

Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón
Milan, November 22, 2017

Reference text: J. Carrón “At the Beginning It Was Not So!” pp. IX-XVI,

http://english.clonline.org/default.asp?id=559&id_n=21674

- *Liberazione n. 2*
- *Give me Jesus*

Glory Be

Veni Sancte Spiritus

Only one who little by little grows in awareness of what we sang in the first song—“Tonight, neither a book, / a song, / nor a woman’s love will do” (C. Chieffo, “Liberazione no. 2,” in *Songbook*, p. 227)—can get up in the morning—“In the morning when I rise” (“Give me Jesus,” *Ibid.* p. 42)—asking for the only One who can answer this longing.

“What makes us poor like that?” asks a person who could not come because she lives far away. “I was very provoked at the last School of Community, because it was explained what poverty is: ‘Something was happening in which His presence was imposing itself. That was what was giving us back the attitude of a child,’ that is, this awareness of oneself as poverty. It was like a punch in the stomach, because I thought that I was naturally predisposed to have that attitude, as if it were something innate. Instead, you say that the event that happens is what gives us back this attitude.” In part it is true: we are born like that, like children, but in time, as we see in our experience, we lose that attitude. That is why we need someone who brings us back to having the attitude of a child, that attitude of poverty. This made the question become urgent to her, “I would truly like to better understand how this ‘mysterious point’ of poverty happens. Please go deeper into this.” How are this event and poverty related?

One day I reached the evening feeling very sad and bitter about something that had happened at work. Wishing to defend the rights of a person, and what was right, I got involved and I looked for possible ways to respond. In the evening I was tired and when I picked up the Beginning Day text I read, “The Christian’s point of departure is an Event. The point of departure of the others is a certain impression of things” (p. IX). For me that day the Event had not even been my last thought. It just didn’t happen! That made me ask to understand its meaning and why I hadn’t even thought of it.

Do you understand? That attitude is innate, but we can have days in which it doesn’t even come to mind, because we don’t have an attitude of poverty. Historically it happens like that.

On that day I would have really liked to give some people a hard time! As I asked myself these questions I realized that sometimes I experience circumstances that are even more difficult and challenging in which I find myself open to the Mystery, full of need and with the desire to understand what is coming into my life and what it is asking me. In facing them I don’t feel tired, I am not distraught. On the contrary, I am more certain of who I am and of Who leads my life, sure that there is a good for me in which I am already participating. The difference in the way in which I face the circumstances is that sometime I find myself totally disarmed and the only possible

position is to ask. I am poor. In other cases, I already know what is right, what needs to be done and therefore I don't ask, quite the opposite, I don't even think about it until something happens that introduces another criterion, like reading Beginning Day. Having understood that helped me understand the meaning of poverty. I saw the relationship between poverty and Event. Only a soul in need, open, can recognize the Event that is happening now.

It is interesting that we are starting to discover these things that we told each other at Beginning Day, and not just as formulas to be repeated, but as something meaningful for our lives. Why? Because in facing them—as you said—with this poverty, we face daily circumstances and challenges with a need. When instead we face the same circumstances without this openness, as something that we “already know,” they tire us. This openness is crucial, because it helps us recognize when the Event is happening and when it isn't. We see a red light, some symptoms that something is not working. When this attitude of openness is present, “I am more certain of who I am and of Who leads my life.” The question is how this poverty is given back to us—since, even if in a certain way it is innate, we lose it along the way. It is given back to us exactly as it happened to you during Beginning Day, which allowed a new gaze enter you.

