm in front of us students.

Maybe my enthusiasm was a bit of an attempt at being young.

I went home thinking: Wow, Carrón who is the leader of the Movement and could seek from us some proof of what he says, of what he preaches, of the things he decides and of everything he thinks of, instead puts himself here before us, looking for the answer with us. This seemed in great contrast to the attitude I have had with my friends and my fellow students at the University in the past month, since I was asked to be the responsible of the community. This role has brought me to face people who told me, “I have this problem with the Movement, with my faith,” and I often find myself becoming defensive, as if it were my responsibility to bring them to affirm something that I think, that is, to agree with me. This is totally useless, because I can cheat with everyone, but not with myself and with my heart.

Good! It is useless. To understand that is no small thing! That is why I don't do it.

In you I saw the open position of the child, while in me I see the closed position of the adult. Yet, becoming adults, growing up, cannot be a condemnation, otherwise I would have to throw away

everything that has happened up to now. At the beginning it wasn't like that, but going back to the beginning also means to erase...

What does all that you described until now suggest? Can one become an adult without losing the aspects of being like a child?

Well... what I saw in you...

“Well... what I saw...” Exactly!

To be an adult and to be like a child are not in contradiction. You see it in someone. And the Gospel points out to you someone else. Our Lady was able to be an adult and to remain so open. John and Andrew were adults and remained so open. Peter was so adult and remained so open. I think that the point you identified is crucial. That is why I liked so much how you described what you recognize when you are with the others: “I can cheat with everyone, but not with myself and with my heart.” It is useless for you. It isn't that you don't have to be concerned for those who have been entrusted to you, but the question is what does it mean “to be concerned.” How are we concerned for our friends? How am I concerned for the Movement? It is only by recognizing a present fact and inviting others to look at it that you defend the Movement and exercise your responsibility (like I exercise mine). Because you are not the one who can correspond to the expectation of your friends' hearts, just as I am not the one who corresponds to the expectation of all of you. I am amazed when I see certain things happen in front of me, things that I recognize are for me and for you. This is what truly answers, as it did at the beginning. That is why, when we have that attitude of amazement and recognition, we unexpectedly find ourselves united, generating a communion among us that is not born of a decision to agree. We recognize that we agree because we are all amazed by the same Presence, the presence of Christ here and now. How many times during the CLU Equipe this summer did moments of such silence took place... See? You are nodding in agreement because you still remember them—something that could almost be touched. Why? It was not due to some strategy or performance, but because we were listening to some things, something was happening in which His presence was imposing itself. That was what was giving back to all of us the attitude of a child, it was giving us that gift again. This rediscovering the attitude of a child is also a not a fruit of our performance and we are surprised again in front of something that happens and gives us back that original attitude. The point is whether when that happens we accept it, because recognizing the event doesn't happen automatically. What happens is imposing, but accepting it is not automatic.

Every morning I turn on my computer. The screenshot is flawlessly CL: besides my emails, the CL website appears automatically (and there is also the Sussidiario website). I read everything that comes from the Movement. At the beginning of October, I read (rather quickly) the report on the Spanish GS assembly in Madrid, which mentioned the pro-independence young woman who said, “I am not defined just by this.”

Did you all read it?

The article recounts the dialogue among and conclusions of people with different opinions, and the Catalan songs sung together by everyone. I got to the end quickly and I felt my mouth saying on its own, “Um!” Just like that: “Um!” It is a small symptom, we can say. And I wondered, “What does it mean?” Without realizing it, I was thinking, “Good job, but a little naïve, because the problems are huge!” But I stopped and thought, “Naïve? What does naïve mean?” Immediately Fr. Giussani's well-known phrase that was recalled also at Beginning Day came to

