

YEAR XXXI N 01/02 JANUARY FEBRUARY 2014

MARIAPOLI

Newsletter of the Focolare Movement



*Community
of Sarajevo*
**In the wounds
of history**

**Movements
in dialogue**
A resource
for Europe

**Minoti Aram
and Chiara Lubich**
A story
that continues

Before everything

«Sometimes, thinking about the commitment to do the will of God, it seems as if we have to reduce our life to just a series of perfect actions. But it's not exactly like this.

We know how Jesus took the place that the Law had in the Old Testament. And so what then is the will of God that Jesus manifests to us? What is the Law now? It is summed up in the new commandment.

And so to live the will of God means to live above all that command, that must be placed at the basis of the entire Christian life. Thus we must link this year to last year, the year of charity as the Ideal, otherwise we would not be following God's plan.

So the pact remains valid even today, all those practices [...] that are necessary to carry it out are valid even today.

A series of actions that are more or less perfect could be the spiritual life of those who don't know our spirituality, but for us – who have received this grace – it is another thing: we must certainly do the will of God in the present with all our heart, our soul and our strength, but in the atmosphere of the commandment of Jesus, based on reciprocal love. This is what Jesus wants from us.

Chiara

Spiritual thought of Chiara read by Eli on the 18° conference call from Zurich on the 20th of November, 1980



CCHL archivio

Towards the Assembly

During the Congress of the gen2 Emmaus answered to one of their questions on the coming Assembly of the Work of Mary

Another question that arose from the interest that there was for the Opera is the question on the Assembly. [...]

First of all I would like to say one thing: that there was some sort of idea that the Assembly is convened for the elections. The Assembly is a moment of reflection that is done all together through a certain number of representatives [...].

Why do we come together? To see how the Opera is doing lately and to ask what we can do so that the Opera goes ahead, or how it can improve in the subsequent period. One period consists of a cycle of six years because in the elections the principal representatives of the Centre of the Opera are chosen, which means the President, the Co-President and the General Councillors who have a term of six years and so the Assembly is held every six years.

But the Assembly is held not only to renew the President and the Co-President, this is just one part of it. The Assembly is done precisely to look at the Opera, and to say: did it go well? Would we have wanted it to be different? Should we do something to change some things in the Opera? Is there something we don't like, something that could be done differently? etc. This is, above all, the reason for the Assembly. Then we also hold the elections because we have to renew the tenures of office, this is just one particular aspect; this is also im-

portant logically, because then, for the next six years, there will be those people and therefore this is also important.

So now we are preparing for this Assembly, which will be in September. During this preparatory period «in the meantime – you said – no one is consulting us». I am the one consulting you now: if you have some ideas, some thoughts, some worries about the Opera, some suggestions to give to the Opera, send them to me. Don't think that: well, now we have to come together, hold a meeting to think about something. Certainly afterwards, if you send these things to the Gen Centre it will be much easier for them to gather all this, just as they did for the questions, and there they can try to see: if there are some things that are repeated maybe ten times, and so they gather them into just one suggestion since they are all the same suggestion. Logically, this is just one way of doing things, but all of you are free to send everything that you want in whatever way you think is best. Or maybe even through the Delegates of the Zones, through those who will participate in the Assembly. As you all know, this representative will go to the Assembly; and you can say: «Look, at the Assembly please remember that there is this problem». Thus everyone will participate. It will be a unanimous participation. [...]



Castel Gandolfo, 20 December, 2013, gen 2 Congress, Emmaus: Answer to the questions (Excerpt from the transcript)

Going in depth

The sociality of reciprocal love

**The spirituality of unity, a remedy for
the ills of our times ever since its birth.**

A contribution of Iginio Giordani

This year we are called to meditate specifically on the point of our spirituality which is mutual love. What can Iginio Giordani – our Foco – tell us in this regard? In the meantime, it is good to know that Foco never dealt with the points of the spirituality by writing a specific theme, and he never dared to comment on those written by Chiara. Such prudence was not just simple human respect, but the fear of God. There are many testimonies by Foco himself wherein he recognized in Chiara not only the highest spiritual interpretation but also the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit that was overflowing in her and that sowed the Ideal in humanity that was so thirsty for light and unity. He was the «*design*» of humanity – Chiara always told us – and so we can only imagine that Foco has something new to tell us about reciprocal love. Not having any theme of his, during the recent retreats at the Centre we prepared a presentation of some of the important moments of his experience as a focolarino beside Chiara, enriched by never before seen audio and video excerpts (available at Iginio Giordani Centre for those who would like to have them).

His human stature was such that, especially during the early times, he was able to clarify the nature of the reality of the focolare for those who did not understand it. It was in 1949, and the Bishop of Trent – Mons. Carlo De Ferrari – wanted to put the young girls gathered around Chiara in a convent, when the Hon. Iginio Giordani, parliamentarian and Catholic writer, married and a father of four, a

well-known personality who could never be closed up in a convent, went to see him. The Bishop got angry with Foco and Chiara, out of love for the truth, went herself to the Bishop to defend him. From that moment on the relationship between the Bishop, Foco and the focolarinas grew always stronger up to the point that Mons. De Ferrari would sign his letters to Foco as «honorary focolarino» and sometimes altogether left out the «honorary» and called himself simply a «focolarino».

Another circumstance that allows us to grasp the design of humanity in Foco was dur-

ing the months that followed Paradise '49, when Chiara experienced a sense of total rapture by the Most High and it seemed that she had decided to leave the active life of the Movement to dedicate herself to mystical contemplation. The testimony of Foco of that event is, at times, dramatic: Foco had always searched for a form of religious life that could put together the consecration to God and the everyday life of the common man, inserted in the daily household chores, in his work, in his existence. He found all this in Chiara and in the Ideal, but now it seemed to him as if Chiara's choice was like taking a step backward, still in keeping with the division that existed between consecrated life and commitment in society. It was really up to him to remind Chiara of how she had always indicated Jesus Forsaken as the Spouse of those who had chosen the focolare, and that humanity was – for her, in that circumstance – the face of Jesus Forsaken who was asking for a special love and a return to the world. From there, from that special circumstance, Chiara had the inspiration that led to her writing that meditation «I have only one spouse on Earth».

Through the Ideal, Foco found his true vocation, that which he had searched for unceasingly in his youth, when he had made other important spiritual experiences, but which

were not decisive for his existence (Dominican Third Order, the spirituality of St. Ignatius, the Canossian spirituality and that of the Daughters of the Church, etc.). Once he had made the step that would lead him to become the first married focolarino, he put all his energies at the service of the growing Movement. He wanted to do all he could so that everyone would get to know it, and in the meantime in 1962 – in an interview for the national Italian network – he shared about it on television. Foco spoke as a «professor», and on television he said that in the world today young people are rising up and doing «works of mercy» (social actions) (according to the language of the times) listening to one another, taking away one's own ego to give space for the other who must be loved, and thus bring about unity. He described this as the only remedy against the illnesses of the times, such as desperation and loneliness. Words said fifty year ago but resound as very much current and topical today. It cannot be otherwise: the reciprocal love that Chiara taught us has become history in our lives and has made humanity, that part represented by Foco, a reality which is on its way towards «*Ut omnes unum sint*».

Alberto Lo Presti

A much awaited book

The book entitled "*Igino Giordani storia dell'uomo che divenne Foco*" (Igino Giordani the story of the man who became Foco) by Tommaso Sorgi has just been published.

Twenty years of intense work: a research that is as much inspired as it is detailed; a spiritual harmony between the author and this unique personality: all this serves to define the book written by Sorgi and published by Città Nuova. Truth be told, the idea for this book is not his but Chiara Lubich's, who way back in 1985 called Tommaso to head the newly opened Igino Giordani Center to begin the archiving

and the writing of his biography. The result is an important volume, based on a meticulous analysis of historical data but at the same time it us able to fly high, beyond the stories, the happenings, the adventures, to go forward into the mystery of a design spent at the service of man and of the Church, prepared for that decisive encounter, the one the Foco had with Chiara in 1948.



In Trent 70 years from that «YES»

**In the city that saw the birth of the Ideal of unity, an open convention,
with the participation of some institutions**

In planning the life and the activities of the year we thought that in Trent, the 7th of December must have a special place.

From the start we had involved the community in thinking about what we could offer to the city as a gift during this event, that we didn't want to be just a simple commemoration.

We met together in 22 from all the vocations and of all ages: each one felt that this event was his or hers and in a rich and lively exchange of proposals, we prepared a program in an atmosphere of true reciprocal love.

During the preparation, we were guided by a sentence of Chiara: «Everything started with a precise program: we wanted to contribute towards resolving the social problem of the city».

The program was made up of four «scenes» fruit of the incarnation of the charisma: the poor, economy during times of crisis, culture illuminated by the life of the Gospel, a city set on fire by the love of God.

The experiences that we chose wanted to express precisely that «contribution» and

to share them we had with us persons of different beliefs, students of the schools, members of various associations.

The representatives of the institutions, some of whom were invited by Chiara to join the project Trento Ardente (Ardent Trent) in 2001, played an active part in the program each according to their expertise.

The Province, the Town, the Federation of the cooperatives and the Region all said that they felt honoured to give their support and to shoulder all the expenses.

Chiara, from Heaven, in this 7th of December, has once again looked down at her Trent.

At the Saint Clare Auditorium, 600 people followed once again the golden thread that links these 70 years, also through brief passages written by Chiara.

The special vocation of this city came to light for the new ones and the Opera demonstrated, even if on a small scale, to be that context in which people don't encounter the Movement, but God through it, just as Emmaus had wished for in her video message that touched the sentiments of the Trendiness.

The announcement of the request to begin the process of



beatification, which was widely reported by all the newspapers and the regional television networks, was met with resounding applause by all those present in the hall. The Archbishop of Trent, Mons. Bressan, after recalling the period in which the Opera was being studied by the Holy See, said that «he is happy that the process towards her canonization has been started».

And he added: «The best way to honour Chiara Lubich is not so much to commemorate her, but rather to take up the mission that she has indicated to us so that the fraternity brought about by the Gospel may be understood and lived by everyone; with intense gratitude on my part and also of the entire Diocese for all those of the Focolare Movement who support us so that we can be inflamed by that love that Christ came to bring to the world».

In their speeches, the representatives of Universities, Municipalities, Provinces, Regions, Cooperatives, declared in various ways, how they were inspired by the fraternity in action.

Speaking to the community of the Focolare Movement in Trent, Prof. Andrea Leonardi, lecturer of the History of Economics at the University of Trent, expressed himself in this way: «Don't be afraid to consult one another, don't look for solutions by simply looking within your circle, have the courage to open yourselves to the international com-

munity... strive to be open also with regards to the culture that is not religiously inspired, that is not motivated by reasons of faith and certainly together we can build a society where Culture with a capital C will pave the way for a strengthening of fraternity in the human family».