Another person who lives abroad wrote to me about this point, telling me about what happens when one is defined by this Event. This person suffered a great injustice at work and a person who works with her noticed the new and different way in which she faced that situation. In fact, this person told her, “Ever since I saw how you reacted [a newness that one can see and touch isn't something that one imagines; I don't invent it, it isn't generated by me in the way I look at something. That coworker didn't have a particularly close relationship with her, but she saw how she reacted] I couldn't get it out of my head,” even if she didn't understand why. Until at a certain point she realized why: she had everything, “Two beautiful daughters, a good companion for the journey, a certain financial wealth, health, travels, but I was missing something,” something that the person who had struck her “had in spades.” She had been surprised by that to the point of thinking that she was crazy. Then she wondered, “Am I really crazy?” And she answered herself, “No.” Then our friend who wrote the letter began to develop a friendship with her, invited her to some School of Community assemblies on the Exercises, and afterwards gave her the Exercises booklet. Her coworker basically read it in one night, telling her that she hadn't been able to stop reading because “every word was just for me.” Then she was invited to Beginning Day and everyone was struck by the change that was taking place in her. Even her students, in addition to her husband and friends, so much so that they were asking her, “What are you taking?!” Other friends began to follow her and also for our friend it was like a new beginning. What makes a person so different that she disrupts (a very beautiful verb that Fr. Giussani uses to describe what a change consists of) the environment to the point that everyone looks at her? That struck even our friend who generated the change. In fact, she writes, “This made me start over as well, it gives me the simplicity of the beginning, because it is contagious. I have the desire to be with her [her coworker], because I see Christ happening in her face, in her amazement, in her joy. It moves me, and it is contagious, so that when we get together I always go home singing, literally, and it is easy to say ‘You.’ It becomes easier and easier. The other day in the small group that goes over the content of School of Community we went there with one attitude and came out with another, all happy. It was evident that Christ was present there, that He was happening there and was affecting, ‘infecting’ us, He was happening in us because we were seeing Him as He was happening. One only needs to be there and look at Him. I perceive that, as you say in the text of the [Exercises]

booklet, we can have a different position before what happens [pay attention, because this is a crucial suggestion], as if we were saying, ‘Good, how beautiful her beginning is!’ and immediately afterwards we examined it, compared it with our own beginning, looking at it as if it were a step of a process, instead of looking at it for what it is [instead of looking at what is happening, instead of being amazed, we immediately shift, instead of identifying with what happens and remaining where it is happening. That is why it is often very easy to forget what happened]. How difficult it is [instead] to avoid being ‘infected’ if one looks at what is happening [Fr. Giussani says, “If one fixes his gaze—fixes it!—on His happening.”]. It also reminds me of the phrase we know so well: ‘Look every day for the faces of the Saints.’ Which is very simple. At the beginning it was like that! This is what I wanted to tell you. In the background of my life there is always a happiness full of gratitude, no matter what happens, because in the relationship of love with Christ I already have everything, but the Lord gives me the opportunity to begin again, starting from the encounter with a teacher who turned up on the battlefield where they ripped me to shreds. This is huge. Amazing.” We stay in reality to see this. We are “going forth” (as Pope Francis invites us to do) to see this. Because we are the ones who gain through what the Lord makes happen before us. It is contagious, isn’t it?

Hi.

Who has “infected” you?

My daughter. I am at the end of two rather difficult years and now when it seemed that things, serious things, were falling into place, we were hit by a financial hardship never experienced before. During this time, what gave me the strength to never quit entrusting myself to God, and above all to trust Him, has been my teenage daughter, who in facing the difficulty of fluctuating health conditions in the evening never stopped putting her fuchsia rosary next to her bed as if to remind me, as if to say, “Mom, in the evening let’s entrust everything to Him in our prayers.” I couldn’t know what the Lord had in store for her, but it was something exactly for her. In school she met Student Youth [GS] and thanks to some teachers she truly experienced Jesus’ embrace, she had a decisive encounter. In fact, when you fall in love with Jesus you lose your head, it is something unexplainable that I experience and live as a grace. Now, I too am starting to attend School of Community, pushed by this wonderful teenager who told me, “Mom, you must try the beauty that one lives with this companionship.” What amazes me most now are these strong relationships of friendship that I saw and see with my own eyes. Actually, not just of friendship, but truly of brotherhood, and this strikes me deeply. Thus, I can only be grateful to the Movement for the fraternal embrace it offered my daughter and that I feel strongly also toward myself.

