

*Notes from School of Community with Father Julián Carrón
Milan, October 31, 2018*

Reference text: J. Carrón – L. Giussani, *Alive means Present! Traces, October 2018*
<https://english.clonline.org/traces/page-one/alive-means-present>

- *Aconteceu*
- *Il monologo di Giuda*

Glory Be

Let's begin our work with the "tenacity of a path" (p. 12) to which we were invited by Fr. Giussani at Beginning Day. The first thing we suggested to each other was to try to understand what we are working on, to understand its scope and importance. We all know that the circumstance that occasioned Fr. Giussani's contribution was the upheavals of '68. For him that was a true challenge that made him discover something more than what he acknowledged as true, so much so that he let himself be moved by it: "*Fifteen years ago, when we started with GS [...] the reason [...] we sought as the firm ground moving us to adhere [...] was the following: we were born into a tradition, so it would not be right for us to continue or dismiss that tradition without first engaging it. [...] This was [...] the reason that motivated all the people who came with us [...] If I had to ask young people to join GS today, I don't think I would still use that reasoning.*" As if to say: during the first 15 years we did that, now I wouldn't do it anymore.

Facing the provocation of '68, Fr. Giussani didn't persist in his previous approach (he didn't say: I always did that and therefore I will continue to do it!), but he let his position shift. This brought him to discover the nature of Christianity in greater depth, to the point of introducing a difference between "Christianness" and "Christianity." Recently, as I reread a passage of *Amoris Laetitia* I was struck by what the Pope says, "*We do well to focus on concrete realities, since 'the call and the demands of the Spirit resound in the events of history,' and through these 'the Church can also be guided to a more profound understanding of the inexhaustible mystery'*" (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, 31) of Christianity. Thus, only those who accept the challenge can be led and guided to a deeper understanding of the inexhaustible mystery of what happened to us. Therefore, the first question to be addressed is: How does Fr. Giussani respond to the crisis?

I have a question.

Go ahead!

Fr. Giussani begins his contribution by saying something whose meaning and importance I think I never grasped completely: "It is no longer a hope in what you might receive [...] it's a hope in you; it's a hope in me and in you, in you and in me; it's a hope in our person, or something inside of our person. It's not a hope in something outside us, in a word, a circumstance, a situation or opportunity: it's not a hope in those, but a hope in something that's inside us" (p.3). When I listened to these words at Beginning Day I thought to myself that now he will explain what this "something" that is inside us is. Yet, I don't think he explained it or perhaps I missed it. I always heard that salvation comes from outside myself, that I didn't make the announcement to myself, let alone that it depended on me; I learned that it is gratuitous. So, what is the resource within me that can stand up to the confusion of

our times? I tried to come up with an explanation on my own by understanding the text, and I even thought of a few things, but I understand that by doing that I run the risk of skipping over the question. I would like you to go over this passage again and explain to me what Fr. Giussani really wants to tell me. Thank you.

It is crucial to understand—as you said—“the scope and importance” of Fr. Giussani’s contribution. I would like to ask you what, in your opinion, was the resource Fr. Giussani possessed in the face of the crisis of ‘68. Only when one must face life’s challenges—and we cannot say that in the past month we weren’t challenged in our work, family, relationships, circumstances—can he see how he reacts and with which resources. Then we can compare ourselves with Fr. Giussani in order to understand the importance of what he is saying. In fact, you are absolutely right: the resource we need is something inside ourselves. Therefore, each of us must ask, “How would I have faced the challenge of the student protest?” Yet, it is not necessary to *imagine* how we would have faced it. It is enough to ask ourselves, “How did I face the circumstances, the daily or exceptional challenges that I found myself living recently? What resource did I have to face them?” Fr. Giussani says, “*Everything hangs on the event, [...] on something that’s outside of us [therefore you are absolutely right] and that proposes itself deep within us [it was something that he had already come upon in his life that in that moment proposed itself deep within him], but is outside of us: it’s an event outside of us, just like the stormy sea [...] an event [...] that pierces us to our depths with its proposal; and this proposal that pierces to our depths also involves that poor person who carries it, despite him or herself*” (p.11). What Fr. Giussani ran into was outside him, but at a certain point it became his. Otherwise he wouldn’t have been able to say to those who were listening to him, “*It’s a hope in me and in you, in you and in me*” (p. 3). Then we see that something happened outside ourselves and we grasp its importance because it reached the depth of our hearts.

