

I will be happy if... i have the courage to go against the current

"Blessed are those who are persecuted
for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"
(Mt 5,10)



Objective

To have the **courage** to "go against the current", stating your own ideas and fighting against injustices in daily life.



How did it go?

Welcome, give time of dialogue and **sharing** of what each one has lived, the experiences made and the difficulties encountered.

We can also remind one another of the objectives we set ourselves in the previous meeting: "How did we get on?"



Introductory Activity

WHAT TO CHOOSE?

OBJECTIVE: identify and recognise situations in which to live justice

FLOW: The animator draws a line on the ground dividing the space into two distinct areas. All the youth take their place on the line. Now the animator outlines some situations in which the youth have to make one of two choices. The youth move to one side or the other according to the choice they make. It is very important to create an atmosphere which allows deep listening, research and sharing. The questions are just an excuse to initiate a dialogue on how we can live justice in daily life. Here are some examples:

- This weekend your favourite singer is in concert. All your best friends are going and a girl/boy that you really like will be there. However, you need money to go and your parents don't agree with spending this amount of money. At home you find money on the sofa that someone has left behind. It is just the amount that you need to go to the concert! What do you do?
A) Do you take the money and go to the concert,
B) Do you leave the money where it is and stay at home.
- Recently you have been spending a lot of time on your own, and you would like to spend time with a friend. One day a class mate whom you think is cool tells you in secret that he has bought a bottle of strong alcohol and he wants company to drink it with him. He asks 'If



you want, you can join us, but I need to ask you to hide it in your house until tomorrow, I don't want my parents to find it'. What do you do?

- A) Accept his invitation,
- B) Refuse his invitation.

- You are a member of a volley ball team, and everyone makes fun of Maria because she doesn't speak the language very well and she acts strangely, she is not a good player. Whoever spends time with her is seen as a 'loser'. Maria's birthday comes along and you get to know that all the team have decided not to attend her party. Maria comes to you and in front of the whole team asks you: "Will you be coming to the party tonight?". What do you do?
 - A) Accept the invitation,
 - B) Refuse the invitation.
- Your bus pass has expired, and so you have left early to walk to school. It is a matter of 20 minutes and your school bag is heavy. A class mate greets you and encourages you to get on the bus anyway without paying: there is seldom someone who checks at that hour.
 - A) You get on the bus
 - B) you continue to walk to school.
- Among your classmates it seems to be cool if you manage to steal something from the kiosk near the school. Some of them push you to do it as well as if it were a test of skill and courage. What do you do?
 - A) Refuse, with the risk of being made fun of
 - B) Steal something of little value so that they keep quiet.

After each question, one person from each side can say why they are on that side of the line.



This is how we live

The Gospel says to love those who harm you. When I moved to Kikwit (a city in the Democratic Republic of Congo) with my family I enrolled in a school where there were not enough chairs for everyone. Each class was made up of more than 80 students, and the bigger ones always took the chairs as if it were their right.

One day a boy bigger than me gave me a strong push making me fall off my chair and landing on the ground.

Moreover, he took my bread which

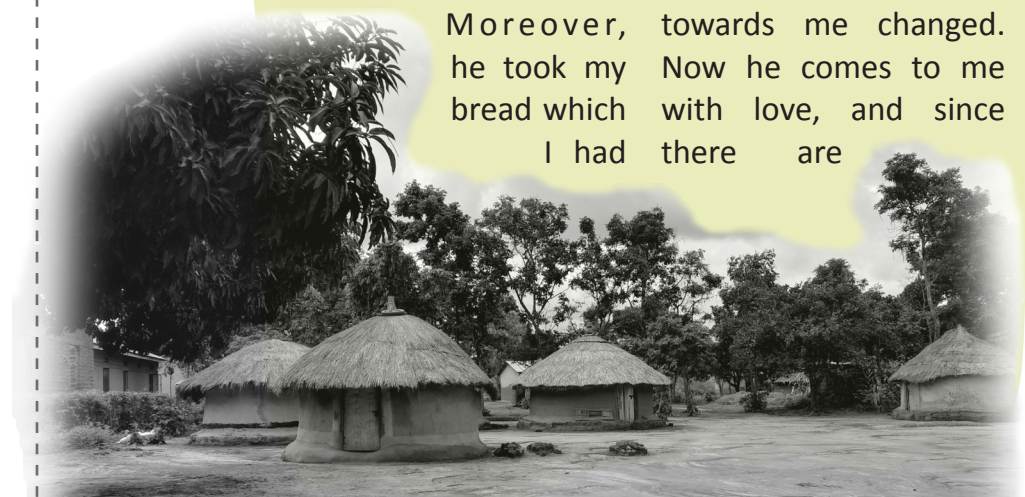
brought from home. From then on, he began to steal my snack food every day.