Sometimes it is delivered directly to our own home! It is enough to recognize it. Yet, the question arises: is this an event, or sentimentality? As people often ask me: how can one recognize whether it is just a sentimental reaction (that in any case is always present in any event), or it is an Event? A person who could not attend tonight wrote me, “I recognize the Christian Event today only when I see in what is happening the unmistakable traits of Jesus, that is, when I recognize that what is happening is made possible by Jesus of Nazareth, born of Mary two thousand years ago, who died and rose again and is alive today. Otherwise [is He alive today because she says so? No!] that [what she sees happening] wouldn’t be humanly possible. Also, it doesn’t have to be something exceptional, it can be a simple gesture,” but the point is that—even when trivial—it is so beyond what is possible for our human strength that it documents Jesus’ unmistakable traits.

I want to thank you for the journey that you are helping me make, and in a few words I wanted to tell you how it is changing me. For awhile now my belonging to the Movement has changed the way in which I look at myself. Belonging to the Fraternity is becoming the deepest relationship I have, freeing me from abstract images, both mine and of the people around me. I am discovering that my identity truly passes through that belonging. In belonging to the Fraternity, I discover, unexpectedly, who I am, how I am made. For years I suffered deeply in order to conform to these images, both mine and of others, until at a certain point I met someone who spoke of me in a way that was commensurate to my desires. Thus, I realized that that was who I was, because I was described in a true way, without having to conform to anything and without censoring anything. The last time you strongly provoked me on the point of gladness, not so much because I don't see it in me, since I have a pretty sunny disposition, generally I am enthusiastic, but rather because often I don't do the work that you indicate to us, that is, getting to the origin of that gladness. The last time I realized that only if I do that work can Jesus become familiar to me: this is the greatest need I have, it is what I need most to be able to face what happens to me. In working on Beginning Day and after the last School of Community I was really moved as I understood once again that it is the relationship with Jesus that makes and defines me. The key and central point for me is to do this work, that is, to return to Him, because I need everything. When I return to Him and I truly ask Him to be happy and to do great things with this nothing that I am—because it is true that I am limited and inadequate, but I realize that I have become a bit complacent about being inadequate—I return to be present to myself, I return to be present and passionate, because I realize that I am wanted. The disasters that happen, the arguments, the things that I don't understand, become a bet on the fact that He wins over everything. I am amazed that this human position, this decision, is not a decision that one makes every day, but a work that one must do in every instant, always! There isn't a second in which I don't need Him completely.

If we don't perceive this newness that Christ introduces into our life, we will not find an adequate reason to be a Christian. In fact, it is in that newness that one sees the human usefulness of faith. Because—as you said—one can really be a slave of one's own images, as if one had to conform to them. Instead, when one is freed of this slavery, what is it returned to him? Poverty. Finally, one is free of one's own images, finally one is free, because he is poor. This gives you a new gaze on yourself. It isn't something sentimental. Where do you see it? Because you discover more and more “unexpectedly, who I am.” As you spoke you skipped a sentence that you had written to me, “Things have returned to speak to me,” that is, the usual things speak to us. And, “I return to be present to myself.” Try to generate all of this without the Event, and you will start to see that it is humanly impossible. That is why it amazes us when it happens. Thus, it makes it easier to say, “You,” because it is said to someone who is present. Those unmistakable traits that are documented in a new way of living reality are the cultural newness.

I was struck by a phrase of the Beginning Day text in point four, where you say, “The attitude to which Christ bore witness expresses all the cultural newness that He brought into the world. In order to understand this, you must recognize what was happening in the depths of Jesus' being” (p. IX). I ask you: what was happening in the depths of Jesus' being? What did you mean? This question doesn't arise from any spiritual or “intimistic” curiosity, but rather from a desire and the need to enter, to know ever more, this Mystery who makes everything.

Why did this question arise in you?