Yet, in order to understand what happened to us, continues Fr. Giussani, one needs—I don’t know how many of us are aware of it when we face life’s challenges—poverty of spirit. “*The deepest-rooted symptom of poverty of spirit is listening, a position of listening and listening again: of listening again to what we’ve already been given, and generously given*” (p. 5). We have in spades what has been given to us, but often, since we haven’t taken stock “*of what we’ve already been given, and generously given,*” we don’t recognize it as a resource. What happens then? My friend, you ask how can we face all these challenges, the confusion of our times (which you asked with very appropriate words)? How are you facing it? Has anyone become aware of “*what we’ve already been given, and generously given*”? In Fr. Giussani’s contribution, we see that he is so aware of what he’s been given—which he knows has been given also to us, and thus says that “*hope is in me and in you*”—and to consider this hope the resource for facing the challenge “*because God, as Creator and builder, cannot prepare anything for us now if not in relation to what we’ve already been given. Because [...] every moment carries newness, an impressive newness, that we feel pressing on our existence, pushing it to walk a path, or pushing it to discover*” (p. 5). That is why everything that happens is to make us discover more fully what was given to us at the beginning—the fact that we have been chosen and preferred, which at a certain point we recognized when we encountered something outside ourselves.

I couldn’t think of these things without remembering what we said to each other at the Fraternity Exercises, quoting von Balthasar: the beginning is “*the source you can never leave. Even afterwards, just afterwards, when there will be all the consequences, the premise can never be forgotten, not even for a moment,*” because “*our freedom is inseparable from having been freed*” (*Engagement with*

God, Ignatius Press, 1975, p. 16). Our freedom is inseparable from the source that is His action, His preference for us.

So, what resource did Fr. Giussani have to face the challenge of '68? This preference, this origin from which he never separates himself. It is only poverty of spirit that makes us aware of this resource. When this poverty is not present in us, we cannot be aware of how Fr. Giussani faced the challenge of '68, and each person will begin to conduct his own analyses, reducing everything to what he already knows: "*Because when poverty of spirit is missing, in exact proportion to its lack, what happens? A person "already knows"*" (p. 10). One doesn't deny anything, but he already knows it. Therefore, he thinks, "I already know what Christianity is and what it has to do with '68, with the confusion of the present time, with the challenge of work, with the problem of my relationships at home. Thus, Fr. Giussani continues: "*He thinks he already knows and reduces everything to what he already knows; he tends to trace everything back to what he already knows. [While] Only the poor in spirit can be enriched; true wealth is for him alone: for everyone else there's nothing but wasting away, just trying to get by, which is wasting away*" (p. 10). This happens also to us today because our time too "*is extremely poor in spirit, but not in the evangelical sense of the term; [...] because richness in spirit is [...] an event of synthesis*" [Fr. Giussani didn't analyze '68, but rather grasped the crux of the challenge and made a judgment that we all understood without needing to get who knows what Master's at Harvard], *and the meaning of history is the supreme measure of the richness of spirit*" (p. 6).

What do we have as a resource for dealing with the present-day events? Fr. Giussani tells us that we need a hope that is in us. Yet, sometimes this is not concrete enough for us to perceive it as a resource. So something must happen to help us understand the hope that is in us. Not because we are self-referential, but because another sees it in us and tells us about it.