mind, “Naively if you will”! He says, “At the beginning [...] we did not build on the values that Christ had brought us, but we built on Christ, naively if you will” (pp. VI), etc. Thus, I told myself, “What are you doing? Are you stopping at this apparent naivete (apparent, imagine that) of the kids, as if it were something “less,” a handicap? Didn’t you recognize that it is the witness of an attempt at building on Christ?” Then I had to go because I had things to do. Later, towards the evening, I went back to the Spanish flyer, because in the meantime I had realized that I had read it a little like one reads the newspaper in the morning, while you dunk your croissant in the cappuccino at the coffee shop, a little distractedly, thinking that in the end you have already seen and re-seen much of the news that comes your way. I re-read it. In that moment, though, I felt like I was reading something different, something new, truly new! Beautiful, convincing, also exciting. Every detail, every remark that was made seemed to tell us about a newness, a huge cleansing of positions compared to a certain barbaric way of clashing typical of extremists on both sides. I thought about it and asked myself, “What did I expect when I read it this morning?” Either I had no expectations, or ultimately, I was trying to quickly identify not the traces of the enthusiasm for a Presence, but a “cultural translation” (I use Fr. Giussani’s expression that was used at *Beginning Day in Assago*) that sounded convincing to me, that would confirm to me that it is right to belong to CL. I realized that by doing that I risked missing the element of true judgment and authentic culture contained in that pure and creative way in which the kids proposed themselves to us. In fact, it is truly in the enthusiasm for a Presence that our intelligence about reality grows, not outside or parallel to it. In fact, later I asked myself, “Is there something historically (“historically” for us who lived through the 1968 upheaval means incisive, concrete, adequate to a reality that pushes forward) more important for a Spanish kid of today (but also for the adults, for a country, for its destiny) than being reached and touched by a position like theirs, like the position that can be glimpsed there?” I answered myself, “No, honestly there isn’t.” I conclude: thank goodness that the Mystery tipped me off (because this is what happened) through that “naively” I heard that referred me back to Fr. Giussani and pulled me away from my distraction. In the end, what did you see that you had missed when you read the piece the first time? We often do what you described, we move on without grasping the scope of what is staring us in the face. We don’t recognize it because we think that it is too naïve. Who, having heard about John and Andrew’s encounter wouldn’t have said exactly what you said with regards to the problem of the Roman Empire at the time? When Fr. Giussani speaks to us of John and Andrew we all get excited. Maybe he is a little naïve as well...Maybe Christ too was a little naïve in using this method...But what affected history more incisively than that fact? Yet, for us that flyer almost isn’t an event, it almost isn’t a remarkable event. It happens before our eyes, but we face it unperturbed and therefore we don’t perceive all the newness that it brings and the origin of that newness. In fact, to give a judgment like that of the Spanish kids, the Word must have become flesh—like for John and Andrew it was necessary that the Word became flesh—and they must have had the experience of correspondence recounted by the Gospel. Thus, like you said at the end, our moving on often prevents us from recognizing the true judgment because we consider it naïve. Then, we think that we need to get to the “cultural translation.” No. No! The judgment is inside the event that is happening, like those students experienced. Afterwards, they wrote an additional flyer, I don’t know if you read it.

Yes.

I am going to read it, because it makes everything even more clear. “It is October 2nd, 2017 [after the previous day’s clashes], Village of Plana de Vic [inland in Catalonia]. A seventeen-year old girl [a nationalist] is surprised as she realizes that her long-held convictions are wavering: “This morning we read the official statement of the school where I study that expressed anger and condemnation for the cruel gestures of violence against citizens who were voting in the polling stations. It upset me, because there was violence on both sides, even though the police were more brutal. The generalizations made when speaking of the Government’s and Civil Guard’s bad behavior and the fact that in the case of us Spaniards everyone is lumped together, drives me crazy. It is mortifying that we [Catalans] are called terrorists, but we are also brandishing the same word. Neither the Spanish nor the Catalan news is looking for the truth, but instead only for their own gain. This is not the independence I defend.” After reading the letter of an alleged policeman who exhorts everyone not to commit any violence on October 1st, the girl concludes by saying, “I don’t know whether it is true or not, but what I felt as more dizzying was what the policeman said at the end: ‘For us [in this political game] EVERYTHING is at stake.’ I find myself before a man who bets his whole life on this, a man whose happiness depends on a political decision. If ideology is so powerful as to blind us, and the witness of my experience (the Christian encounter) is not enough, how can I build a *green light* powerful enough to break the mask of ideology?” A *green light*. Like the light that appears in “Men Against Fire,” an episode of the TV show *Black Mirror* in which the army of a city defends the people from the invasion of anthropomorphic beings called “cockroaches,” riddling them mercilessly with bullets. Suddenly the eyes of a soldier are hit by a *green light* that comes from one of the creatures, and the next day that soldier no longer sees cockroaches, but rather frightened men, women, and children who are trying to hide. He is paralyzed and no longer able to kill. The veil of ideology that separated them has fallen. A friend tells the girl, “You already are the *green light*. Your experience seems insufficient in comparison with the magnitude of the problem, it looks like a speck of dust. Two thousand years ago a child was born in Bethlehem. Not enough to solve the problems of the world? It is God’s method. He chooses what is small to do great things. You only have to be faithful to the experience of correspondence that you had, so that little by little you will be able to break down the masks.” This girl is not interested in adding wood to the fire. She wishes to verify how the Christian experience is able to make the veil of ideology fall. In her fragility she wonders how that can happen through her, how she can become that green light. She is interested in living and passing on the change that happened in her in the encounter with Christ, an encounter that gives unity to her life and allows her to look at the other as a good and not as a stranger. We all need a green light that pierces through the ideologies and allows us to find ourselves.