In answering to the question: «How does one live in the city of Chiara», the mayor Alessandro Andreatta spoke of an «ardent» city that is not only lit up by love in the spiritual sense, but in the most secular way it is «passionate»: enthusiastic of its values, passionate about welcoming the other, about the need for encounter, for dialogue, to build something beautiful and positive together and passionate about her dream that Trent become a city of relationships: passionate, ardent relationships.

In many, including ourselves, we left that hall with the desire and the commitment to «start again» today, each one according to his or her own specific journey, so as to be builders of fraternity.

The community of Trent



The community of Sarajevo

The miracle of living together

A visit to a Country that is finding it hard to recover from the ruins of war

Our trip to Sarajevo began on November 29 with a Mass in memory of Josip Stijepic, doctor and dearest member of the New Families, who left for Heaven last year. Catholics, Muslims, Orthodox, non-believers, all friends and acquaintances of Josip and his family, bore witness to how he gave himself and his untiring activities in the four years when the city was under siege, when he risked his life, defying many dangers to help the wounded and, as soon as the war ended, helping the people to overcome spiritual traumas.

The following day, in a beautiful hall in the convent of the Franciscans, we met with the young people and adults, Catholics and Muslims, non-believers, Orthodox, among whom were also a priest and some nuns. A miracle of living together that is unique, born from sharing the love for Chiara and for her spirituality that is open to everyone.

Almost all of these people, sincere, of strong character, were marked by suffering and by the traumatic and tragic trials of the recent war. The present political situation does not give much hope for a future free from misery,

migration, discrimination, internal division. In fact before the war, there was a peaceful cohabitation among people of different cultures, among the Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croatians and the Muslims. Now the only thing that unites them is their common language, but the territory is divided between a Serbian Republic and the Bosnian Federation made up of Muslims and a minority of Catholic Croatians. The capital itself is divided into a Serbian part and a Bosnian part. The Croatian populace, which is a minority, is discriminated and have difficulty in occupying relevant positions in society. Here there is poverty, a 40% unemployment rate, a continuous migration in these last few years and the exodus of many families. Another wound is the presence of unemployed youth with many of them turning to drugs.

During our stay we also had the gift of meeting with Cardinal Vinko Pulic who, even if he had just come back from Rome, wanted to meet us and to spend an hour with us. He spoke to us about the present situation and of the difficult context in which the Church finds itself, about his fraternal relationship with the priests and the religious, whom he hopes would have a greater openness towards the Movements.

The meeting with around fifteen youth in the home of Josip's family was very beauti-

AN IMAGE THAT HAS BECOME SYMBOLIC: 6 April, 2012, twenty years after the beginning of the siege of Sarajevo, thousands of Bosnians met in the main city streets to participate in a concert in front of 11.541 empty seats, the same number of those persons killed by the Serbs snipers in the years of the war in Bosnia.





ful because of the atmosphere of great listening and the profound questions they asked. We also had a meeting, in reality a sharing, among some who came also to the previous meeting and some new ones. They shared their experiences. They asked us how they could go ahead and also how to involve their relatives, acquaintances and colleagues at work.

Tima, a Muslim adherent, mother of three, shared that 18 of her relatives had been murdered, but because of the personal relationship that she had with Chiara she felt that she had to forgive. «Chiara – she confided - has changed my life». Now one of her children is an imam, lives in Austria and is the leader of 300 families, another is studying also to become an imam: all of them have been prepared by her, who with her husband Safit are also the community lead-

The power of Christ in the community

«This experience, then, of death and resurrection, is more easily possible in us because of our communitarian vocation, because of our walking together towards God. We will never be able to gauge the help that our brothers give us even without our realizing it. What courage their faith instils in us, what warmth their love, how much they carry us with their example! We will never be able to calculate the strength that the presence of Christ in the midst of the community puts in us»..

Chiara Lubich

From *Unity and Jesus Forsaken*, Città Nuova, Rome, 1984, p.93, also printed in *Chiara Lubich – Reciprocal Love*, Città Nuova, Rome, 2013, p.99

ers of the Muslims of the Bosnian city of Tuzla. The letters that Chiara herself wrote her are very precious to her.

Zdravka Gutič, former vice-mayor, who had participated in the meeting of the IV° dialogue at Castelgandolfo, gave a strong witness of how he had rediscovered the meaning of his life after the meeting of Together for Europe in Stuttgart.

The day-meetings in Sarajevo were a continuous building of relationships with this very



dear community. Unfortunately the economic means to be able to leave the Country and to communicate with one another is quite scarce (only very few can connect to the internet and making telephone calls is very expensive) so their formation can be brought ahead by making more frequent trips to visit them, temporary focolares and the presence of families of the Movement coming from Croatia, who can stay with them for a few days. The commitment of the focolarinas of Spalato throughout all these years is admirable, the trips are demanding and very long, more than six hours by car.

On the day of our departure, we went to pray at the tomb of Josip with his wife and his children in the big cemetery at the center of the city, a former stadium that was transformed into a cemetery during the war, while our members were returning to Spalato, to continue nourishing the life illuminated by evangelical love.

Fonte Mantovani, Giuseppe Di Giacomo

International gen2 Congresses

A starting point

After four years, more than three thousand gen2 from all over the world participated in the international Congresses held at Castel Gandolfo at the end of December. «From this they will recognize you» was the title of these two meetings



Through the workshops, lessons, and experiences, the Congresses showed a gen life that explodes. They came from all over and, when it was not possible to travel, the video experiences and greetings arrived via internet that allowed many other gen from all over the world to be present. The visits of the first focolarinos and focolarinas, the concert of the Gen Verde, and the evening with Gen Rosso, were the pearls of the Congresses. The gen girls also toured the city of Rome and participated in the Angelus with the Pope.

The moments with Emmaus were the central and much awaited parts of both Congresses. The themes that were dealt with revealed much vitality. The questions ranged from the gen life to the United World Project, from the Assembly of the Opera to the theme on women, from Pope Francis to the challenges of the youth, the new set-up and many other aspects.

A varied program that reflected an articulated life: for this reason the Mariapolis Center was fully utilized, «invaded» by stands and workshops of all the Inundations, the gen3, the gen4, the Youth for a United World, the Sophia University and the Gen Schools of Loppiano and Montet. In all the halls there were simultaneous programs, some in Italian and others in English: everyone could choose where to go according to his or her interests.

The preparation started with a question: how can we realize Congresses that are made by everyone? We searched for the answer together with all the gen boys and girls all over the world, to whom we had asked for the things that were of interest to them in this appointment together. Once we had received the answers the gen Centers and the secretariat of the Youth for a United World met together and thought of a program that would gather together all these ideas that came. The result



Christmas 2013. The gen2 boys in the focolare of Fr. Foresi

was this challenge: two Congresses prepared and lived by a team with the involvement of the zones, of the other realities of the Opera and any gen who offered him or herself to do something.

For some it was their first Congress, others participated in it as the last step of their time with the gen. What remains from such an experience? They said that it was the relationships. For some it was important to «see the link with what we study and the Ideal». But what Johnny from Egypt said, more or less summarizes all the impressions: what remains is «the unity among everyone that has given me the strength to continue my life as a gen which I will bring with me».

A gen girl said: «The Congress was a fundamental moment. It seemed to me as if I had pressed the “pause” button in this frenetic race of this very full period in my life. And now there is an awareness and the desire to press “start”. I understood that change has to happen first of all in me and this is what the Ideal is for me».

The gen boys in the school of unity

It was a beautiful gift to be able to spend the days of Christmas with those who remained after the Congress and to make an experience of a School! We were 20 from: Ecuador, Brazil, Algeria, Burundi, Mexico, Cameroon.

Being at the Center we were lucky to be able to meet with four of the first focolarinos and focolarinas: Fede Marchetti, Marco Tecilla, Peppuccio Zanghi and Bruna Tomasi – each meeting was a jewel of communion – that led us to making true and profound choices. The visit to the focolare of Fr. Foresi on Christmas Day was a special gift. Another gift was the Mass held in the two “Green” Houses with the presence of elderly and sick focolarinos. Some of them were our gen4 assistants or Delegates of the Zone.

The school was truly an experience of life: from life to life. These impressions also expressed this: «Peppuccio did me a lot of good with his challenges. I want to be a radical gen». «In the second lesson on Paradise I was touched when Chiara spoke of God Trinity and I thought about the two Muslim gen who were present: who knows what they will understand... But Chiara then also said that the gen of other religions can

ask God for the grace to understand that which God wants to tell them». «When we went to visit the house of Chiara we entered into her intimacy. It was as if she were still alive among us. And today, in the first lesson on Paradise we sealed her presence among us with the Pact».

Special moments with the gen girls

The third day of the gen girls’ Congress was rather special: we all went to Rome! The Mass at St. Peter’s was celebrated for us by Cardinal João Braz De Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life, then the special greeting of the Pope during the *Angelus*. To be in that square with more than a 100 thousand people, was to feel ourselves one with the entire Church! In the catacombs we declared the Pact among us in a solemn way: that place, that reminded us of the radicalness of the mar-



tyrs of Rome, gave us the measure of «how» to love one another. It was an unforgettable moment for each one of us.

At the end of the Congress before leaving, a small gift: each one received a coloured pencil (before Christmas we received more than 600 from the Gen Center) to «write a new story, the story that will be born from reciprocal love that will generate new peoples».

After the Congress, from December 30, 2013 to January 7, 2014, a travelling gen school was held (in Loppiano, Trent, Fiera di Primiero and Rocca di Papa) for the 54 gen girls from different continents and also Europe, including a special moment: giving each one the Statutes of the Opera.

Stella Cheng, Joaquin Salzberg

In the school of the Trinity



Three international meetings at Castel Gandolfo and many others in the Zones The challenges of a radical vocation

were just a small group even when we were 1,200 and everyone spoke freely so much so that we could say: «It's true, we are a family, we trust one another».

In this atmosphere and, in the celebration of the 70° of the Movement, the words of the «Yes» of Chiara had an especially strong effect in the soul of each one.

The challenges are many; we have in front of us a journey that will bring us towards the near and far peripheries, also within ourselves; Jesus in the midst will always remain the certainty that we can face the year that is awaiting us with confidence and optimism.

What were these retreats? They were all the fruit of work done during the year to go in depth in the vocation of the focolarina and the focolarino that will continue, through re-living the aspects of our life. They were also the fruit of a profound reflection: to see how our relationships have been during the year and what does Jesus want to tell us today.