At the beginning of this year, I "rediscovered" a great uncle who is about 60 years old. "Rediscovered" in the sense that I have only seen him at extended family gatherings. This year he invited my family and the family of my aunt for lunch. He likes—like me—to eat and drink well, and he treated us like royalty. I was very happy eating and drinking; I had a great time. I spoke a bit with him, but it was nothing memorable. In fact, later, what I described most to my friends was all the good food I had eaten and the wines I had drunk. A few weeks later, my aunt told me that this great uncle had been very impressed, in particular by me. I honestly didn't understand, and I thought he had been excited about our common passion, about how much I eat and drink, but nothing more. Since then, though, I have taken note of some things he has done; for example, he came to my college graduation, he wrote to me and invited me to visit him with my girlfriend, and he also shipped me some good food. I decided to go and see him with my girlfriend, and I was very curious. As we were going to the restaurant, we chatted and he asked me a lot of questions, and it appeared he was studying me, looking for something. I understood this clearly, for example, when at a certain point he asked me, "How long have you been with your girlfriend?" I answered him, "For almost six years." "Ah that's it! Now I understand! It was she who made you get your act together, who changed you and made you mature so much." I was amazed at these words. During lunch and after, there was also an opportunity to tell him my story in detail and to tell him clearly that what changed my life was an encounter with Christ. After I told him my story, I saw that he opened up a lot, and this amazed me even more, since he is an older adult and I hardly know him. I wondered what was happening. He opened up, told me a myriad of things, above all the hardships he is experiencing, and spoke to me of other people, of things besides himself, never about himself. Then, when he finished telling me all these things, I asked him, "But you, great uncle, how are you?" "Eh, my son ..." And I, "No, no, you,

great uncle, how are you?” “Eh, this one and that one ...” “No, no, how are you?” The third time I asked him he burst into tears; he was moved and said to me, “Actually, I am sad, even if it looks like I have everything. I have money; it seems that I don’t lack anything, but I’m sad.” I was taken aback and I didn’t know what to say, but I wanted to understand what was happening, so I asked him, “Why are you saying these things to me? I am a wretched young man who doesn’t know you and I’m only 23 years old.” “Because when we first met for lunch, I don’t know why, but I saw a hope in you. The problem is that I don’t see this hope in myself!” This is the problem. How often in seeing the faces of friends full of hope and joy, I too stop and say, “Lucky them, but for me it is impossible, there is no possibility for me now.” However, at the School of Community we have at my university, after a flat day, something happened: a friend spoke of how full of gratitude he was and how he was enjoying everything in every moment, and I recognized that it was true not because he was saying it, but because his face was witnessing to it, it was witnessing it to me. It is about looking and seeing what the Lord is doing with this friend of mine because that is what becomes infectious for me as well. This hope is given to him, it is given to someone else, so that it may also be mine. Not “yes for him and no for me”; otherwise, I’m stuck on a complaint. It’s already there! For me it is always a matter of following either His method or mine, and verifying it.

One who does not know you well notices it, even if he doesn’t understand exactly what you carry: “In you I saw a hope. The problem is that I do not see this hope in me!” This gives back to you the awareness of what has happened to you, because so many times you too, like your great uncle, think that certain things are impossible for you. What did all of this make you understand? That to grasp everything you have before your eyes, you need to look at and see what the Lord is doing. This is the only thing that becomes infectious for others, the only thing you and your great uncle perceive to be pertinent to the needs of your life. How did your great uncle discover hope? Through the hope that you carry within you, which involved him too. From this the desire to understand was born in him.

My friends and I would like to understand what Fr. Giussani means by the expression, “A presence charged with a proposal is, then, a presence charged with meaning” (p. 8). In fact, in the work we did together, the thought emerged—based on our experience—that everything can be a presence that awakens the “I” and provokes it. But then, what does Fr. Giussani mean when he says that “not just any presence with a proposal is charged with meaning”? (Ibid.) In fact, some of us pointed out that the text speaks of a witness, of an announcement, of an encounter. So it would seem that those who are touched by a presence with a proposal full of meaning are then able to perceive every circumstance as a provocative presence. Can you help us?