What does this fact tell us? In a person who for decades has been the recipient of a certain ideology, only an apparently trivial thing like the Christian encounter makes the veil of ideology fall. Is it an event or an illusion? Is it something that, small or big (like John and Andrew), documents that the Event continues to happen, even though we don’t see it? Yes, or yes? Like this flyer, there are many things that elude us in our distracted way of looking. Then, we inevitably replace the fact with the whole shebang that follows, because when we are no longer amazed at what happens the rules step in, the ethics step in, everything we can come up with steps in. Instead, for that girl—as it is for us—the only ethics to avoid falling prey to ideology is to remain “faithful to the experience of correspondence” that she lived. The fact that a girl can recognize that expecting everything from a political decision cannot correspond to the heart may seem too little, but is in fact everything. It

is truly everything. And she was able to recognize it only because she belongs to the Christian experience, not because she took a class on ideology at Harvard. In fact, not even that would have been able to give her that naïve boldness that made the veil of ideology fall. Yet, we think that that is too little in the face of the challenges of reality, don't we?

Very little.

“Very little,” not “little.”

Why does everything look easy when one participates in an encounter like Beginning Day, why does everything look so simple, so straightforward when one attends School of Community, so straightforward that each person is ready to suggest the solution and even those who don't have one are striving to find it? Yet, all this theory, all these words and facts experienced by other people don't withstand the impact of the next day when I must be personally engaged. I think that I am helped more by our being together than by what we say to each other. How can we help each other when we are together? How can we help each other to make the journey?

Is it only being together that helps us, or the fact that happened? When I went to Madrid for Beginning Day I met that Catalan girl and her question was exactly like yours, “Will what I lived this weekend hold when I go home this evening and when I go to school tomorrow? In her school, very few people think like her as compared with those who have a different position. What holds in the face of that situation? What holds is the experience she had and that she will have to constantly acknowledge, verifying whether it can withstand the concrete situation she finds herself in. If, instead, the criterion for being able to hold on is “unity is strength,” the game is over, because the others will be more numerous than we are. Instead, the experience is there, and in the face of these challenges, we can verify whether what we saw holds in life's circumstances. That is why we are not spared the circumstances. In fact, if we don't see that faith is victorious—that it holds—in the circumstances, we continue to doubt. This doubt is like a woodworm that stays inside us and corrodes us. Therefore, the fact that one must face certain circumstances is decisive for the certainty of one's own faith.

Like many others among us, I changed jobs recently (on September 1st) and now I teach in a public middle school. I have two classes, one of them pretty tough, because the majority of the kids don't trust the adults and think that the teacher is an enemy. I knew it would be like that, I had been prepared for it, and therefore I knew the school I was choosing. I knew I wanted to go and teach in a public school, because my personal history was bringing me exactly there.

Why? Tell us for a minute about your “personal history” to help us understand.

I grew up in a left-wing family, half atheist and half self-described Catholic, and my parents always made it a point to send me only to public schools because “they are freer,” in the sense that there each person has his own opinion, you hear from all the teachers and then you make your decision, you decide whom you want to follow. Yet, beginning in my sophomore year (in my sophomore, junior, and senior years) I had a teacher who gradually became the person I held in the greatest esteem. Only afterwards did I discover that she belonged to CL. This was a terrible contradiction for me, because I was telling myself, “How is it possible? A person who is so intelligent belongs to CL?! It is impossible!” However, instead of making me pull away from her it made my curiosity increase.

And it wasn't because there were many CL people in that school, but because you encountered one.