Because Beginning Day and the last School of Community were the happening of His presence. You, Davide, and some of the other people who spoke were the instruments through which Christ became present, because you witnessed to what was happening to yourselves. It emerges that Christianity, as it was conceived, lived, and passed on by Fr. Giussani, is simple, not at all complicated. It is enough to welcome it, to recognize it, and it makes you breathe. “The Event” is not the old or new slogan of CL and it isn’t even the object of reasoning or the development of a thought of mine. Jesus enters unexpectedly, all of a sudden, in my life and this generates in me an amazement, it generates my “Yes” to Him, it overcomes my daily distractions, it makes my heart jump. The heart: I think that a comparison with and verification by the heart of every instant are the essential steps needed to recognize Him. Nothing else is necessary. You often say that this is our best ally. Thank you for having invited us years ago to do this work on the heart—you stated that the heart is infallible, that we are the ones who cannot read it—a work that never ends. What happened at Beginning Day makes grow and become ever more essential in me the need for Him and my gratitude for this place. This urgent need doesn’t end, but rather increases. Every circumstance, every relationship elicits this need. My question about the point on the depths of Jesus’ being arises from this absolute need.

Why did I mention it at Beginning Day? Exactly because of what the person who spoke before said. In fact, Jesus’ words, “Forgive them, because they don’t know what they are doing,” aren’t humanly possible, just as the episode of the inmate that I always mention are unthinkable. A reaction like that of the inmate (in the face of an unjust body search) is not humanly possible. It is enough to think of how we usually react to any kind of offense, or when we feel that we are treated unjustly: by default, we mow down those who did us wrong and then we think about it. Instead, when we catch ourselves facing what hurts us (and circumstances in general) differently, this drives us to ask, “What’s happening? What is happening deep down within me that makes emerge in me an attitude so new compared to my usual reaction?” This is the cultural newness. In order to say, “Forgive them...” to those who were crucifying Him, to look at people so differently in comparison to how we normally look at them, what relationship must Jesus have been living with the Father? It isn’t that Jesus didn’t know that what they were doing was completely wrong, but Jesus doesn’t separate the objective wrong of the fact from the persons involved; He does not make a judgment separated from history. The inmate did the same: “If these guards didn’t have the opportunity to encounter a gaze like the one I encountered, how could they behave differently?” “They don’t know what they are doing” says Jesus. In order to look at people in that way something else must happen. Jesus’ sentence “Without me you can do nothing” isn’t just a pious phrase to be repeated. Without Him we truly cannot do anything! Then, when we realize that the alternative is truly nothingness, we begin to glimpse the tip of the iceberg of something else, something different, and we begin to guess what is inside the depths of that inmate, Who is acting in him, to the point of making emerge such a completely different way of being a cultural presence in reality.

I wanted to ask your help to understand what it means to keep silence.

Why do you have a question about silence?

Because at Beginning Day you said that it is one of the tools for the education and life of the Movement, and that without silence He cannot penetrate our lives. As the previous contribution said, I too desire this intimacy. I have been participating in the life of the Movement for a few

years even if I met it many years ago, and I had never before tried to keep silence. When I re-read this point, one morning I decided to look for a moment in which to keep silence in the midst of the usual things: rushing, work, the children, the things I have to do. Sometimes I tried also before falling asleep, but then sleep won...

It prevails!

Therefore, I didn't keep silence, but slept.

"God gives to his beloved in sleep," says Psalm 127.

That morning, as I went to work, I decided to try to keep silence—I have almost an hour on the road after I drop my daughters off at school. So, I didn't turn the radio on and I didn't pray the Rosary. The first thing that came to mind when I put myself in that position was the Psalm that says, "I ponder all your deeds" (Psalm 143). Actually, it didn't work out like that, because my mind started to wander to many things, things I had to do, things I had done, and there was no silence. Only at a certain point, unexpectedly, a thought about a friend, whom I wish could meet some of my other friends, entered my mind, and I prayed for her, but for the remaining time I got lost in my small things. Therefore, I wanted to ask you what it means to keep silence and how one can learn to keep it.

Let's re-propose the question: what does it mean to keep silence?

I never tried to keep silence, but I will recount two facts that...