How can we understand that an announcement is a presence with a proposal full of meaning? First of all by looking, looking at where it happens; otherwise, we get stuck in our reasoning. We saw this in the previous contribution. Our friend, following—as he said—the method of God, not deviating from what he had found outside himself, was pierced by it to the point that it involved his own person. He didn’t go to his great uncle to announce in words the hope that is in him, but rather that hope has pierced him so much as to involve his whole person, and so it was inevitable that it became obvious to his great uncle, even without having spoken directly of it. A proposal is full of meaning, Fr. Giussani tells us—and we see that this is true because it is infectious for us—when it involves the person who carries it. This is exactly what a friend who could not come tonight has told me. She writes that after attending the funeral of one of her patients, for whom she had a great affection, at the end of the Mass, “the daughter gave me a note on which these words were written, ‘Dear Doctor, in these years of my father’s illness I thought often of you, who with your words and tenacity are able to go beyond his illness in every moment. I thank you for having helped me to give a reason for the

hope that is in each of us and for continuing to love and accompany my father day after day' [others recognize the hope we carry]. It is a grace to be able to meet people who see the 'Beyond' that we carry, and this recalls me to put Him more and more at the origin of each of my days and of everything I do [what we carry: when another gives it back to us with this awareness it also becomes a call for us to look at reality with this "Beyond" in our eyes]. The other thing that struck me about this fact is related to what you said at the end of *Beginning Day*: 'We ask for the grace to be able to recognize [...] the responsibility we bear, certainly not because of our merits, but because of what we have received: a method through which the Christian announcement, in its bare essentials, may enter the life of every person, to the point of involving his entire person' (p. 13). It is truly a great responsibility, which I feel so much in my work where I am in contact with mankind reduced to the essential by illness and pain. I myself am called back by them to recognize the Essential."

What has struck many people is the newness that Christianity represents. Many have been struck by Fr. Giussani's insistence that Christianity is a radical newness. That is why another of you writes to me, "In our group that went over the text of *Beginning Day* a question came up: we were very struck by his underlining that the announcement is a radical newness, 'something that couldn't be there, but exists.' How does the announcement remain this unpredictable over time, in everyday life?" How do we rediscover the radical newness that Christianity brings? What do the provocations of reality mean to us (the question faced by Fr. Giussani)? What experience do we have of the radical newness that is Christianity? The question doesn't concern, as we can see, those "outside," but us who are "inside." Isn't that true?

*Yes. In fact, what Fr. Giussani says about the fact that recalling people to tradition and discourse is no longer able to move them to adhere, might be the description of my relationship with the movement: my history, a story that began 40 years ago and that has determined everything in my life (work, marriage, children) is not enough for me—even the fact that here I can hear words and speeches that are more intelligent and real than anywhere else is not enough for me. All of this is not enough to move me, even to simply move me to go to School of Community after dinner or to participate in other proposals of the movement. Talking about it with a friend, I almost drew this conclusion: in many proposals of the movement, there is a lack of newness, a lack of a presence full of meaning that involves the person who carries it. But *Beginning Day* was not like that; it was a real announcement and I would have no difficulty in adhering to the gestures if they were all like that. That is why I ask your help to make this step: I recognize that Christianity is a presence full of meaning that involves the person who carries it. I recognized it in Fr. Giussani at *Beginning Day* and I recognize it in you— but in me? Is this "the radical shift in our awareness" of which Fr. Giussani speaks? That is why at the end you asked, "How does this event become an experience for each of us, and how does it enter into the marrow of our "I"? (pp. 12-13).*

Do you see? This is the great challenge, because it doesn't concern others, but us: even for us, a movement lived only as tradition, as history, as words and proposals, is not enough. If something doesn't happen that changes us, that moves us, we feel the exact same need we recognize in others. That is why Fr. Giussani tells us that if this doesn't happen again in us, he does not know how long we will remain in the Church or in the movement. Of course, we can remain formally, but I don't know how long these realities will continue to interest us, if this staying doesn't take hold of us, doesn't become infectious for us, to use the word that came up earlier. At this point, Fr. Giussani invites us to take a step, making it clear that the difference between a childish and a mature audience consists precisely in this: "*Within a mature person, within a grown man, all the drama of life [...] is unfolding within him*" (p. 3). We must accept the drama in front of which we find ourselves. Just as