The thing that drove me crazy was that she just taught her classes. There was no Student Youth in my school, there was nothing of that. She never said anything, I didn't come to know from her that she belonged to CL, she only taught. That, however, was enough, sufficient to completely overturn my life, which acquired a meaning that was revealed over the course of a long time, because I graduated from high school in 2006 and now it is 2017. This is my starting point. Thus, I wanted to go and teach in a public school out of gratitude, because if she hadn't been in a public school, even without any strategy, I wouldn't be here. Imagine what implications this would have had! I can't even imagine them. So, I had all the reasons, I had the cause that was bringing me there, I knew that the school I was going to wouldn't be very easy, but I also knew that it would be possible to work. However, theory is one thing and practice is another. In fact, my encounter with one of the two classes was very hard. I could see that the game my students were playing (they are still playing it) is to see how patient I am. This is exhausting, because I am very patient, but that alone isn't enough. After two weeks during which I was getting home sometimes able to hold back my tears and sometimes crying, I realized that my main concern was becoming how to manage my hours—there are many, ten, in that class—and nothing else. It was a few days before Beginning Day and I thought, "What am I doing there? OK, I know why I went to that school, but now that I am there it seems to be a disaster." Going to Beginning Day with that question helped me enormously, because the day did not go by uselessly and offered me some ideas to work on. One thing in particular that truly stuck with me—I had already heard it, but this time it was different—is when you quoted the example of the inmate who, being cruelly searched by the guards, didn't get mad at them, but instead thought, "Of course, they cannot behave any differently because they did not see what I saw." In that moment, a light went on in my head. In fact, I told myself, "That is the same thing that happens with me and my students, they cannot behave differently." Many of my colleagues have told me the personal stories of many of the kids and they are truly difficult. I knew that to begin with, but I had never made this very simple connection. Not just that, I also thought, "I can look at them like that and the gaze on them with which I affirm, 'You insult me, but I am here for you, because unfortunately what happened to me hasn't happened to you,' is the same gaze Jesus had on those who were insulting Him when they crucified Him, who at the time didn't understand...I wonder whether they understood...they say that one understood, but afterwards." This made my knees shake, but when I went back to school I was less nervous and I got less angry. Now things are a little better. When I returned to school I thought, "I might never see the fruits of this gaze; no one guarantees that I will see the fruits." As a matter of fact, gratuitously, something tiny is happening, perhaps because I am freer with my reactions, and in very small details every day a student will notice that I do certain things, and there are things that have started to surprise them. The first episode that struck me—and it is the only one I am going to recount—is about a day in which, miraculously, they were working and didn't need me. I took advantage of this to correct some other tests. At a certain point, in the silence, I accidentally said, "Oh no!" A student asked, "Why, teacher?" I answered, "This person left a whole page of the test empty. He didn't turn the last page and didn't see it. What do we do now?" "Well, aren't you happy? It will take you less time to grade them." "Look, if that were my concern, I wouldn't do this job. I don't really care about grading quickly; I rather would like for all of you to do well." She didn't expect that answer. This does nothing to confirm that it is true that it isn't their fault,

but rather it confirms that I have received an additional grace. Thus, the only thing I must do isn't to strive to have patience, but rather to live before them like my teacher lived before me. The plan is not mine.

You said, "There are things that have started to surprise them." Why are they surprised? It is due to that difference that you make present, like your teacher made it present to you. It seems like nothing compared with the magnitude of the problem of education. Let's think of Saint Paul: they put him in jail, he becomes friends with another convict, and starting from that he begins to overturn his theoretical position on slavery. It seems like nothing. One of you asks me, "How can one keep the event alive every day, so that it isn't only about thinking back to the first time? Why, when we think about the event, do we grope in the fog, as if it didn't correspond to a concrete experience? We have a hard time in staying before the content of what should be our first concern, so much so that we arrive too quickly at the consequences," and therefore we don't see what is happening. Then, since we don't see it, we grope in the fog. It can be a small sign, but your student, in the class that makes trouble, noticed it. For her it wasn't fog, she grabbed onto the event, the difference that her teacher brings to her class, to the point of being surprised by it. That is why the problem is whether we have the simplicity to recognize it.