This is the beauty of it, that one doesn't plan it! This is how we can see how it happens.

Last summer at the CLU vacation we invited an important politician to have an open conversation with us. During the conversation I had with him before over 400 kids, I saw a very important man, over 70 years old, with a history completely different from ours, interested in understanding the purpose of life, striving to understand what we are doing in the world. In that moment the two of us were united by that. Everything happened right there, in that instant in a hand that offers it to us now. I saw Christ happening when I realized that we were both changing our attitudes during the meeting. At a certain point, as I looked at him, I noticed that he was moved while he thanked us for the existence of a companionship where such deep questions can be brought to the table, a fact that over many years he had not seen happen either in public or in private. For me it was as if it were happening for the first time. In that moment I was moved too, in real time; moved in the sense that the presence of the Lord set me in motion. Together we said to each other, "We aren't leaving through that door as we were when we came in, we are different." He is if He changes. After the meeting something that I would have never expected happened to me. Usually, after the meetings I go to drink a few beers with my friends and we comment on what was said. That time I couldn't, I swear I couldn't! No one told me what I had to do, but I swear that my heart was so full that I had to keep silence—like the Apostles who went their separate ways without saying goodbye to each other because they were filled by the encounter they had just had—because my heart was so full because of what had just happened (not "just" for what had happened). There was nothing to be added to what was present there. It was all there. This was the first sign of change that I noticed. An event fills you with silence and it happens when you least expect it, as—second fact—happened to me a while ago. It was a beautiful sunny day. One of my passions is my motorcycle and so I spent the whole day going for a rather long ride. It was the classic day in which nobody annoys you, the classic day in which you don't think of anything. I was having fun, I was leaning my bike down in the curves and I was very happy. However, on my way back

something happened, and I was amazed. I had to stop. I had to stop and try to spend a moment with Him, to regain the awareness of He Who makes and fulfills everything in my life, to realize that not even that day could fulfill me. That is why I need silence, I need to stop a moment to allow that tender Presence to penetrate my whole self. In fact, I realize more and more that it is not enough that things, facts, are beautiful and strike me. They must enter within me, otherwise they will remain outside, a memory of the past. Only if I leave room for the Presence of Christ do they become experience and change me. This stopping a moment to look, that is, silence, is what is helping me most, because as I said before, it reaches the point of moving me and letting even those days in which I could say—in my mind—that I can do without anything be defined by His presence.

Daily life can start to have this density when one is amazed by what happens. In fact, as we were saying earlier, pondering all His deeds means to acknowledge what He is doing now, and one can do that because he finds himself in front of something he has never seen before: for the first time he is so struck that his life is filled with silence. I am surprised by this contribution, because it witnesses to how everything is born at the same time, beginning with the amazement at seeing Him happen, which is very evident because it is humanly impossible. Then, what happens—as you said—can't be anything but Him at work. He is if He changes. This awareness of Him at work introduces us to silence. That is why you couldn't help giving up your beer to keep silence. The same happened to you during that wonderful day on your motorcycle. I always remember the episode of Fr. Giussani at a wonderful party, when at a certain point he notices an “exasperate tension [...] to call out your name, oh Christ” (*L'attrattiva Gesu`* [The attraction of Jesus] BUR, Milan 2001, p. 153), not as something pasted on afterwards, but rather as something arising from the present event. In fact, Christian silence isn't not speaking, but rather a *full* silence. The majority of people cannot stand silence, because it means finding oneself alone with one's own inner noise, with one's discomfort, with one's wounds. That's why they prefer music, the TV, not to be alone with themselves. One can be alone with oneself only if a Presence defines his life, if he is full of an encounter. The fact that this starts to become an experience is striking, as this friend who is at college recounts, “This year a friend who is not in the Movement came for the first time to the CLU Exercises. I had been struck by his decision to come, because he is going through a period of great questions and he had seen in this opportunity not so much the possibility of getting some answers to his questions, but rather the opportunity to continue to look at and address them, certain that living with all these ‘unresolved’ questions was more beautiful because it makes one seek constantly. The first evening after the Introduction, back at the hotel, curious to know how it went and to get his impression, I asked him, ‘What do you think of this evening?’ He answered, ‘I am very happy. Give me the room key, because I am going to bed. I want to go to bed with this happiness without spoiling it.’ Afterwards, he explained himself better, writing me, ‘I was happy because I was in that place with the awareness that in that moment it was the only place in which I wanted to be, with the person who had looked at me and showed me how one can live in a true and fulfilled way. Thus, at the end of the meeting I was so full of joy that I felt that any word would have “spoiled” the sacredness of the moment.’ I was struck that for him two hours were enough to have that experience of silence that we propose to each other and that I—this is the sixth year I have attended the Exercises—have never lived like that.” The experience is given back to us by the newest person!