12Some impressions: «... I have only one desire in my heart, to answer totally to such a great call of Jesus: to build sacred places where the life of God finds a home here on

The experience made in the retreats at the Center made the unity among the focolarinas and focolarinos even stronger and the notable presence of many coming from the non-European continents made us feel ours the challenges that they face. The first and third retreats had the characteristic of being world-wide (484 present from different non-European continents) the second instead, was almost entirely European, and highlighted the richness of the reciprocal gift among the focolarinas and focolarinos of different Churches.

In all the retreats, the presence of Emmaus brought that note of fresh wisdom, that attracted many graces.

The beauty of the vocation of the focolarino and the focolarina emerged as well as its specific function. Emmaus encouraged us to make the focolare life can be not only liveable, sanctifying and imitable, but also «attractive», to begin a year of gratitude, to remember also those who «have gone faraway», to remember also the good that they have done.

The deep communion which was always present, made it possible to feel as if we





The words of Emmaus

The focolare: a heart that beats

«We have said oftentimes that the focolare is like the heart, this heart that beats, this heart that is hidden. Someone said: well after all, the heart is a muscle. Yes, certainly it is a muscle. There are many muscles in the body, and one of them is the heart, it is a hidden muscle. But it has a characteristic that someone pointed out to me, that is, it is the only muscle that cannot allow itself to stop and rest even for an instant, because if it rests for just a moment the body dies.

Therefore, the heart of the Wok of Mary, which is the focolare, cannot allow itself to rest even for a moment. What does this

earth so as to embrace humanity and to bring to it light and warmth... ». «... the experience in the school of the Trinity, in this year of reciprocal love, should bring us to a unity among the generations where everyone will feel, in different moments: fathers, sons, brothers»

We can say that the most beautiful gift of these retreats was that of having made the Opera always more our home, the home of the Trinity, which is so because of mutual love.

Serenella Silvi, Hans Jurt

mean? It means that we can never allow the thermometer of mutual love to go down; all the other things we can allow: we can go on vacation, we can play a match, sometimes even go to see a movie or go to a restaurant together. We can do everything, but we cannot allow ourselves not to have charity among us otherwise the body dies. Do you understand how serious this is? It is not only we who die, but the whole body dies».

7 december 2013

A year of thanksgiving

«In a letter that I received it said: "If last year we had the Jubilee Year, a year in which we forgave one another, a year in which we rediscovered the value of love, let us make this year on of "thanksgiving".

Do you agree? Based on what we just shared regarding reciprocal love, may this year be one in which we wake up every morning saying: "Thank you for having created me". Then: "Thank you for giving me this brother; thank you for giving me this occasion to love you ..." And: "I thank you, you and you!". May it be a year of thanksgiving to God and to the neighbour, and it will be a year of love and of joy».

14 december 2013

Make Paradise visible

«"To be Jesus", this is our vocation. How can we become Jesus? In the reciprocal giving of our entire life, therefore in the focolare, in the communion among everyone, in an intense way, in a profound way, in a fraternity that is so total, so complete, that will make us experience here on earth the possibility of living the life of heaven, of the Trinity, that we want to bring, that we want to have always among us so as to bear witness of it to the others. Our vocation is to make Paradise visible. There is an extreme need for a vocation such as this».

6 january 2014

The men and women Volunteers

«To serve God in humanity»

Almost three hundred delegates of the men and women volunteers for a meeting of verification, of dialogue, of communion.



«To go out with Jesus in the midst» – with these words of Emmaus we began the annual Meeting at the Center of the 300 volunteers in-charge of the branch in the Zones and zoneteas, coming from all over the world.

The meeting was preceded by three days of pre-meeting from the 18th to the 20th, which was held distinctly in the two Centers with more than 100 delegates, especially from the continents. They were days of verification, of dialogue and of communion both personal and of the life in the Center and in the zones.

Two special moments enriched these first days together: the greeting of Emmaus at the Center of the Opera and the Audience with Pope Francis in St. Peter's Square.

The words of Emmaus were strong and incisive: *«Take advantage of these days here to practice how to live the collective spirituality! I have a thought that is passing through my soul. You know how much I have always been insisting on going out, how we must go towards the exis-*

tential peripheries. But in certain moments it is precisely this that makes me also feel the responsibility for sending you to go out, this launching, because I know that it's not easy. And I also know that we don't have the grace to face these existential peripheries with an individual spirituality. It's because God has given us a collective spirituality. Therefore if we don't take advantage of this collective spirituality, as you have already understood, we lose, we lose, we are losers. That's why I am saying: we have to go out, we have to go towards the peripheries, but with Jesus in the midst, bearing witness of Reciprocal Love (...)».

Her message set the «tone» of the meeting, and with Darci Rodrigues and Gusti Oggenfuss we entered into the new dynamics of the «Opera today» with a complete updating that included the video of Palmira Frizzera. Over and beyond the «technical» aspects: «merging» and «settlements», we grasped how it is the Holy Spirit who is guiding the Opera. All felt themselves involved as real protagonists of the Opera's «new set-up» and committed to answering the challenges that the world is going through.





The answers of Chiara on «reciprocal love», the theme of the year of Emmaus, the thoughts of Foco, brought into focus once again our life with Jesus on the midst. In this atmosphere of unity, other themes were also deepened: Maria Ghislandi and Paolo Mottironi spoke on our «going out» with the «local communities» and the «existential peripheries», Annamaria Sanità and Domenico Mancinelli spoke on our commitment to and the life of New Humanity.

Everything was supplemented by the numerous experiences of the volunteers, strong ones due to their witness in society and also intensely moving for the heroism lived in the «frontier zones» and in continuous and dangerous conflicts.

There were also important clarifications regarding the General Assembly of the Opera and the Assembly of the Volunteers.

During the profound dialogue and the group meetings we lived an experience of true reciprocity, because of the communion that grew from it, because of the discussion on the «new set-up» of the Opera and on the Assemblies. We experienced with joy the beauty of being a part of this unique planetary family.

Giancarlo Faletti came to visit us on Saturday morning, bringing with him the unity of Emmaus and of the entire Center of the Opera. «His coming – as we had written to Emmaus – radiated affection, transmitted trust and an awareness of the power of the love of God that is incarnated in our radical vocation, in the midst of people, in every environment, in every moment».

Here in synthesis are some of the profound and concrete impressions of the men and wom-

en responsables, that express what was experienced and lived by everyone:

Poland: «We have the treasure, we have the charism of Chiara, and we are debtors of these treasures. We must feel the cry of the world today that hungers for God! We must not just live, but we must give the Ideal to the world».

Australia: «For years I have been responsible for the men volunteers, but today I feel that I have to start again from the beginning. I have to review all my relationships... as if they were new».

Africa: «I want to leave from here going towards the “first peripheries”, bearing witness of reciprocal love, that is the first requirement for “Ut omnes”».

Brazil: «The words of Chiara have given me a greater certainty of the power of the Charism: they are eternal words».

Japan: «In front of various difficulties, I often used to feel my limitations and I was afraid that the fire of the Ideal would die out in our hearts. But having experienced such a strong mutual love among us, I had the light and the courage to start again and to launch myself towards humanity. Living in the “school of the Trinity” I am sure that the Holy Spirit will guide the future of the Opera».

Yes, we can say that the Holy Spirit has worked profoundly in each one.

Just as we told Emmaus, «It seems like a new meeting, a search for the true light, that of Jesus in the midst that illuminates the new reality of the Opera today».

Maria Ghislandi, Paolo Mottironi

Together to launch ourselves «outwards»

«To risk more so as to give the Charism, to grow in concreteness, to find the operative ways».
The commitment of the 800 participants at the meeting of Castelgandolfo

«God is at work», «new energy», «school of the Trinity», «to go out to bear witness to what we are living»: these are some of the echoes of the annual retreat that gathered together 800 priests and deacon focolarinos and volunteers from the 14th to the 17th of January, at the Mariapolis Center of Castel Gandolfo. Three rea-



sons for having this meeting together, with distinct moments, just as we had already done in 2011, were: the Assembly of the Opera this coming September; the preparation for an appointment with seminarians and young priests and deacons this August in Loppiano; the desire to assess the situation of two realities that foresee our involvement in radiating the charism of unity in the local Churches: the Parish and Diocesan Movements and the Priest Movement.

The entire meeting had as its background the reciprocity among the priests and deacon focolarinos and volunteers. There was a great

sense of «family» among brothers united by the Ideal and by the common call to the ministry, a reality that would like to emerge even more in the zones: to be more «inside» so as to radiate more «outside»

But the reality that touched us the most, in a certain sense, impassioned us, is the journey that is being undertaken by the whole Opera in this mo-

ment. Emmaus e Giancarlo, in a memorable hour together, placed in our hearts the reality that it is as if God was «passing» among us, thus not only provoking us to «re-organize» the set-up of the Opera, but to «put in order» first of all our hearts and our relationships harmonizing them with the present, the today of God. So much so that we perceived that this stage of the Opera is not any less than the «charism» of the past, but a call to a greater participation and co-responsibility.

«To go out» of ourselves to give that which humanity is waiting for today: God, nothing

else but God, source of that fraternity on a planetary scale that is the truest aspiration of hearts.

For this reason, two expressions, in the words of Emmaus and Giancarlo, have taken on a particular meaning and thrust: «to enlarge the heart», «to pass on ...». To pass on a «gift» which has given and which gives a new face to our life and pushes us to look at the Church and humanity with the same heart of a God who is a Father! All this in a moment of singular coincidence of the new push that comes from the charism of Chiara, and the reflection-meditation that Pope Francis has given to the Church: the Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*.

Some of its more salient parts were presented, and echoed among us as a powerful invitation of the Spirit to not allow ourselves to be «robbed» of the most precious thing we have: the Gospel. It was touching to see how the Pope sees the heart of the «good news» - the new commandment of Jesus, making the typical «service» that we are called to do in the Church and for the Church,

flash before our eyes in a new way: reciprocal love, placed as the basis of personal relationships and every pastoral activity.

In this light we gave ample space to the Parish and Diocesan Movements and to the Priest Movement, specific expressions of our «going out», so that the presence of the living Jesus may shine in the Church and in her structures.

The presentation of the Parish and Diocesan Movements through a medley of experiences, highlighted the many ways of radiating the charism of unity in the parishes and dioceses.

The Priest Movement is always more going ahead according to the three concentric circles of commitment and initiatives: from the unity among the priest focolarinos and volunteers to the care of the adherents, the service to the local Church, the starting of the ecclesial «worlds».