Fr. Giussani had to face '68, many times you too have to face challenges. The movement's proposal is also a challenge to you: Do I have adequate reasons to follow it? Even if one doesn't understand the density within the proposal, he shouldn't think that he can get away with living it superficially. In front of every proposal each of us must go to the bottom of the question: "Why do I have to be here tonight? Why do I have to participate to the Food Collection? Why do I have to go to charitable work?" A superficial answer will not be enough. We cannot remain in the movement as adults without making this journey, without the tenacity of a journey, because—as Fr. Giussani says—"tradition and theory, tradition and discourse, can no longer move today's men and women," as we see happening to us, not only to others.

But Father Giussani adds something else, which I think is very important to understand. Why are tradition and speech no longer enough? Because "*for the mature, grown man the problem doesn't even present itself, precisely because you have to have overcome it to become adults in the faith, you have to have gone past the fascinating appeal of historical reasons and the admirable appeal of the aesthetic offered by theoretical perfection*" (p. 7). What does this mean? We think we have become adults, mature, when we have mastered more discourses and theories or when we offer exhortations and corrections. Yet, the truly adult man realizes—as you did—that this is not enough. The adult man must have overcome this point and must have grasped what he really needs. In fact, as you said, to realize that this is no longer enough is a sign of maturity. Realizing that it is no longer enough is not a misfortune! An adult understands that this puts him before the real question: What do I need? How can I truly discover, through this deeper awareness, what is missing, what I need?

Recently I went through a period in which everything in my life was hard (something that has happened to me at other times). I have often moved through life as an orphan, becoming less open with time. I am wounded by my own closed way of seeing myself and my relationships, in which I already know everything. One fact, however, has awakened me with regard to what Fr. Giussani said about hoping in something that is within us and the irreducible newness that Christ introduced. On a recent weekend I was in the mountains doing something beautiful. For me, going to the mountains is a time when I can be free, happy: it is a privileged moment. While I was walking with others and hearing their conversations about how to get to the top and their previous accomplishments, etc. (at times very boring conversations), I felt something terribly jarring, so much so that I had to get some distance from them, because in the face of all that beauty my heart wanted more. All the excitement about what we were accomplishing was too little. When I reached the top, my heart was happy but not filled with joy, and a question arose: Can true enjoyment of things be experienced only by achieving a great goal? I reached the judgment that true enjoyment arises from the awareness of the origin of things, from knowing Who gives you those things. So I can say that the fact that in those two days my heart was screaming was already the sign of a desire for Him, that He would make Himself present again. That discomfort was the instrument that made me understand the nature of my heart and that not even a "super" thing can fill it. From that moment I was able to understand that I was missing Him, and I could ask, "What kind of heart do I have, that not even a very beautiful thing fills it?!"

This is maturity: "What's the matter with my heart, that not even a very beautiful thing fills it?!" When one realizes this, what does it awaken in him? The awareness that his heart wants more. In fact, all the excitement for what you were accomplishing was too little for the need of your heart, and then you perceived that true enjoyment comes from knowing Who gives you these things. Friends, if in everything we do, in everything we come upon, we do not reach the only "Who" that can make the things that I do interesting to me and who can respond to the totality of the need of my heart, in time