A while ago I asked a dear friend to have dinner with our small Fraternity group which I have been meeting with for the past year-and-a-half. I thought of her because I have great respect for her and because I thought that the place that is so useful for me could help her with some difficulties that she had confided to me some time before. Before speaking to her I thought of what I was going to say to her; I was prepared to address any objection she might have, and I had thought carefully about my answer to this or that question. When in the end I simply told her that I wanted her to join our group of Fraternity because we care for her and because for me it is a privileged place, she was silent. When I finished speaking, she was moved and answered, “You know, in these days I have been thinking that I need a point [a place], because on my own I get totally lost in my thoughts and in the chaos of my days. I will say “Yes” because I need what you are proposing to me, I really need it. I feel as if I were drowning and someone is pulling me back by the hair. I am honestly telling you that I haven’t gone to School of Community for awhile; I am not following anything, and I am alone, but I truly need what you are proposing to me.” I was speechless, because I realized how true what you told us in point 4 of Beginning Day is. I found myself having firsthand a certain impression of things that is then translated into a discourse, into a preconception; in fact, I thought I knew how she was going to answer, and I was ready to argue. But when the answer to one’s true need happens, things are different, because it eliminates all the discourses. This was totally clear.

It is what we said at Beginning Day: if this gaze is not given back to us—as we saw this evening—we don’t leave our impressions and images behind. Yet, it is enough that it happens again, and the person is able to recognize that she needs a place to avoid getting lost in her own thoughts or in the chaos of her life. It is a real need, palpable, touchable. Sometimes one may not realize it right away, but when life’s circumstances happen, one understands. A person who was “slapped” at work, because he was not given the position that had been promised to him, wrote to me in amazement, “After some initial bewilderment, contrary to what I would have expected, I wasn’t overwhelmed by anger or disappointment, but I caught myself wondering where the Mystery was taking me [a curiosity already begins—“Where the Mystery was taking me”—because we can no longer look at reality as separated from the Mystery] and what plans He had in store for me. I realized that even if for me that circumstance was far from desirable, I could face what was happening to me with a new attitude of trust in reality, because it was given to me by the Mystery. I discovered myself free from performance anxiety and from the need of having to be defined by a professional role. Until that moment I had never had such a clear awareness of how much the regular work of School of Community during recent years was working in me [it seems like nothing, but this is generating a subject, a person who, through what is happening to him, discovers in himself this new “I”]. The certainty that what had just happened was for my own good had given me a gladness that I brought home with me in the evening, to my family, so much so that my wife asked what nice thing had happened to me [he had just received a huge slap in the face, but he was not defined by his impression of it; he was defined by the certainty that had entered his life!]. In the following days, despite the fact that the wound was still open, the desire to go back to work to face the challenge of my daily reality as a new opportunity to verify my faith prevailed.” This is the promise, not abstract, not only in eternal life, but already now, in the present, in the daily circumstances that we live.

The next School of Community will be on Wednesday December 20th, at 9:30 pm. During this month we want to continue to work on the text of Beginning Day in a particular way: we will not simply go over the text itself, but we will verify the connection between its content and the charitable gestures we proposed last time.