The presentation of the meeting «Networking » for seminarians and young priests received a big echo and immediate adhesion from everyone. (see box p. 18) It was the culmination of the wave of «youth» that we felt as never before in this retreat.

«It is really the time to launch ourselves outwards», Chiara said in February 1988 to the Priests' Centers: and it seemed to us a very current invitation! We must «risk more in order to give the charism», «to give the Ideal without being afraid», «to grow in competence », «to find the operative ways», this was how the priests and deacons concluded, feeling encouraged to become more proactive and a gift for the Church.

Fr. Tonino Gandolfo, Fr. Hubertus Blaumeiser



Congress of the gens units

Aim at life

The Congress of the gens units made everyone experience Love and make the call to unity resonate

For the 40 participants it was beautiful to grasp from the *Evangelii gaudium* of Pope Francis, on the day of the opening (December 27), how the Gospel unites our life and brings us to go outwards to the peripheries.

The meditations on the theme of the year in three parts, presented by the priests and the religious of the Center, created a dialogue and brought each one to go in depth. The experiences that were shared, specially those of Costanza Tan and Jorge Lionello Esteban, who spoke to us of the Opera today, awoke in us the push to incarnate the Ideal in our life.

The meeting with Emmaus was decisive. By highlighting the specific contribution of the gens, she made us feel that we are an important part of the «house» of the Opera.

It gave a turning point to the life of unity, inviting «life». The answer she gave regarding the

gens who, after their ordination as priests, lose their contact with the Movement, was enlightening. «I believe that we must go to the root of this “getting lost”», Emmaus said, observing that this does not happen only to seminarians and priests, but also to the lay people who at a certain point «allow themselves to be taken by many other things, by the “worldliness”, as the Pope says». It could also be that the pastoral activities imperceptibly make them lose sight of the ideal, maybe it is a group of teens that they are bringing ahead and everything is going well: «Then these teens may take the place of God»

The culminating point of the Congress was the concluding Mass with three «pacts»: of mercy, of reciprocal love, and of unity. There was a great joy and emotion.

As a fruit of these splendid days, a mailing list was started to keep the experiences circulating among them.

Fr. Alexander Duno



Net-working

A Church in relationships is the title of the appointment for young priests and deacons, seminarians and youth who are thinking about the priesthood. This will be held from August 19 to 22, 2014 in Loppiano, promoted by the gens and the priests and deacon focolarinos and volunteers.

There will be three themes that the meeting will focus on as the «knots» of a net to weave with the contribution of everyone: Scenes of the world – glimpses of fraternity; the Church in communion – for humanity; Men of God – weaver of fraternal relationships.

The aim of this meeting is to discover together the relevance and the urgency of the Church as communion and dialogue, just as the Second Vatican Council had outlined and the charism of unity has borne witness to in its 70 years of life. Today, more

than ever, the world finds itself in front of a challenge: to slide towards disintegration or to make humanity one family according to the «dream» of Jesus.

«In the Church we are members of one another, all reciprocally necessary», Pope Francis wrote in his recent Message for the World Day of Peace 2014. «This means that we must weave fraternal relationships, marked by reciprocity, forgiveness, total giving of oneself, according to the width and depth of the love of God, offered to humanity by Him who, crucified and risen, attracts all to himself».

Info: networking2014.focolare.org

Iscrizioni: networking2014@focolare.org

Congresses of adherents

A strong commitment

Almost two thousand people from different countries participated in the meetings at Castelgandolfo. A breath of fresh air also in those who have been participating for more than ten years

The second Congress of the adherents ended with the great joy of all the around 1,200 persons present (in the first Congress held in November, there were around 700) coming from Italy and Europe and also from Latin America, Africa, China, Korea, the Philippines, U.S.A.

To welcome them on the first day was the message of Emmaus that introduced them to the theme of the Congress: reciprocal love. An invitation to focus once more on relationships, to love one another with the same measure of Jesus, to make of every obstacle an occasion to love more, and to bear witness just like the first Christians so as to bring ahead the Kingdom of God.

The program included the answers of Chiara and the theme of Emmaus, and was also rich with profound and touching experiences, artistic moments that were greatly appreciated.

Persons of various Churches were also present and for the first time also a Muslim lady who, at her departure could not stop thanking us for what she had experienced.



Gratitude to Chiara and to the Movement for the Ideal, gratitude for the welcome, desire to start again, light, rediscovery of the Gospel, the desire to incarnate all that they heard even if it meant a stronger commitment to be able to do it: this is what was common in the majority of impressions that they left.

In spite of the large number of participants, everyone, the young and the not so young, affirmed having experienced the beauty of the family, and it was really like this, everything took place with an exceptional harmony.

Many came for the first time, others had known the ideal of unity for more than 50 years, others came back after years of absence, but in everyone there was the same freshness, the same desire to bring this light and this life in one's own environment, just like the first community of Trent.

Everything can be summarized with the words that they themselves wrote to Emmaus at the end of the Congress: «How beautiful it really is to feel that we are at home, even those who have lived through a period of absence. We want to bring this reality of the family in the places where we live, certain that it is really "God's business".

We are aware of the difficulties, in a world that is apparently without hope, but we make the pact with you: to be like the first Christians and to bring the "badge" of reciprocal love everywhere».

*Costanza Tan,
Jorge Lionello Esteban*

In visita al Centro dell'Opera



IN DIALOGUE

Stories of unity A story that continues

**Minoti Aram and Chiara Lubich:
a relationship woven by dialogue, respect
and understanding. The remembrance after
the death of this Gandhian representative
on December 25, 2013**

After the first trip of Chiara to India in January 2000, the first Hindu-Christian Symposium was held at Castel Gandolfo entitled «Bhakti, the way of love: Union with God and Universal Fraternity».

In the midst of many participants, professors of philosophy, of Sanskrit, mathematics and of various disciplines, she was also there, Mrs Minoti Aram, Hindu, seated in a wheelchair accompanied by her daughter Vinu.



Rocca di Papa, 30 september 2007.
The last visit of Minoti to Chiara

It was the occasion for the members of the Abba School and other focolarini of the Center of the Movement to meet an extraordinary person, very strong in her extreme weakness.

She did not present a theme, but she lived those days as always, in love that was trans-



formed into welcome, a smile, an advice and above all, full unity with Chiara, who loved to call her as her spiritual sister.

Married to Dr. Aram, educator, pacifist, rector of a University and finally a member of the Raja Sabha, the Indian Senate, Minoti lived a life guided by the Gandhian principles and, together with her husband they decided to give life to the Shanti Ashram in the eighties, a laboratory of peace and of commitment where many women and children were touched by her concrete love that has assured many of a dignified life.

She too followed her husband in his commitment to interreligious dialogue, and it was precisely during an international Conference in China that she met Natalia Dalla Piccola. She shared what happened during that meeting: «... in those days the talks continued even beyond the time limit. To make our work easier they would serve us tea at regular intervals and I, not being used to drink bitter tea, I was looking for a friendly face to give me a cube of sugar. Natalia saw my need immediately and, with a great naturalness she came to my aid.

During the following days, we often talked to one another, I of the Shanti Ashram and

Gandhi and she about the Focolare Movement and Chiara. From there began our long and fruitful collaboration.

We had a common aim: the commitment to bring a lasting peace and unity among everyone. She was very simple and humble and these qualities of hers did not go unnoticed.

My husband and I were fascinated by the stories of Natalia regarding the life of the early times of the Movement. She on the other hand wanted to know about Gandhi and showed a great capability of appreciating the diversity and of deeply grasping our commitment to peace and social development.

I remember that, at the end of her trip, she confided to Dr. Aram her wish that also Chiara could make the same experience in India and so we left each other with the promise that we would work so that we could received her in a worthy way at the Shanti Ashram».

It was precisely this promise that brought Chiara to India in 2001 to receive the Gandhian Prize of «Defender of Peace» in the city of Coimbatore, where she addressed a crowd of 600 people the majority of whom were Hindu.

The day after, in the living room of Minoti's house, in front of the Ashram, a historical meeting for the dialogue with the Hindus took

place: Chiara gave the guidelines to follow to deepen the reciprocal acquaintance of the Christian spirituality of the Movement and that of the Gandhian one based on true reciprocal love, expressed through the openness and profound respect for one another.

Numerous activities followed, round tables, social and artistic activities, visit of the youth up to the organization of the 2009 gen3 Supercongress in Coimbatore, where Minoti wanted to be present especially in the crucial moments with the 1500 teens who participated.

Then n2007 came. Chiara was already very sick and had just come back from Switzerland. On September 30 Minoti was present in a Castel Gandolfo for a meeting of dialogue and expressed the desire to meet her.

It seemed impossible, Chiara was not seeing anyone but when she learned that Minoti wanted to see her, she said yes... It was a meeting almost without words, but was very profound, they spoke to one another with their eyes and even more with their soul. Now we believe that she is with Chiara in the fullness of joy, in a present of light and of love that will never end..

Giuliana Taliana, Antonio Salimbeni



Coimbatore, January 2003. The visit to the Shanti Ashram Minoti and her daughter Vinu Aram between Chiara and Natalia

Europe and the communion of the Movements



Firs dialogue. A conversation with the Delegates of the Opera for Europe regarding the pathway travelled

A valid contribution comes from the members of the Movements who are able to transmit the positive points of their experience of dialogue in the ecclesial bodies. At the same time, one can see the positive repercussions in the political, social, and economic fields, just as the process of «Together for Europe» does even if only in the initial stages.

In this journey of communion it is noteworthy to see the presence of the youth, who are there with their typical and essential contribution.

The main event of the year, Pentecost with Pope Francis, who saw the Movements as the protagonists both in the celebration in Rome and also in the simultaneous local events that were held in some Countries.

We would like to give you a glimpse of our trip, so let's try to go over together some of the stages of our journey that were particularly indicative.

Starting from the west, let's focus on the north: Sweden. In view of Pentecost, in this Scandinavian Country – where less than 2% of the population are Catholic – under the stimulus of the Bishop of Stockholm, Movements, new Communities and secular Institutes gave life to a journey of communion that was inserted among the events for the Year of Faith.

In England, they had just recently concluded a meeting of Movements entitled: «Many streams, one river». There were 1600 present at the Westminster Central Hall, belonging to more than 20 Movements and ecclesial Communities. Even if it was organized

During the annual meeting of the Delegates of the Zones, which had just ended a few months before, being the Center of the First Dialogue, we «travelled» throughout Europe, «visiting» them all.

This part of the old Continent is living through a rapid transformation that affects also its relationship with the Catholic Church. As the place of origin of the Christian Churches and for a long time the center of Catholicism, Europe is coming to terms with a more universal composition both in governance and, thanks to globalization, also in its expansion in emerging non-Western areas, so much so that we can speak of a post-European era.