I could not love this boy: he had become my enemy. After sharing some experiences with my parents, I understood that I had to love Jesus Forsaken in that boy and that if he stole my bread every day it was because he was hungry. So, I decided to offer him the bread before he had time to steal it.

Little by little his attitude towards me changed. Now he comes to me with love, and since

I had there are



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many gaps in his knowledge of different subjects I try to explain to him anything he does not understand.

The experience of living love at home, in my family, urges me to serve others. In our culture boys don't help in the household chores, however for me doing light housework is a chance to love. So, I wash the dishes, I go to the mill to grind the maize, to the river to wash clothes etc. One day a friend saw me with a basin of flour on my head and asked: "Why are doing these things instead of leaving them for your mother or sisters?" I replied: "When you love there is neither man nor woman!".

A.K. Democratic Republic of Congo

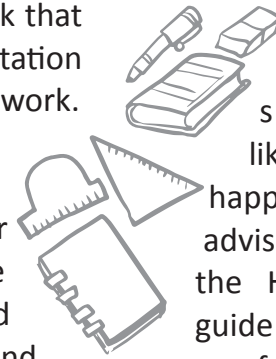


I am 17 years old and I am in the fourth year in High School. I love to dance and I am part of a dance group in my school. At the end of the last academic year my parents advised me to give up the dancing so as to concentrate more on my studies. But I insisted on going on because I am passionate about dance. I made a pact with them: if my results were good I could continue dance the following year.

One day during a class test I was so afraid I would



not get a high mark that I fell into temptation and copied the work. Immediately afterwards I felt terribly guilty. After a few days the teacher discovered what I had done and this made me feel even worse. So, I decided to write a letter to my parents confessing everything and asking for their forgiveness I didn't feel I could face them. I knew my parents would be very disappointed in me but after I had said everything I felt relieved and happy. I felt that they accepted my apology and they told me to use this negative experience in order to improve. We are not perfect, we all make mistakes, but the important thing is to say sorry and start



again. And the next time something like this should happen they advised me to ask the Holy Spirit to guide me and to pray for the strength to say no. I understood from this experience that I have to always be open with my parents and to never doubt their love. I have learnt to listen more to the voice of God which speaks in my conscience. God permits even our mistakes so as to make us become better people.

A. Philippines

This happened
to me...



Going into depth


Sometimes when we go against the current, the others think that they are right and that we are wrong. At times, they abandon and reject us, and in the end, we too start having doubts and think that maybe we made a mistake. What should we do in this case?...

You are right. The world is a bit right and a bit wrong. You are right because you have the truth, you are with Jesus. You are right.



Of course, we must stay in the midst of this world to love everyone. But we must not have the mentality of the world. We must have our own mentality, the right one, the truth. So, we must try not to be upset about it, and we do what the first Christians did. What did they do?

The world around them was worse than ours, much worse. The people didn't only criticize them, but they also did bad things.

Well, this is what the first Christians did: when the others hurt them, when they felt tempted to go back to the world, when doubts came, as they came to you... what did they do? They went back to their Christian communities, among the other Christians, and there they found the strength to go ahead, to face the world, and to bring the revolution of love. The revolution of love began with them. 

Chiara Lubich,
Marino 10.05.1997 -Gen 3 Supercongress
Ai gen 3 1996-2002. Ed.Città Nuova. pag. 14-15

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YOU CANNOT SERVE TWO MASTERS



Chiara Lubich,
Rocca di Papa. June 20, 1975
Gen 3 Congress. The Beatitudes

Here Jesus says clearly that those who are faithful in living according to the laws of God, that is, in justice, are persecuted, but this shouldn't discourage them, because in this way they will gain the kingdom of heaven.

