

We will be happy if... we know how to create our own trend

“Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God” (Mt 5:8)



Goal

- To learn how to discern what can endanger purity in heart.
- To strengthen our will to make choices according to our own values.



How did it go?

At the start, there is a moment of welcome, wherein it is important to allow space for dialogue and the sharing of what each one has lived, the experiences made, and the difficulties encountered. To welcome means to make each one feel accepted and be at ease: creativity will help us find the best ways. We may recall the aims set at the last meeting: “How did it go?”



Introductory activity

TYPE: Role play

TIME: about 30 minutes

MATERIALS: Cards with the different roles of the story

PROCEDURE: Each youth is given a card with the description of his/her role. Three specific characters are needed; the others represent the group. While the youth don't know the roles of their companions, the animator must know all these.

- **Passive:** you don't agree with what the class is doing, but after a weak attempt to say something, you comply with what your companions do, for fear of being excluded.
- **Aggressive:** you don't agree with what the class is doing and you see that it's not easy to change their opinion. You get angry and react using strong words.
- **Coherent and courageous:** you don't agree with what the class is doing. Even if it's difficult, you stick to your principles, and look for a way to share your opinion with the others.
- **Members of the big group:** they think exactly like the rest of the class.

After distributing the roles, propose to the youth the start of the following story: “I was booked for a study week in Switzerland and left together with my whole class. The teacher accompanying us gave us much freedom. The first evening we went to a bar and my classmates began to drink alcohol and to smoke. I did not like their behavior and, above all, the quantity they consumed...”

For 3 times, the group acts out how the story will end; the big group will interact each time with one of the 3 different characters (passive, aggressive, coherent and courageous).

CONCLUSION: Create plenty of space for dialogue among all.

- The 3 characters behaved differently. In your opinion, can this change the reaction of the group?
- In your opinion, which of the 3 behaviors acted out happens most often in your age bracket?
- In what situations did you find it difficult to remain faithful to the values you believe in? How did you react?



We live this way

I knew I was not alone

I was booked for a study week in Switzerland and left together with my whole class. The teacher accompanying us gave us much freedom. The first evening we went to a bar and my classmates began to drink alcohol and to smoke. I did not like their behavior and, above all, the quantity they consumed...I decided to leave the place and not to participate in their evening program.

Even if they made fun of me, I knew I was not alone: all the Gen 3 in the world go against the current. As I was leaving the bar, a friend joined me. Together, we made a beautiful excursion to see the city by night. On the second night, we tried to discuss with our classmates, boys and girls, in a critical way, but it was in vain. We also made an alternative program for the third night, which our classmates respected, even though they didn't come.

(O. - Germany)

Positive messages

In my class, there is a pin-board for the exchange of ideas or news. Usually, it is used only by the youth who offer items for sale and also to put bad photos. I wanted to go against the current, and I thought not so much by protesting, but by pinning an alternative with a beautiful and positive message.

I prepared a colored poster with some cartoons of GB and W and placed my signature below. My classmates were happy and they asked me to bring one each week. One of the teachers wanted to know more about it. When I explained that I took those cartoons from the New City magazine, he decided to subscribe to it.

Now a classmate of mine has begun to pin some beautiful messages on the panel.

(M. - Brazil)

This happened
to me...



In depth



Chiara, I think that when my friends see me going “against the current” they should be struck by this and ask me why I live in this way... but it doesn't happen. They know my way of thinking and my choice of life. They respect me, they don't attack me, but they remain indifferent, as if they aren't interested. Why is it like this? What advice can you give me?

*Chiara Lubich,
Buenos Aires, April 12, 1998
Answers to the Focolare
members in Argentina*



ON THE ATTACK WITH LOVE

You say that you are going against the current: good for you! But it's not enough. Going against the current means giving value to virginity, it means giving value to non-violence, it means giving value to all these things. It's not enough. You have to attack the others.

Either we are on the offensive in the world, by loving others, or we lose, we're won over. We can't stay in the midst of the world in this way, without doing anything, just by going against the current.