In parallel it is strongly being questioned on the politico-economic field.

The most diverse ecclesial, social, cultural conditions live side by side, indicating the communion among the ecclesial realities in a very variegated way.

But, everywhere, this shared communion shows the way to be able to enter more profoundly in the essence and the goals of the Church and allows one to draw the necessary impulses so that it will become always more a «house of communion».

by the catholic Movements, the presence of members of Movements belonging to various Churches was significant.

In Spain, instead, the protagonists were the Confraternities, linked within the context of religious tradition which is still very much felt and participated in the Country. Thanks to the members of the Movements who have become a part, they are now experiencing a new vitality.

In Central Europe, the friendship between the charismatic realities is intense and active and often brings ahead common programs. In Austria, among the projects is the Vienna Lab, promoted by entrepreneurs, employees and young people with the aim of weaving a network of dialogue regarding the many ways of economic action, among which are the Economy of Communion. In this nation, besides, the Church has undertaken a journey of spiritual and structural renewal and to be able to do this that have turned their interest to the ecclesial Movements.

In Eastern Europe the communion among the Movements is making headway as a driving force in society, particular attention is given to the family, undertaking important actions in its favour. Thus is Slovenia and in Croatia, where they were able to positively hinder some proposals of laws to redefine the family, and destroying it in its essence.

Also in the Czech Republic the friendship among Movements is very much alive. An important yearly appointment brings them together on the 4th of July, in Velehrad for the «Meeting of people of good will».

In the south of Europe, going all the way to the Mediterranean sea, is Italy.

The peninsula is rich with Movements who have their headquarters there, and so the contacts among them are many and varied. Also significant are the contacts with Movements born from ancient charismas. In Trent a yearly meeting gathers together members of one and the other.

The spiritual enrichment derived from this is noteworthy, with positive and constructive effects on the local Church.

Also of importance us the fact that in Locri, in Calabria, the diocese has opened the process for the beatification of a married couple: Maria Rosaria and Franco Bono, she was a member of the Focolare Movement and he of the Catholic Action. The Zenit News Agency wrote about them saying: «The specific diversity of their charismas and their commitment were lived by both of them as a reciprocal enrichment and a reason for dialogue and growth».

Looking therefore at the journey we took, it seems that we can say that the joyful beginning marked by Pentecost '98, in these past 15 years, has seen a constant growth and is always more appreciated and encouraged by the ecclesiastical authorities.

Ours then is the commitment to gather, to value and to give a push to the life that has started during these times so as to work always more towards the realization of the design of the Church-communion.

Anna Pelli, Mario Ciabattini



Slovenia, civil action 2012 in favor of the family

In Rome

A gift for the Church

A group of intern members of the Movement called to animate a prayer vigil for those engaged in pastoral work for vocations in Italy



«To go out», «to go towards the others», to bring the gift of the Ideal to those who have not yet come to know it... This is the desire that we had in our hearts when we were invited by Mons. Domenico Dal Molin, director of the National Office of Pastoral Work for vocations of the Italian Bishops' Conference, to animate a prayer vigil for the participants of the National Convention on Vocations.

At the initial reluctance due to the lack of many of our members, who were away from Rome due to the holidays, we told ourselves: «How can we say no?» «It is not really the periphery, but ...»

So we launched ourselves, believing that if we gave our contribution, His would not be lacking.

Thus on the 4th of January, there were 12 of us in front of a church packed with priests, religious men and women: around 550 persons in-charge of offices and centers for vocations, rectors and seminarians, religious men and women, consecrated lay people and lay people committed within the living network of pastoral service in the dioceses of Italy...

Before starting we asked Jesus together that He be the present in our midst; we offered him our small contribution, so as to make a gift to Mary, since the program that we had prepared together for the meeting was the «Via Mariae».

And this is how it was, with songs, music composed by Andrea, a gen boy, readings of passages from the Gospel and from the writings

of Chiara, with others.

After a brief presentation, as soon as our humble (but powerful!) choir started to sing, everyone was immediately united. We were so surprised... it was felt that we were all together, gathered under the gaze of Mary. In some moments we ourselves were moved by the unity that we felt among everyone.

Up to the end, when Mons. Dal Molin thanked us before the blessing: «You have given us the caress of God, truly we have lived through a moment of prayer, together with Mary ...» and then, happily greeting us, he said: «I knew it! Simple and profound...»

A sister from Naples said: «Usually I am never left speechless... Today yes».

And a volunteer present: «... an hour of Paradise. Everything was beautiful and harmonious». We were all different flowers in the same garden, we were "Church" that was journeying together through the various stages of the "Way of Mary". I think that Chiara would be happy».

Radi Di Giovanni

IV American Missionary Congress

The ecumenism of life is moving ahead

In Venezuela, at the IV American Missionary Congress the Focolare Movement highlights the importance of an ecumenical experience

From November 26 to 30, the IV American Missionary Congress was held in Maracaibo in Venezuela with 4,000 participants from all over the continent.

The theme, «Missionary disciples in a secularized and multicultural world», was deepened through conferences and 22 thematic forums. The first conference was held by Lucas Cerviño, an Argentinian focolarino from Barcellona (Spain), who emphasized on reciprocity.

The Bishops of Maracaibo proposed to the Venezuelan Bishops' Conference to offer as the contribution of our Archdiocese, the ecumenical experience that we have been bringing ahead for more than thirty years, especially with the Presbyterians and the Pentecostals. The request was accepted.

In the forum «Ecumenism and Mission» the pastors and pastoreesses of the Presbyterians and Pentecostal Churches who are in contact with us and a Pentecostal gen girl, shared our experience together. It was moving to see them speak as children of the charism of unity: it was a gathering of the fruits from the seeds that were sown throughout all these years and cultivated with patience and not without difficul-

ty. The pastor Obed Vizcaino of the Presbyterian Church presented, as one of the pioneers, the journey of these years of dialogue, highlighting the relationship that was born as a fruit of concrete love.

The pastoreess Elisa de Bulmes, also from the Presbyterian Church shared her personal experience and publicly declared herself to be a «focolarina», and finally, Pastore Everth Hidalgo of the Pentecostal Hosanna Church spoke about the challenges that dialogue entails. The participants at the forum, around 60 of them, appreciated very much their presentation.

Persons of the Movement belonging to other Christian denominations also gave their contribution in that various workshops, and so different initiatives were born that they will bring ahead. The pastors expressed surprise at the openness and welcome that the Catholic Church gave which allowed them to participate actively in an event of this level. The moderator and the spokesperson of the forum were two religious from Chile who appreciate the Movement and would like to remain in contact with us.

The Pastoreess Bulmes wrote: «I thank God [...] because all over the Americas, we are following ways of dialogue so as to build together unity in the midst of our realities, identities and diversities but having as our center the Triune God»

Rocio Rada, Maria Gorette Sousa



Ecumenical Korea In the ray of a prophecy

**Trip to an Asian Country for
the X General Assembly of the ECC
and meetings with the community**

Christianity arrived in Korea first with Catholicism in the 17th century and then with the Protestant churches in the 19th century. These include Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists, Orthodox and Pentecostals.

The decision to hold the 10^a General Assembly of the Ecumenical Council of Churches (ECC) in Korea underlined the tension that exists among some Churches. The Assembly, the prime motive for my trip, was therefore a great chance for ecumenism in this Country.

During the days before the Assembly I was able to immerse myself in the ecumenical reality of the Zone, with the community of Seoul where the presence of Speranza, a Presbyterian volunteer is really very precious.

From October 30 to November 8, together with the Reformed Pastor Peter Dettwiler, a Swiss married focolarino, I participated in the X General Assembly in Busan in the southeast of the Country. The secretary general of the ECC, Rev. Olaf Fykse Tveit, had asked Emmaus to send two people of the Movement. Writing to us he explained: «Ours is a long-standing friendship that started with Chiara Lubich, when she made her first visit to the ECC in 1967. Since then this has grown and has borne significant fruits. We really count on the precious contribution that the Focolare Movement is capable of giving to this page of history».

Other persons of the Movement were also present in the



various delegations. We met many whom we already knew and also made new contacts.

It's impossible to count how many times we shared the story of the Ideal! Different encounters with people from the lively community of Busan.

In the days that followed the Assembly, together with Maris Moon and Alberto Kim, the Delegates of the Opera, I went to Kunsan, on the other coast. There I met the community made up of Presbyterians and Catholics. We visited the Presbyterian Church of Pastor Jung which is named «A people who walks along the new way»: many of his parishioners attend the Mariapolis. Then we left for Joen Ju.

In each one of these meetings I could sense the potential of the dialogue of life among the persons of the Movement that could contribute towards the reconciliation among the Churches in this land.

It seems as if the words of Chiara, when she came to Korea in 1982, are coming true: «I saw many red crosses [the protestant Churches have big red crosses that light up during and shine throughout the city]. Here today in this hall there are only Catholics but when I come back the next time I want to see half of the hall with Catholics and the other half with Protestants»

Joan Pavi Back



EcoOne

A fertile ground

From Chile to Argentina ecology according to the charm of unity is going ahead



From November 25 to 27 I was in Viña del Mar (Chile) for a conference.

It was an occasion to meet the volunteers of the city, who had come to know of my presence, while in the succeeding days a series of meetings had been planned with environmental agencies (a multi-national, a foundation and a government institution), with students and professors of a Catholic university and, naturally, with the people of the Movement who were interested in ecology.

There were many contacts with those who already knew about the EcoOne experience and others who were interested to know more and to deepen the relationship based on these topics.

What can I say about the meeting at the Catholic University? Aside from shar-

ing my professional experience, I spoke about EcoOne, explaining that it is a part of my commitment as a Christian researcher to build a better society. The young people surrounded me with warmth and they bombarded me with questions; the translator (linguist) appreciated the exegesis of the Biblical story of creation (published by Sergio Rondinara) that invites the person to act as administrator and guardian of nature; the professor who had invited me congratulated me for having been able to communicate the harmony between work scientific work and the faith experience.

In Buenos Aires I met a part of our people committed to EcoOne for many years now. One of them travelled Friday night and Saturday night (1000 km. going and 1000 kms. returning) just to be present.

The on going development of a new ecological culture has allowed us to think about a possible international Convention of EcoOne in Argentina in the first half of 2016.

We also had a meeting with a group of researchers and students and professors of the University of La Plata in view of future collaboration.