After Beginning Day, I wrote to you a little impulsively to thank you and Davide for what happened there. In fact, first I was deeply struck upon entering the Forum in Assago, because for many years I hadn't been able to come, and it was truly moving. Then, I was struck by how well your words described me. For some time now, my heart had been truly heavy, I felt like I was complaining constantly: about work, my husband, even my friends, who had become a pretext to vent my dissatisfaction. I wanted to find a scapegoat for the fact that I am not fulfilled. At Beginning Day, instead, I was moved again like at the beginning, I began to breathe again, glad for what happened to me there. It isn't that the circumstances changed, but I truly lived Christ's embrace of my life. I saw again all the attraction of His presence and once again I started to desire to see His face in the details of my day. Then, also, all the facts that make up my life (work, my husband, my children) returned as signs of this friendship that He has with me. My gratitude is for the experience I lived and for the grace of being in a companionship that constantly overcomes my distraction and my forgetfulness. Now, I wrote the letter a little impulsively after Beginning Day, so when the other day you called me to ask whether I could come and speak this evening, I asked myself, "What happened to me between Beginning Day and now?"

Does it hold?

Does it hold? My consistency doesn't hold, but what holds is He who continues to happen to me.

Who should hold, your consistency or Him?

He who continues to happen to me.

That is, He who claims to be Christ.

Who happened during an evening among friends and happens again in the facts of life, and in unforeseen things as well.

What is the sign that He happens? You already said it.

That my heart is glad.

"My heart is glad." It is the same correspondence as in the beginning. Different from the form of the beginning, but the same correspondence as in the beginning: you are breathing. Not because the circumstances changed, but because you have relived Christ's embrace. That is why sometimes

I wonder, “Have we all been in the same place?” because there are some who are excited and others who fall asleep or who get bored. The fact that just one person saw this, since it is impossible that she is making it up, documents how much the recognition passes through our freedom, because it is anything but automatic. Therefore, if we were in the same place, but our heart’s position is not the same, how much do we have to beg for the poverty of the Unnamed to which the Pope recalled us, exactly the poverty to which Jesus recalls us: if we want to enter the Kingdom of God we must be poor like that to be able to recognize Him present. That is why we continue our work with this desire: not so much to see how good we are (we all already know our ability to give a performance), but to see when we recognize Him present. Because those who want to validate their performance in the end get angry and complain. Instead, those who recognize Him present can breathe and are glad. I am curious to see what we will see. Fr. Giussani has already reminded us: what a grace to be part of a people who challenges my distraction, who makes me able to see what exists and not what doesn’t exist! Therefore, to see and tell each other, to share what we see is the first gesture of friendship.

The next School of Community will be held on Wednesday, November 22nd at 9:00 pm. We prepare ourselves by going over the second part of Traces’ PageOne *At the Beginning It Was Not So!* Starting from point 4 (“Christianity as Ideology and Christianity as Tradition”) to point 6 (“The Contemporaneity of Christ, Permanent Origin of the Dimensions of the Christian Experience”), from pp. IX to XVI.

The Book of the Month for November and December is: *Dov’è Dio? La fede Cristiana al tempo della grande incertezza* [Where is God? Christian Faith in a Time of Great Uncertainty] (Piemme Publishing), which is my conversation with Andrea Tornielli.

World Day of the Poor

Sunday, November 19th will be the first World Day of the Poor as indicated by Pope Francis, according to the intention expressed in the Message prepared for that occasion where, among other things, the Pope writes, “At the conclusion of the Jubilee of Mercy, I wanted to offer the Church a *World Day of the Poor*, so that throughout the world Christian communities can become an ever greater sign of Christ’s charity for the least and those most in need” (6). Pay attention to the connection the Pope makes: as the fruit of the entire Jubilee of Mercy, there arose in him the desire to express Christ’s charity with a gesture. As you can see, the Day is not a gesture unrelated to the Jubilee, but it originates from the same impetus, as we noted at *Beginning Day*. The Pope’s invitation is a help to live also the gestures of charity that we will make in the coming weeks: the Food Collection on November 25th and the initiatives of the AVSI Tents during the Christmas Season. The Food Collection and Tents are a concrete way to participate in the Pope’s call to heed the poor; both gestures should be lived with the awareness of what Fr. Giussani invited us to experience from the very beginning with the Charitable Work in the *Bassa* region. His proposal, in fact, originated in the same concern the Pope is asking us to have now. Amazing! Therefore, we can understand more easily what the Pope says from within our experience, thanks to the proposal we received from Fr. Giussani.

Veni Sancte Spiritus

Good evening to everyone!