They don't pay attention to you, of course not, but if you begin to provoke them, to needle them, to love them, to do something for them, to needle them in the beautiful sense of the word, by doing something for them,

they'll open their eyes and ask: “What makes you do it?” Then the moment will come to speak... Never stop loving them; continue to love: he needs a pen, give it to him; he needs ideas for a theme, let him read yours; he needs something else... if you're at school.

What's important here is not to be on the defensive by going against the current, but to be on the offensive in the world, by loving. Then we'll win them over. 💎



TO SET AN EXAMPLE WITH DEEDS

? Young people today are rediscovering the idea of going against the current. There is the danger, however, that they revert only to an outward rejection of everything around them. *How can we help them understand the true meaning of going against the current?*

Well, this is good news; I didn't know that young people are beginning to rediscover the idea of going against the current.

You know, young people are fantastic! They always have something new, they always arouse interest because of how they are able to change and this makes them improve.

I think that first, you must do this by giving an example. Make them understand that you are going against the current much more than they are, because you are following

Jesus who is himself a sign of contradiction, really in contrast with the world. And you must give an example under many aspects. For example, you give importance to "giving", you promote the culture of giving, while others want to "have".

You show that you are pure, that you are a pure Gen, while you know that others have been influenced by a hedonistic mentality, by many ugly things.



*Chiara Lubich,
Naples,
May 3, 1996,
To the Community
of Naples*



You forgive; for example, if someone offends you, you forgive, whereas others seek revenge.

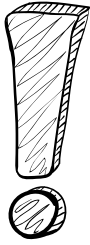
You love your parents, whereas many times, there is conflict between generations. You might love things that others reject. You even love suffering, and people are amazed by this because they reject suffering. You even face death with a certain serenity, because you know that heaven will be much more beautiful. You love everybody, even people who belong to other races, whereas today there is racism, and they will notice this.

If they see that you are such an extraordinary person, you can tell them, as we first focolarine did, what is happening to you - to you or oth-

ers who belong to this people here. Tell them about receiving the hundredfold after having given. If you do this and tell them that Jesus really spoke the truth, that Jesus spoke the truth, they will listen to you, because it's something new, it's a surprise; it's a religion that appears new. Many times, they believe that religion is only religious services, a bit of prayer, but they don't see it as something alive.

Make them understand that you are full of joy because you live unity, and joy springs from unity. They will be convinced by your deeds, you must show them concrete facts.

This is the way you should act.



We will try!

Is it possible to make other youth and teenagers rediscover going against the current? Together, look for some ideas or commitments to realize. As an example, here is a little episode that really happened some years ago:

« **Julia Bluhm** is a 14 year old living in Maine (USA) and a third year high school student. One day, she noticed that the retouched photos on some glossy magazines made many of her classmates feel uneasy. The “Photoshop” re-touch remove the blemishes, making everyone look perfect. The girl felt specially bad about Seventeen, which is an old and famous teenager’s magazine. She felt betrayed by the false images and launched a petition in her blog. She asked the magazine to commit itself to publish, in each issue, only the photo of a normal girl, without retouches.

Tens of thousands of young girls signed the appeal. In short, they said: “We want to be seen as we are. Your models are dangerous because there are always some more fragile people, who may want to follow them. This can lead to food disorders, depression and low self-esteem”.

It was a reasonable analysis. In fact, Julia won her fight with the editor of Seventeen, who promised: no more retouched photos. »



At what point are we?

To reach a goal, we must practice daily and keep note of the positive changes and the difficulties encountered. This will help us until the next meeting when we shall spend time sharing our experiences.

Did I have an opportunity to act according to my convictions even when the group of my age bracket (friends, school, sports) thought differently?

What difficulties did I find?

What helped me?

How did my companions react?

For the gen assistant



Evaluation after the meeting

- Did the proposed activities increase the youth's interest in this beatitude?
- Has a particular area emerged from the Gen 3 in which they feel it is difficult to live the purity in heart?
- What commitment have they taken to live it? Aim at accompanying and supporting them in their commitment until the next meeting.
- Do I consider the topic finished or is there still something to discussed at the next meeting?
- Did difficulties arise? What must we keep in mind to improve next time?