The creativity, enthusiasm, openness, social commitment, the hope for a better future (a characteristic that is somewhat lacking in present day Europe), typical of these peoples who are so different from one another, make up a fertile ground so that the dialogue with culture becomes an instrument for «Ut omnes», a highway to meet the contemporary world and its needs, to reach some of its existential peripheries. This is possible because of the presence of a mature Opera in that area, which boasts of people who are culturally prepared, living local communities, young people committed to the service of the poor, these characteristics that infuse great hope.

Luca Fiorani

Psychology and Communion

In Madrid a wider comparison

For the first time outside Italy the working group for this Inundation meets in Madrid

Professors and researchers from different European universities met from October 18 to 20, 2013 in Madrid, with the aim of giving continuity to the profitable work of comparison that has going ahead for some years now and which has had, as its latest step, the Convention last March at the Sapienza University, but also the Congress of Psychology and Communion of 2012.

For the working group it was the first occasion to meet outside of Italy, which was made possible due to the presence of some professors in Madrid who identify themselves with the objectives of Psychology and Communion.

The group is quite heterogeneous by specialization, age, origin, professional profiles and membership to the

Opera. And yet, instead of being an obstacle, this multiple diversity allows for an intense exchange of experiences and of reflections.

In the meeting in Madrid, various contributions reaffirm that the work of Psychology and Communion is a potentiality in the methodological and content levels to enter into authentic dialogue with the contemporary psychological culture and to renew it from within. Some working hypothesis, guidelines, shared sentiments have emerged that make the experience always more shared and fruitful, and the contribution of the younger generations was a stimulus for everyone. To be specific, we identified a theme, «Recognition and empathy», to be studied in depth ac-

ording to each one's specific perspective, a research project to be realised in a span of three years, also through collective video conferences and annual Seminars to be open in part to newcomers.

Through skype a moment together with some groups in Brazil, Canada, USA, Argentina was made possible: the involvement of cultures outside of Europe is an element that is very important so as to be able to develop the reflections in a way that is truly universal and to let those that could be particularistic or too conditioned by culture fall away. In other words, so as to make Psychology and Communion an experience that can be more and more shared by all those who, wherever they are, look at the human being from this perspective.

A permanent working team with professors from international Universities will meet periodically through video conferencing after the Seminar of Madrid.

Simonetta Magari



From Syria

When only God remains

The martyrdom of the Syrian people seems to be never-ending.
And yet life finds its way also «in a valley of death»

In every community of Syria the life of the ideal continues and goes ahead, opening new possibilities in places where some of our people have taken refuge, such as in the hillside around Homs, or along the coast. From Aleppo, they express all their gratitude for the indispensable support of the Opera in providing for their basic necessities: heat, schooling for their children...

Some families have followed the gen4 girls and boys in the period in which the focolarinas could not be present: «We will take care of holding meetings in the focolare for them», they said.

The letters of a priest focolarino that we received in December is very important.

«Qara is our village in the north of Damascus, in the massive area Qalamoun. Here there is a Christian community that has been present since the third century after Christ. Thanks to the wisdom of the elders of the village, we were able to refrain from getting involved in the conflict, but even so, the situation is getting worse and it seems as if the war is an inevitable destiny¹. Psalm 22 is marked in my heart: "Even if I walk in the valley of death, I do not fear any evil, because You are with me".

I did not succumb to fear and I did not abandon the parish that has been entrusted to me by God. To encourage my parishioners I went with them to Deir Atieh, a village nearby.

But the battle Reached us even there. We found ourselves on the frontline. With two families, for five days we were without electricity, water and food, closed up at home. We had no means of transportation. We could only pray and ask for mercy.

It was a very difficult trial in which that cry of abandonment of Jesus was revealed to us. It is precisely in this prayer that I entrusted myself to God who was the only one who could save us and free us from this slavery.

In the morning we started to walk towards the exit of the village. At the checkpoint there were no militia present, we saw the snipers but no one shot at us and we walked for another six kilometres, up to the first town in a safe zone.

It was a crossing with the Lord. I understood that everything is vanity of vanities. I would like to encourage everyone to trust in him. I would like to say, especially to us pastors, we should not let our flock fall into the hands of the wolves. I offer this experience to the Lord so as to renew the His Church, to make it alive with His Spirit and to sanctify its pastors. Only in this way, can we be a Church which the Lord will not be ashamed of, but which He will be proud of».

Arlette Samman, Giorgio Antoniazzi

¹ The *Fides* Agency reported that since mid-November the Christian and non-Christian villages, in the massive area of Qalamoun, are under attack by the armed groups of foreign jihadists who are combing the area bringing death and destruction. (28.11.2013 *The exodus of Christian civilians from Qara*).

At Christmas So as to meet Jesus

Many lived the Christmas season
by «going out» to meet Jesus



Man (Ivory Coast). In Glolé, 30 kilometres from Man, the people arrived from 12 villages wherein we have been working for many years with a Nutrition Center. There were the chiefs and important people with some person in-charge of different Christian Churches.

After the meditation «One city is not enough» a very beautiful communion started, with strong experiences of concrete love especially for the children who suffer from hunger and the lack of the love of a family. The new



chief of the village said: «If when I present my working programme to my collaborators and they do not agree on it, I will not bring it ahead alone, but I must learn to discern those things that we can do together».

In Blolequin, 175 km from Man, from the orphan children cared for by the Congregation of the Consolata Sisters, Aurora and Larissa, who is a Youth for a United World, went there with 37 gen3 and Teens for Unity. They spent six days there of work, formation and much self-giving.

With the catechists of the parish adjacent to the Cittadella Victoria, we prepared a day of celebration for children: Christians, Muslims ... without distinction! And in the end we served lunch to everyone! They were 1000, all in line to receive their meal of rice with a piece of fish that some mothers had prepared with the providence we received. It was beautiful to look at each one of them in the eyes!

the focolarinas of the Mariapolis Victoria

Velletri (Italy). To offer to the people who are «economically in need» a moment of celebration, of conviviality and of family. This was the aim of the lunch that organized by our community during the Christmas season. The initiative, which has now reached its fourth edition, is the fruit of much dialogue and discussion: we understood that there are various forms of poverty among which the greatest is relational due to loneliness and solitude. The more we are alone, the more poor we become of thoughts, sharing ... Our aim is to build lasting relationships with the persons that we invite inspire of their distrust, their being closed and above all the lack of resources.



This year other Movements such as St. Egidio, Renewal in the Spirit, the Vincentians and the Caritas of ST. Clement, joined us with enthusiasm.

On the 5th of January there was rain and strong wind. At 11:30 there were only 10 people out of the 100 we had foreseen, but as the time to begin arrived the hall was full. Every guest left with three full bags. But the joy in we felt as they greeted us with a smile was the most beautiful gift for us.

Madeleine and Pio Mulamba

Marseille (France). Everything was planned for an afternoon with some foreign students, who were mostly African, whom we had recently met. But the evening before, we came to know that the snack that we were planning to offer would have been their Christmas meal since they did not have much money (they had to wait until the end of January to receive their scholarship funds). So we decided to offer a real lunch for «our» Jesus: we prepare a festive table, with shining stars and a small gift for each one.



There are 10 of them who came; their countries of origin are Togo, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Haiti, Vanuatu. At table we talk about our different traditions, about the reality of universal brotherhood that goes beyond the differences. They are happy, they feel that they are in a family. Arsene of Burkina wrote: «Thank you for letting us experience a magnificent Christmas even if we are far from our relatives. May God bless you!»

The focolarinas of Marseille

Faithfulness to a commitment made

The poor as part of the project just like all the actors of the economic activity. The experience of an enterprise of the Economy of Communion of Abruzzo

I am a woman entrepreneur from the province of Chieti with six employees and seven collaborators, working in the insurance field.

Ten years ago, when I received the mandate to manage more than 6,500 clients, I never doubted that my working experience would draw from the main ideas of the project «Economy of Communion»

An economic model that has in these years, given me the strength to overcome the inevitable difficulties in relationships, to recognize professional opportunities and to remain faithful to the choice I made; to give the possibility to all my employees and collaborators to share not only abilities and experiences but also ideas and projects.

Last but not least, it has helped me to choose moderation and simplicity with joy.

In 2004 I participated in a Convention in which Chiara Lubich, among other things, shared on how those who adhere to the Economy of Communion must work; this has been fundamental in my activities! I made a vademecum out of it, a concise guide that makes it easy for me everyday to verify my actions, towards my clients, my employees, competitors, suppliers; but also in verifying with my conscience that consoles me, approves and sometimes even admonishes me.

Many times at the end of the day, when I think about what I have done it seems as if everything went so fast that I don't even remember the people I met, but

the reflections make not only the difficulties or the contradictions encountered come to light, but also show how much good I have received from everyone, no one excluded.

On some mornings, even if I have a great passion for my work, I feel that going to the office is arduous because of the various difficult situations I have to face, but to give a smile, to listen up to the end to the one talking to me, to understand, well to do something immediately for whoever is beside me, generates relaxation not only in me but in the whole office: one day an el-



derly client who had been eagerly awaiting his turn to be served, before leaving asked: «how is it possible that the people come in sad and leave with a smile?»

The financial situation this last year is difficult, the economic logic seems to tell me to lay-off at least two employees, in the office we have been used for more than 10 years to having periodic meetings wherein each one voices out the difficulties encountered but above all the small or big successes in a logic that is profound and open to participation. This has allowed me to share with everyone, as we go along, about the progress of the agency in its globality, so that in this reciprocal awareness of the difficulties that we are passing through, after having reviewed my expenses and reduced the remuneration, I realized that

these measures were still not sufficient and so everyone proposed to reduce their working hours.

I felt that this decision has made each one acquire, I can say, joy and pride for the contribution they offered, which for me is invaluable.

Since the first year of my business I had decided to never forget to give the third part of my profits for my brothers in need. But these last few years, due to economic decline and the loss of profits, I could justify my second thoughts, but fidelity called me back to my initial commitment and so I gave my third part to the poor because they are not those who are being helped but rather they are part of the project just like all the actors of economic activity.

One day I asked Mariana, one of my employees, what she liked about her job and she answered: the relationships and the possibility of meeting people to whom we can share this atmosphere we have among us.

My individual labours (in a sector that is so particular like that of insurance services) in a small city, in the province of Abruzzo, could dampen my enthusiasm – I am small and I certainly don't constitute a «mass of people» – but when I think not only about the Italian Industrial Park – which gathers all the economic activities of the Eco and therefore represents me, where all the other Industrial Parks in the world are also present, this hope opens wide the doors to a certainty that we are many, not in the future but already now... and always more.

And it is precisely because of this that last year with some other entrepreneurs, the Italian Association AIPEC was born to give the possibility to many to get to know this way of doing things: first of all there is a sincere and profound and open respect among us that attracts many.