In fact, one who is on God's side cannot be held in high regard by God's enemies, too. They will despise him

and fight against him because his way of acting goes against the current and is a reproach to their consciences. We Gen sometimes see this in our families, too, and then we see it all the time at school, where there are others who make fun of us because we don't fight back with our fists or don't take part in bad conversations, or tell the truth even if it's not to our advantage.



And yet, if we don't act in this way, we are not Gen, and we are not Christians, because one cannot serve two masters.

Thomas Moore, for example, refused to recognize that the new marriage of the king of England was valid in the eyes of God, because the king was already married, and for this reason Thomas was condemned to death.

But who, before everyone else, was persecuted, dragged before the court of justice, and in the end condemned and put to death? Jesus was.

Jesus, after he had told those 5000 people li-

stening to him who are the happy ones, who are his privileged ones, and by thus doing had overturned the world's way of thinking, turned next to his apostles.

Jesus knew how many obstacles they would have met, how many lies against them, and how much suffering in announcing these things all over the world.

And so, full of love, he said to them:

"Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of lies against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."





Sometimes
I find
myself alone,
the only one
in my class,
who thinks
like you.
I resist
and resist,
but then
sometimes
I don't
even know
if I should
resist...



Resist,
Resist,
you are not
alone, (...) There are gen
3 everywhere, you are
not alone; you are alone
there, physically, in that
school, at that desk.
Everyone is saying things
we don't agree with. But
you must remain firm,
you are not alone. Then
all those who have gone
to heaven are with us.

Chiara Lubich,
Rocca di Papa. 29.11.1977.
Gen 3 Leaders Congress
Ai Gen 3. 1975-1980.
Ed. Città Nuova pag. 68-69




God is with you.

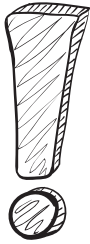
You are not alone, you
are never alone.

So, draw strength from
all the others. Block your
ears when they talk, let
them say whatever they
want, but hold on to
your ideas.

And when you see one
of your friends troubled,
try to help her, always
with love, always with
love. We must go ahead
with our revolution and
remember that you are
never alone, so you
must never despair and
never say: "I can't go on
any longer." If you think
you can't go on, if there
is no one to help you,
write me a letter.

So always be firm like
pillars. If it should
cause you to suffer,
it's Jesus forsaken, it's
Jesus forsaken. "I'm
here alone." He too felt
that he was alone. The
earth didn't want him
anymore, they nailed
him to the cross; heaven
closed itself. Who could
be more alone than he
was? "I too feel a little
lonely. I want to be
alone with him, to share
his passion with him, so
I'm happy to be alone,
against everyone." But
don't ever give up! We
have every reason not
to give up. There are
many of us and because
solitude is Jesus
Forsaken. 

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I will try!

We are in the world but not of the world. This truth of Jesus makes us understand that at times our attitude of justice, honesty or truth could become a reason to be made fun of or to be left alone by others.

What should we do if it happens at school, at home or with our friends.

- Let us remember that Jesus too was mocked and persecuted
- Avoid judging those who behave differently, but at the same time not to be influenced by them
- Experience the joy of going against the current and the certainty that God is on my side



Where have we got to?

To reach a goal we have to train day after day. Keeping a diary can help us to reflect about the difficulties we have encountered and to keep a note of positive changes. It will help us to keep our commitment until the next meeting, when there will be time to share our experiences.

Did I manage to go against the current today?

Let us put in our diaries our reflections, the joy of success and the prayer for help to Jesus so as to improve

At the next meeting let us share with the others some significant extracts from the diary

For the Group Leader



Evaluation after the meeting

- **What was the atmosphere like** Were we happy to meet other again, did we really listen to one another? Did everyone listen respectfully and did everyone share fully? Can we say we experienced the presence of Jesus among us?
- Did the **suggested activities** encourage an interest in these revolutionary words of Jesus? Were there any difficulties? Did any particular area emerge in which it is very difficult to go against the current?
- Do we think we have exhausted the topic or do we want to **deepen** something at the next meeting?