everything will seem too little. It is what Jesus says in the Gospel, in its simplicity. I remember two episodes that we recalled in the past. “The seventy-two returned rejoicing and said, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name.’ Jesus said, ‘I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky. Behold, I have given you the power “to tread upon serpents” and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven” (Lk 10:17-20). If we don’t grasp this, if everything we live does not tend to this realization—in front of the joy with which the disciples return, Jesus, their true friend, introduces them to the one thing that can truly be adequate to their need—if in everything we live we don’t get to this point, everything will necessarily lead us to skepticism because nothing will be enough for us. Thank goodness there is someone who tells us, “Do not be satisfied with this,” that is, with what you do, because it isn’t enough. A man as simple as the tenth leper understood this: what happened in him was what he wanted—to be healed of leprosy—but what keen awareness, what simplicity it takes to realize that healing is not enough! Because there are many who don’t have leprosy and yet they are sad, they may have everything and be sad. Only the tenth leper grasped what was even more interesting than being healed from leprosy: going back to Him, wanting Him. For this reason, being healed was not enough for him. If we don’t do the work of looking more deeply at what happens to us in order to grasp the only thing that is relevant to our need for fullness, what can respond to the sadness we find within us or that we see in others, what can give us true enjoyment—as you said—of things, then we too will find ourselves—as became clear before—wondering whether all the things we do are sufficient to keep our interest in participating in the proposals of the movement. These proposals are made to us and we keep making them to each other not because they can mechanically give us something, but so that in them, in what we carry, the hope that is in us may be revealed—as it was revealed to our friend’s great uncle. So, what is the test for understanding whether hope is in us? That we find ourselves free in the circumstances in which we live, free from any project of ours, from looking for a source of support other than what has happened to us. In my opinion, this is the huge challenge we have before us.

While working on the text of School of Community, I happened to reread a passage from one of the CLU Equipes, *Uomini senza patria* [Men without a homeland], in which Fr. Giussani went back to this point. It was 1982 and in those years everyone had heard about it, in ‘68 and in the following years, but it was as if it hadn’t become theirs. In fact, in that Equipe he said, “In ‘73, in ‘75, in ‘76, in ‘77” and so on, we placed our hope in something we did. And he quotes a contribution that speaks of “people who identify their consistency [...] with a way of expressing themselves.” (L. Giussani, *Uomini senza patria* [Men without a Homeland], 1982-1983, Bur, Milan 2008, pp. 95, 97). Hope had not penetrated to the point of defining the position of the “I” in front of the challenges, and so one sought consistency in an expression of oneself. How can we be so free as to recognize what Fr. Giussani told us, that the answer to the challenge of ‘68 was the hope that was in him and in us (“it is in you and in me”), and not in what we do or in the projects we undertake? “To abandon ourselves to this Presence compels us to abandon our trust in our action, in our work, in our way of conceiving things, that is to say, in our way of making values work, that is, in our ideology, even if it is Christian as a starting point and a pretext” (pp. 95-96). This hope will become enough for living only if we realize—as the great uncle did—that everything we have and do does not respond to our sadness, just as it doesn’t respond—as Giussani said at that moment—to our “existential insecurity,” that is, to the “deep fear which makes one seek support in one’s own ways of expression” (p. 196), in which we identify our consistency in what we do. “Instead, our consistency is something other than us” (p. 97). For this reason he said, “The Easter Poster [of 1982] is a dramatic break with a journey of ten years

and more in which the CLU used [...] Christian values without knowing Christ, without truly recognizing Christ” (p. 98), and therefore failed to overcome existential insecurity. If we don't overcome existential insecurity as an experience, we look elsewhere for a source of support. We can verify this by seeing whether we have grasped the significance of what Giussani did in '68, whether the content of Beginning Day is really passing into our lives, whether we consider it an appropriate and pertinent proposal for our life's needs, for the confusion, insecurity, and chaos we live in, and for the present-day social, cultural, and political situation. Otherwise we will look for a point of support elsewhere.

That is why we have before us the criterion to begin this year: To what extent is hope in us, in what has happened to us, to the point of being surprised because it prevails over any other source of support? Or do we look for hope in our analyses or in the things that we think are most adequate? Beginning Day documents the locus of Giussani's hope for facing the challenge of '68. Each of us must ask him or herself: where do we put our hope for facing the “epochal change,” the confusion that prevails, the sadness and the emptiness, or for responding to the social and political situation in which we find ourselves? Do we think that the content of Beginning Day is relevant, or do we too look for hope where everyone is looking for it, that is, in the strong man or in those who promise to eliminate poverty?