First of all, the Food Collection, to be held this Saturday, November 25th, which the Pope mentioned at the general audience this morning: “I wish all the best for the Food Collection that will take place next Saturday in fruitful continuity with the World Day of the Poor that we celebrated last Sunday” (November 19, 2017).

Second, the initiative of the AVSI Tents.

The invitation is exactly to not miss the beginning in living these gestures. At the beginning it was not so. At the beginning we built on the presence of Christ; it isn't that we didn't build, but we built only on that. If we don't recover this gaze in the way we carry out gestures, we will end up doing them detached from the origin. We will be able to experience the newness of living them exactly in light of what we saw at Beginning Day, when I said that the dimensions of the Christian experience (culture, charity, and mission) spring precisely from the origin that is faith. They are not detached from it, but rather united by the origin, they are the expression of the origin. I invite you to this: to live these gestures as the expression of the origin. I am curious to hear from you at the next School of Community how you will have lived the connection between the content of Beginning Day and the gestures of the Food Collection and the AVSI Tents, and how you will have answered the needs that you have met, for the good of all.

From this point of view, I am going to read what our Romanian friends have recounted, “I have just returned from the School of Community in Bucharest [...] rushing, with the desire to write you and tell you right away what Beginning Day, together with the provocation of the World Day of the Poor, represented [for us and] for me. Better, what Pope Francis's message generated in me and among the Romanians with whom I live, and how Beginning Day was an enlightening moment of method and judgment. As soon as I read the Pope's message it gave me a jolt. It speaks of poverty in a very concrete way, ‘without rhetoric,’ of the first Christians, of how they shared, of the ‘vocation to poverty’ and about staying with the poor, of the Our Father... Then, the final exhortation with which he invites all of us (consecrated lay people, movements, associations) so that a ‘tradition’ can be created. [...] [After having invited all the associations and the bishop, she says that something interesting happened]. At one point I was tired because, on the one hand the initiative was gaining an unexpected dimension [due to all those invitations], while on the other hand it was becoming difficult to manage [...] so, [do you see how separating something from the origin is always lying in wait?] in front of something beautiful and great a little demand and complaint began to sneak in. Thus, I arrived at Beginning Day feeling a little tired. Instead...how amazing! That ‘all of a sudden’ and that ‘at the beginning it was not so!’ kept coming back to my mind. What does this mean for me? Does ‘at the beginning’ apply only to the first encounter? Or is that beginning always present when something happens “all of a sudden”? So, I asked myself what had struck me in the Pope's message. I realized that I didn't even remember it very well...That's it: ‘doing’ was replacing the initial amazement. So, very simply, I didn't do something spectacular, but I just followed the method: I remembered that text, by now forgotten in a drawer, and I re-read it. I was amazed again, it turned me around again. How wonderful: anything but complaints. Thank you [...] for simply telling me to ‘remember,’ so that the gestures

we carry out are not detached from the origin.” This is the work that we are invited to do for the next School of Community.

Christmas Poster. This year we chose a photograph. It is a photo of a refugee camp taken in October 2017 by the photographer Kevin Frayer, Getty Images News.

This is the text: “A “particular history [as we saw this evening, a particular history, a place] is the keystone of the Christian conception of man, of his morality, in his relationship with God, with life and with the world. Our hope is in Christ, in that Presence that, however distracted and forgetful we are we can no longer (not completely, anyway) remove from the earth of our heart because of the tradition through which He has reached us.”

As you know, this is a passage from Fr. Giussani about Peter’s “Yes.” We chose this phrase of Fr. Giussani’s because Christmas is in essence “the” particular history—and this evening we saw how it continues: as something real that happens, that continues to happen in the present—it is the fact that means salvation for all. God chose this method through which He makes the universal truth pass, not to be affirmed through an abstract discussion on truth, but through a particular history, something present, so that our brothers and sisters may be struck by His presence that passes through us and that is able to attract everyone, also those who come from different cultures. We saw it documented this evening: in the daughter who passes this presence on to her mother, the principal who passes it on to the teacher, the person who passes it on to his friend. There is no other way in which the Event is passed on, except by happening.

Veni Sancte Spiritus