Ornella Seca

A privileged way

Secretariats of the Parish Movement of the Big Zone of western Europe

«I rediscovered the power and relevance today of the Parish Movement, as a privileged way today for the Opera to renew the Church». This is just one of the impressions of the 32 participants at the meeting of the secretariats of the Parish Movement of the Big Zone of western Europe, held from the 28th to the 30th of November in the Cittadella Castello Estero in Spain.

The challenges are not lacking, looking at the situation of the Church and of society in Countries such as England, France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal... but one can foresee the enormous possibilities for development. In plenary session and in small groups we went in depth in the life and the prospects of the Parish Movement, while at the same time feeling the importance and the grace of such a meeting for the Big Zones in the Opera today.

We were very happy to read what Pope Francis had written in his Apostolic Exhortation that came out right before this meeting: «It will prove beneficial for them [Movements] (...) not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church. This kind of integration will prevent them from



concentrating only on part of the Gospel or the Church, or becoming nomads without roots» (Evangelii Gaudium 29)

We were able to touch first-hand this «integration» in the visit, after the meeting of the secretariats, to two parishes near Sevilla. Thanks to two priests of the Opera the Parish Movement was born 30 years ago among the young people. Many remained faithful up to today – by now married and with children – and many others were added. To very lively communities, which have reciprocal love as their foundation, two local communities that are the joy of the Opera in the zonetta.

An on going strong experience is that of a committed member of the Parish Movement who is working in a Confraternity, a traditional expression of the Andalusian Church, and who is bringing the love of the Gospel and of communion into this reality, with many fruits.

*Fr. Klaus Hofstetter, Sameiro Freitas,
Marco Bartolomei*



Telegrams of Emmaus upon the «departure» of the latest focolarini who have arrived in the Heavenly Mariapolis

Manfred «Fred» Kockinky

«Called to a splendid life»

Manfred, German focolarino who has been 35 years in the zone of Great Britain, left for Paradise on December 12, after an illness that lasted almost two years. His new name is: Fred = man of peace.

Born in 1957, he met the Ideal in '74 when he participated in a concert of the Gen Rosso in Hamburg and in '77 he started the school of the focolarinos in Loppiano. From there he wrote to Chiara: «In front of Jesus in the Eucharist I promised to be faithful to my vocation to live in the focolare, faithful forever ... is one thing that I did consciously as an answer to the choice of God ». Arriving in the focolare in Great Britain, he worked as vice director of a prison where he gained the respect and affection of all his colleagues, so much so that they have decided to dedicate the new wing of the prison in his name.

After a meeting in Castel Gandolfo in December '96 he shared to Chiara: «Thank you once again for your visit to England... I renew my choice of Jesus Forsaken with immense joy as a thanksgiving to God for being a focolarino in the most beautiful family in the world». And in '98: «I can see how God is bringing me closer to Him, in such a way that no other thing can affect this relationship. It is the life of being wedded to Jesus Forsaken which does not leave space for anything else». In January 2000: «I feel renewed in the true vocation to which God has called me forever: collective sanctity. I promise to live it 100% for the sanctity of Jesus-us».

Since the beginning of the illness, Manfred said that it was not just his, but it belonged to the whole Opera. And so he shared this experience using all the modern means and was able



to reach a vast array of people: members of the Movement, relatives, colleagues and some from the diocese with whom he had worked with to prepare the parties for the youth. Many came to visit him and rekindled their contact with the focolare. The house was always full of people who throughout the years have built profound relationships with him. Manfred faced many difficult moments with great courage and everything was lived as a collective experience with his focolare, the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows. And

so he was able to be cared for in the focolare and to live in a serene atmosphere of Jesus in the midst.

In August 2012 he wrote me: «It is clear to me more than ever that God has called me to a splendid life, to His life that is the life of the Trinity! The focolare is truly a powerful means to show to the world the intimate life of God in a very simple way! There is the peace, the joy and above all His presence. And this is enough! Now together we can give life to the Opera by putting ourselves at the disposition of the Holy Spirit».

He continuously renewed his faith in the love of God for him, especially in the most acute moment of encounter with Jesus Forsaken. He used to say: «Everyday God gives us sufficient love and grace to survive in the present moment... I believe in a God who is love... I bring with me to Jesus the world in my arms and so I can make Chiara happy». Some weeks ago Manfred relayed to me that he was offering everything so that God may help the whole Opera to grow in reciprocal love. Let us thank him for his faithfulness.

Evelina «Agape» Paganelli

A rare flower

December 27th, another «rare flower» Agape - Evelina Paganelli, a focolarina from Milan, was welcomed into heaven. Her sister Anna, her brother-in-law and the focolarine of her focolare were singing hymns to Mary as she departed ever so sweetly leaving those present with a great sense of peace.

Agape was born in Milan in 1941 and at age 18 she had already entered the focolare. She herself recounts this fact: «I come from a good family with healthy principles ... I'm cheerful and know how to enjoy what life offers me. In 1954 while on vacation in Vigo di Fassa (Dolomites) I noticed a large group of people which aroused my curiosity: I followed them into the little town church which was really crowded. Everything took place with great order and harmony. ... I am dazed ... it is clear that these people have discovered the meaning of their lives... and what is my life for?»

The next year, always in the Mariapolis, she met Chiara and wrote her telling of her desire of wanting to follow Chiara's way. «Upon returning to Milan I kept in contact with the group of people of the Movement in my city. They spoke to me of God-Love, the Father of all and I discovered a new world that of the Gospel lived out... It's like a light that penetrates gently and decidedly to illuminate my entire life».

Although she was very young, Evelina repeatedly expressed her desire to give herself to God until finally on June 8th 1959 the highly anticipated letter arrived, granting permission for her to enter the focolare in Milan immediately. In 1962 she worked for the European Community in Belgium for 5 years. Everyone remembers her work as clever and brilliant.

Following this she was called by Chiara to start up the focolare in Istanbul with Aletta Salizzoni (one of Chiara's first companions) so as to maintain the rapport with the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras I, whom Chiara had visited more than once with important steps for ecumenism. It was on this



occasion that Evelina received a new name, «Agape» – Bring to that part of the world the Love which creates the Family, brotherhood. ... Since both women had to periodically leave Istanbul to renew their visas, small communities of the Movement in Greece, Syria, Egypt, Israel and Lebanon came to life. In 1973 the women's zone center moved precisely in Lebanon.

Agape wrote about this experience: «In a short time, Lebanon became the platform which consolidated and developed the Movement in the Middle East, but after 3 years, a civil war broke out, subtle at the start but then it became always harsher, stupid and inhuman as are all wars...» She continued, «In the meantime the Lord prepared a special program for me. After 18 years in this part of the world I had to return to Italy for health reasons. My adventure continued. I say my 'Amin' to Jesus (Arabic for 'I believe') and I placed my faith upon Someone outside of me».

Agape lived out this illness for thirty years fully adhering to God's plan for her with a surprising fidelity and perseverance. During one particularly difficult moment she said: «I believed in the love God at the first manifestation of this illness... and I still believe now».

In the year 2000 Chiara wrote to Agape: «Be certain that your work for the Movement has never ceased, on the contrary it has been made precious by the presence of the Spouse.» Agape in 2004 wrote to Chiara: «The Work of God!...I realize more and more that Jesus arrives punctually to ask me parts of this reality, which until recently made up my life, so much so as to believe that I cannot subsist without the Movement in all its multiple expressions. Now the time has come to abdicate all privileges and love received in the past, and choose once again Jesus Forsaken without hesitation. I wish this will be useful for the greatest triumph of Mary for her Work».

Last May the present Patriarch Bartholomew I (whom Agape had known since he was a deacon) passed through Milan and she was able to greet him. It was a joyful moment for both of them.

In this last days, when she was quite ill Agape said: «I am meditating on death. When it arrives it must find me in Love. I am not afraid because I believe in mercy.»

Thanking God for her life given totally for Ut Omnes, let's offer suffrages for Agape and pray for her relatives.

Enrico Cestra

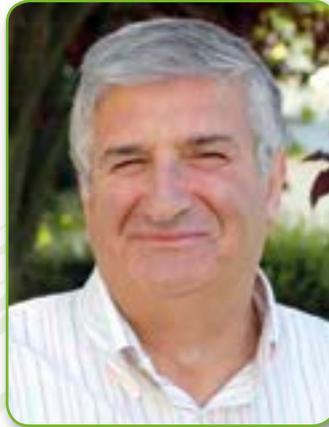
The language of love

Enrico, a focolarino from the Roman Mariapolis left for Paradise this morning following a grave illness discovered this past September. He was 64 years old.

Enrico spent his adolescence in a boarding school. When his father passed away he felt on his shoulders the responsibility for the family, which was composed, other than his mother, of two sisters and one brother, all younger than him.

He met the Movement in 1968 in a Mariapolis at Grottaferrata and began living the Ideal with other youth from Frosinone. He soon felt the vocation to live in focolare but hesitated about leaving for Loppiano given the family circumstances. He mentioned this fact to Chiara who responded: «...don't worry about not being able to leave immediately for Loppiano. When it is the right moment, Jesus will remove all obstacles. In the meantime, He himself will form you in his school, asking you to live His will well in the present moment. The Word of Life I thought for you is: "He chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world».

And the right moment did come. Loppiano, Palermo, Turin, Cuneo, Santiago de Chile, Bari and lately the Roman Mariapolis: these were the stages that marked his forty years in focolare which he lived with the generosity of someone ready to follow Jesus anywhere. He wrote to Hans: «If you find yourself in a difficulty, and you don't know who to send to a specific place, know that you can count on me always. I think I know the language of 'love'; the other languages can be learned....»



In 1974, during Easter he wrote Chiara saying: «...I feel so strongly to consecrate myself to God forever, to give Him my whole being and that Jesus Forsaken be the only spouse of my soul». And from Loppiano in 1975 he wrote: «After hearing your words, I felt a renewed desire to put Jesus in the Midst with each person so as to build 'small living churches'».

When Enrico left for Chile he told those at the Center for Focolarini, «I am happy to go... I will do my best to keep Jesus in the Midst in focolare always. I'm leaving with this in my heart».

He always possessed a deep union with God.

In 1981 he confided to Chiara in a letter: «...I feel the urge to give you something beautiful, but I have nothing. Take my nothingness as a gift. I promise fidelity till the end.» And again on August 15, 1999 he wrote: «...I will try to love Jesus Forsaken

with greater intensity always so, as you told us, to become fathers and mothers of souls».

In yet another letter we read: «I have a great love for Mary and I ask her many things, I tell her to give me some of her pain because I want to carry with Her the sufferings of humanity».