Two gestures that can help us become aware of this await us: the Food Collection and the AVSI Tents. We can live them with the awareness we have gained by working on Beginning Day or we can live them as something parallel, which doesn't solve anything because the solution of the problems would be elsewhere. Without the awareness gained with Beginning Day, these gestures could be lived as pretexts to cover our existential insecurity, our thinking of the things we do as our point of support. For this reason it will be interesting to verify, when things are done, where our hope rests as we participate in the Food Collection and in Tents initiatives and look at our way of reacting to circumstances. This is what we have before us as a possibility of verification. If all we do is not for the purpose of growing in awareness that that hope—which Giussani says is in us—is able to help us face any kind of circumstances and challenges, from personal to social to political, Beginning Day will have been a beautiful meditation to entertain us for a short time, but we will not consider it relevant to life's challenges. Then we will look for the answer to the challenges in other places, relying on other points of support. Since this has already happened (as Giussani tells us, “In '73, in '75, in '76, in '77”), maybe we should not be so presumptuous as to think that we have already understood. It will be a verification we can make!

Mercifully, the School of Community that is waiting for us continues with the chapter of *Why the Church?* entitled “The Locus of Verification: Human Experience.” It discusses the entire proposal made on Beginning Day, which we can continue to keep in front of our eyes in order to verify it before the challenges of living, to see whether in our own experience we consider it relevant to them. It is not easy to consider it as such, it is not obvious that we will recognize it as corresponding to the nature of the challenge. In fact, who among us would have thought that Fr. Giussani's contribution was the most pertinent, in the chaos and needs of '68? Wouldn't we have thought that it was the utmost intimism or the utmost of living outside history? Wouldn't we have looked for more “concrete” solutions elsewhere? For this reason, starting with the work on this chapter, each of us can verify the Christian proposal we have encountered by discovering whether it corresponds to life's needs. The criterion for verifying whether what the Church repeats with Jesus can be recognized as credible is its correspondence to the needs of life, to the challenges of living, to the provocations of reality. We will have a wonderful opportunity to make this part of the journey not as an abstract reflection on a text, but as a verification of how we face the situation in which we live.

The next School of Community will be held on Wednesday, November 21 at 21.00.

We will continue to work on the text *Why the Church?*, “The Locus of Verification: Human Experience,” from page 203 to page 209. As I said, with this School of Community we can verify what we have heard at Beginning Day. In fact, the whole chapter is dedicated to the theme of verification, because without it there is no journey. All that Fr. Giussani did has been to make our “I” grow, and that is why he has invited us to the tenacity of a journey, of a work. Let us help each other in this work of going over the text in the groups of School of Community.

World Day of the Poor

Sunday, November 18 will be the second World Day of the Poor. The movement proposes that everyone support two gestures as a simple way to adhere to Pope Francis’s concerns:

- the National Food Collection Day, which will be held on Saturday, November 24th

- the AVSI Tents Drive during the Christmas period, which this year will have the title: “Under the Same Sky: We Dare to Create Solidarity Across Borders.” The Drive will support various projects. The main ones are: in Syria, for helping with free hospital treatment for the poor; in Brazil, for receiving refugees fleeing from Venezuela; in Burundi and Kenya, for creating new job opportunities; and in Italy, to support the work of the Sisters of Charity of the Assumption with children and poor families.

These gestures offer us the opportunity to collaborate in generating a subject, above all for those who take part in them, that is, some “I”s who in the way they respond to certain needs help to make other “I”s grow.

No one would have responded to the challenge of ‘68 like Fr. Giussani did. For us it would have been, as I said, too “intimistic,” but it proved to be the most relevant response to the situation. It is the same for us today: either all we do is to communicate this newness—therefore also the two gestures that await us—or we propose “Christianness” rather than “Christianity.” “Christianity is something else,” as we heard from Father Giussani. To this end, good wishes for the fruitfulness of everyone’s work!

Veni Sancte Spiritus