

School of Community

The words of Julián Carrón in the conclusion of the CL Beginning Day, September 29, 2018

Why do we propose School of Community once again this year? So that this work—which we do in the most consistent way possible—will help us absorb ever more deeply the announcement that we have heard again today. Because of the experience we have had, we propose School of Community again for ourselves as the key instrument for making the journey that was proposed to us. It is not a matter of mechanically perpetuating a tradition or a particular format. We have just heard it from Fr. Giussani: only through the “tenacity of a journey” will his experience become ours!

We know that a personal, faithful, regular work is needed so that we can embrace the irreducible nature of the *announcement* and have our lives changed. For this reason, I want to return with you to what Fr. Giussani said about the School of Community: “The work on the text of School of Community is the most concrete way to maintain a systematic relationship with the charism of the Movement.”

But “how does School of Community become a point of comparison?”

Fr. Giussani gave us some precise guidance:

“First of all, it must be read, clarifying together the meaning of the words,” since we can often fill the words we read with our thoughts, attributing to them meanings that are determined by the common mentality. For this reason, the first thing is to try to grasp the meaning of the words. Thus, “The School of Community must be done in the context of a serious comparison with the text, not following the line of your own worries” or your own reactions to it.

“In the second place, it is necessary to give space to the exemplification of a comparison between what you are living and what you have read. You need to ask yourself how what you have read and tried to understand judges your life, judges what happened the day before, what is happening in the world and in your own situation.” In fact, “without the nexus between the word and reality you cannot do School of Community: only in this way is it the expression of an experience. If it does not at least lead to identifying something to change [every time we do School of Community] and thus to the desire to make this change happen, it is not School of Community.” Therefore, “in School of Community, certainly, you must speak about your life, but in the light of the new experience encountered.” “The verification” to which we are invited “is a work, a comparison of the proposal with the constitutive needs of the heart.”

At this point, Fr. Giussani asks himself and us: “How can you do School of Community without asking for God? Without prayer? How can you do School of Community without trying to understand? Without beginning to understand its correspondence with our personal experience? How can you do School of Community without noticing the internal logic of the text? How can you do School of Community without wanting to tell your companions to come too?”

He concludes: “The work of School of Community is founded not so much on exceptional gestures as on the work of every day.” The test of the goodness of this work is simple: whether you “experience the correspondence between the words you read and hear and what you are living.”

I am the first to want to follow Fr. Giussani in this work of verification, and for this reason, it is particularly important to me that each of us can take up School of

Community again without thinking that we “already know”—as we have heard—what it is about.

Texts by Luigi Giussani quoted here:

Notes on the method of School of Community (1992)

School and method: Notes from two conversations (1993 and 1997)