When his condition worsened last September he wrote to me: «While speaking to Jesus I told Him that if He wanted me in heaven, I'm happy with that, but He has to make me a saint. This gave me a great deal of serenity. I also told him that my funeral should be a day to celebrate because I am going to the spouse of my soul.....» In this way I was able to assure him that his was truly a Holy Journey as seen by its fruit.

The focolarini said that he truly 'soared' during the past few weeks. Enrico lived with great serenity, with a free soul, 'open' to the gifts of God and trying to give joy to those who drew near. Before losing consciousness, he often repeated: «The love of my neighbours and Jesus Forsaken... are my strength».

So grateful for the gift of love Enrico was with his life, let's pray for him and his relatives. Let's remain united in the joy of his birth into Heaven.



Matteo Italiano

He spread Light

Matteo, a married focolarino from Ancona (Italy) ended his «Holy Journey» on December 19th surrounded by his family

and the focolarini of his focolare.

He was among the first focolarini from the Marche region and with his wife, Rossana, started up the New Family Movement there. Their home was a focolare for everyone.

Matteo was born in 1942. He taught middle school for many years and then became a free-lancer, he also got involved in different political and administrative roles in the city of Ancona. He also represented the Focolare Movement in his Diocese council where he was able to establish a constant dialogue with all the other ecclesiastic realities.

His relationship with Chiara was very profound. In 1977, during a meeting held at the Mariapolis Center in Rocca di Papa, he wrote her: «The experience of God we are living with you in these days makes me feel so strongly within that He is always the one who calls us and loves us first. All we have to do is correspond to His love, allowing Him to live in us».

And again in December 2001 he wrote Chiara: «Following Mass I felt to remain in my place: with you, the men and women focolarini in Paradise, that is at home. I had no burden or thought within me, there was only peace».

He had been preparing himself for some time for his encounter with Jesus. He knew very well that the tumour in his liver, diagnosed years ago, would have led him slowly towards the end of his earthly life. It was a long and painful journey that Matteo lived in great lucidity, with great dignity and exemplary perseverance, in an admirable and constant spiritual ascent.

His smile was what struck people most, together with the reflections he shared during the focolare meetings, in so doing he revealed an immense love for Chiara and the Movement. He was an example of absolute fidelity and un-

til the end in a faint voice, he shared his experience - encouraging the focolarini to love one another and to always have Jesus in the Midst. He repeated: «Only this matters».

In the slow and gradual shut down of this candle which until the end spread light, it seemed that Matteo fully incarnated the Word of Life Chiara had given him: «For those whom God had already chosen he had also set apart to become like His Son, » taken from the letter of St. Paul (Romans 8:29).

To honour Matteo, an official delegation from the Ancona City Hall attended the funeral with the official banner of the city in recognition of his years of service as Councilor.

Thinking of Matteo already «home», with gratitude let's offer suffrages for him and pray for his wife and children.



Gastone Borro

«The heavens were opened»

Gastone Borro, one of the first married focolarini from Milan reached the Heavenly Mariapolis

on December 31st at age 92. He and his wife Rosa, also a focolarina, had nine children. «home»,

Gastone met the Ideal through Guglielmo Boselli in September 1953 and was immediately attracted by the story Guglielmo had told him about the Mariapolises in the Dolomite mountains. A few days later Gastone asked to visit the focolare to know more about this. After that visit he commented: «The idea that we are all children of the same Father and therefore brothers and sisters to one another was such a beautiful new discovery. I felt that I had found what I had always been looking for». Such things were so new to Gastone that he found an answer to an inner discomfort, due to various painful experiences. Among these was the fact that he had been deeply marked during World War II by the tragic retreat of Russia and, miraculously saved, he witnessed the death of thousands of his fellow soldiers.

After his meeting in focolare, Gastone shared his discovery with Rosa and both adhered to the Ideal and together committed themselves to live it in a radical way. In 1954 he attended the Mariapolis held at Vigo di Fassa and subsequently he brought his entire family.

In 1959 he wrote to Chiara: «My life was tilting towards being empty and vain...little by little heaven opened up; I discovered what matters most in life and the reason for my being». The years that followed were serene and in harmony notwithstanding the difficulties of daily life with his ever-growing family. He once said, «Even providence, often extraordinary in our economy, underlined the beauty of a life based on a choice of God... Yet, a short time after, the storm of protest (during the '60's and '70's) entered our home too». In this situation he and Rosa decided always to be ready to keep the doors open and continue to give their love to all.

This was the time for both to deepen their infinite love for Jesus Forsaken as Gastone recounted: «It was the most enriching time in as much as the road of suffering accepted all the way to the end allowed me to find an intimate, profound relationship with God and the others». In 1972 he confided to Chiara: «I felt with all my might the meaning of family: an altar where every pain and suffering is deposited and becomes more precious if offered in unity with my wife since we are bound through a Sacrament. In this way a focolare as family can come to life with all its strength».

In 1986 Gastone and Rosa moved to Trent, Italy so as to accompany the growth of the family focolares. Already in 1965 he had written to Chiara: «Here I am at your disposal, ready to move anywhere in the world with my family». In this new city, Trent, Gastone gave of himself totally to sustain many families and the community of the Focolare and making the beauty of his being 'custodian of Jesus in the Midst' emerge always more.

He received from Chiara this Word of Life: "Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct" (1 Peter 1:15).

As the years passed and his strength decreased Gastone continued to be a gift through his humility, his enchantment for the Ideal and his profound love for Jesus Forsaken. During one of his frequent moments of suffering, he

wrote: «I ask God for the grace to be always ready for his Will. Often I am taken over by the doubt that I am incapable of this but then I realize that all depends on His presence among us, if we are united in His name».

A few months ago, his health declined. They were days lived by keeping Jesus in the Midst with Rosa surrounded by his children's love and that of the Movement.

Thankful for his life witness and united to his family, let's pray that Gastone may be welcomed in the joy of the Father's House.

We also remember two women volunteers of Rome who «left» almost together, last July, after an intense life of building the Opera.

Alfia Fabrizi

«God bless you»

Alfia was born in Rieti (Rome) and, towards the end of the '50s, with Silvio her husband, they met the Movement. Both fascinated by the Ideal, they immediately join the New Families of Rome of which they become the leaders for several years.

Alfia at the same time, felt the call to become a volunteer, and soon she became an active and committed member. Since her youth she experienced sufferings and great trials, but her passionate love for Jesus Forsaken has always supported her strongly, so much so that she became the support and the light for her children and for many others. Her sufferings never made her close up within herself but, on the contrary, she was always giving herself in her neighbourhood, in the parish and in the Opera.

In the final years, strongly tested by the departure of Silvio for Heaven and followed by her illness, she lived in an always more profound way the detachment from everything: from her home – she had lived 10 months in an Institute run by religious sisters, from her habits, from her physical appearance that she usually cared



Romana Viola Toni

«He entered»

«My journey up to today was hard and difficult – Romana wrote in 1998 at the end of the school of the women volunteers in Loppiano – but He, the great Love, what place did he have in my life? Was he really my All? Certainly not. But He, the infinite Love who had chosen me, waited for me. He waited until there was only nothingness in me and then he entered, he filled the emptiness with Himself. My soul was soaked with God, it opened itself wide with marvel at the world. I thanked Jesus profoundly for having chosen me years ago, not certainly because of my merits but because of his immense love». Romana met the Ideal around '68 from a volunteer of Rome, and she too became a volunteer a few years later.

She passed through a difficult moment in her married life, also from the economic point of view, and this took away much of her physical and psychological energy. But she was faithful to her weekly meeting, that she considered as a personal gift of Mary, also the Mass and the meditation. In the nucleo, we would ask for Providence together for her. And it came punctually: Romana found a job which she had really wanted: to be a teacher, where she fully realized herself as a woman and as a volunteer. But above all everyone in her family felt that they were all

for out of love for the brother. «God bless you» was the greeting with which Alfia would welcome everyone. In the final months that were spent going from the hospital to the rehabilitation centers, we saw her glow with joy each time, thanks to her uncrushable faith in Jesus in the midst. She left us on the 7th of July, 2013 at the age of 82. Her funeral was a celebration. and was a great consolation for her children who saw in the numerous and lively participation, the gratitude of many for the love that Alfia had given generously to each one.



immensely loved by God, and so the harmony among them was rebuilt. For many years she was responsible for a nucleo. With the women volunteers she constantly animated the activities for the sick and the elderly. In '98 after a school for women volunteers, the race begins for Romana: «What remained in my heart is that I should not be full even of my mistakes; only in this way can Jesus in the midst be born, who will make all things new, so as to be able to say in every moment "You Lord, are my Only Good"». A degenerative illness struck her and she alternated between moments of lucidity and moments of complete absence: it was the Desolate that guided her and Jesus in the midst that gave her joy and serenity.

She left us on July 8, 2013 at 85 years old.

Bonaria Gessa

Our relatives

The following have passed on to the Next Life: **Dolores, mother of Jorge Lionello Esteban**, focolarino at the Centro dell'Opera; **Werner, father of Ute Ihl**, focolarina in Lithuania; **M.Luiza, mother of Eliana (Sevi) Magali Secomandi**, focolarina in Loppiano; **Alberto, brother of Elias Khoury**, focolarino in Loppiano; **Dora, mother of Stella Maris Hillier**, focolarina in Bahía Blanca; **Mercedes, mother of Luisa Sello**, focolarina in Ottmaring; **Eva, sister of Ilona Meszaros**, focolarina in Hungary; **Matilde, mother of Fausta Giardina**, focolarina in Quito (Ecuador); **Paul, father of Bernadette Bourjarde**, focolarina in Montreal (Canada); **Italo (Dante), father of Caterina Croci**, focolarina in Parma; **Vicencia, mother of Seli Ferreira**, focolarina in Salvador (Brazil); **Rosa, mother of Rosa De La Riva**, focolarina in Barcellona, of **Isabel and of Juan** (volunteers); **Caterina, mother of Maria Teresa Maffoni**, married focolarina of the Mariapolis Renata; **Vincenzo, father of Toti Ingrassia**, focolarino in Milano; **Teresa, mother of Franco Monaco**, focolarino in Bologna; **Rosa, mother of Edgar Ceci**, focolarino in Roma.

Bonaria Gessa

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At sensi del D. Lgs. N. 196/2003 per la tutela dei dati personali, comunichiamo che gli indirizzi dei nominativi a cui viene inviato Mariapoli fanno parte dell'archivio del Notiziario Mariapoli, gestito da PAFOM, esclusivamente per la finalità dell'invio di tale periodico. I dati possono essere comunicati a terzi incaricati per la spedizione.