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MARIAPOLI

Newsletter of the Focoalre Movement

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New generations

**A Work that
educates
together**

Trip to Iran
At Qom, heart
of Shiite Islam

In Ecuador
Protagonists the
local Communities

With Him who teaches

Here are some thoughts of Chiara taken from a conversation with the focolarinas in Loppiano, on the 19th of August 1966. They were the first intuitions of what would be born soon from that moment, the gen Movement, which was later differentiated into the four generations. A reference text for those in the Opera who are involved in the formation of the new generations

See a more in-depth article in the succeeding pages

«We have the clear-cut impression that the answer to children and youth of today lies in the Ideal [...]. Therefore we must have with us a strong, formidable rank of good children and teens who can approach other teens to make them good; because it is always like this, with children we will conquer the children and with the youth we will conquer the youth. [...]

The Ideal is not a monopoly of the adults, don't look down on the children, the Kingdom of God is also made for the children . [...]

The children, the little ones are not made for the ordinary things of this world, small actions of this world; the children, above all, the little boys and girls, are made for fairy tales, the fairies, for something that goes beyond, I mean, beyond the ordinary daily human life; something that goes beyond our way of imagining life. Something, we say, that is beautiful,



Fontem, maggio 2000

but more than just beautiful as we normally understand beauty; something, that has somewhat of the miraculous. [...]

So in our Movement, now that it presents itself as a work of God and not a work of man, there is something enchanting and something adventurous. Now, especially the youth, they want adventure, they want to conquer the world. [...]

We should not treat children like children; we must not look at them as just children; we must see in them children with a soul and the soul is neither adult nor child. [...]

Therefore we must give everything to the children and youth of our Movement [...] for example, we talk about how the Opera is today. Should we tell them about this? Yes, we must tell them about this. You must know how to grasp that something which is heroic, adventurous, fantastic. [...]

We must give everything to them making ourselves one with them, since they are much closer to God than we are; their angels look at the Father. [...]

Now it doesn't mean that we play with the children so that we become their friend and then afterwards preach to them and say: now let me tell you something about catechism or of the spirituality. We must play with them because we love them. [...] Since we need a lot of energy to jump like children do, so then we must distribute the tasks among us, but don't do only it for this reason, but so that they may have the presence of the whole Opera there, with Jesus in the midst [...], Jesus in the midst can take the place of the father, the mother, the teachers, because He is also teacher. [...]

Therefore what we must do is that the entire Opera must get involved [...] and we can say everything, we must just know how to say them. And who knows how to say things? Jesus in the midst; it is not therefore the individual persons, but Jesus in the midst».



«The crazy responsibility for those hearts»¹

«What joy there is for a mother at the thought of having given physical life to her little ones; what joy in a teacher at the thought of having broken that first piece of the bread of knowledge for these little ones and of having conveniently nourished them with the first necessary molecules. [...] Yes it's true that not everyone can read and write well. But in everyone something has been done. [...]

I would like to tell them that while the torch of faith does not yet tremble under the slothful breath of impurity and of egoism, may their little souls appear and open up to the great love of God that has spread with his perfume in all things, I would like to bring them to the contemplation of the Eternal! Because they are mine. Because it is I who must build in those souls. It is I who have the crazy responsibility for those hearts! When I think about making them touch the Heavens with just a glance, oh! I shout to whom must I link myself.

And the mother from Heaven who has always let her powerful protection be felt by the miserable, by the little ones, by the poor, She will be the one to help me. My little ones love Her. [...]

They are children of God, of that God who threatened scandal with words of fire. And if I treat them this way, with words that are too human, without putting them in their most direct reality, which is the reality of Heaven, isn't it a small scandal, isn't it a deception?

No! not by myself. I cannot do it alone. I will ruin it. I will destroy it. I will annihilate it.

But with Her I am safe. With Her I can go ahead. The goal is there. I am on the right road. And then She is, after all, the "Sedes Sapientiae" (Seat of Wisdom)!».

1 Notes presumably from the first months of 1941, when Chiara had just arrived as a teacher in Cognola (Trent), at the Opera Serafica, the boarding school for orphans run by the Capuchin Fathers, cited in L. Abignente, *La santità nel pensiero e nella testimonianza di Chiara Lubich (Sanctity in the thoughts and in the experience of Chiara Lubich)*, Nuova Umanità (2013)/2, n. 206, p. 157

A young boy in a striped shirt is looking down at a red fabric held by another child. The background shows other children and an outdoor setting.

Project An Opera that educates

«Develop all the potentialities of children and teens, make them grow in a harmonious way, help them to realize in life the project that God has on each one of them». This is how Marina Vegliach of the New Families Center described in synthesis the goal of the document recently prepared and presently being studied in the Zones all over the world. The title, «Guidelines of the Focolare Movement for the promotion of the well-being and protection of Minors», expresses a journey made jointly with the Counselors for the aspect of «Physical life and nature» (Cristina Negro and Corrado Martino), the gen3 and gen4 Centers, New Families. Marina makes it clear: «We don't want the minors just to be protected, it would be an oversimplification. What interests us is their "well-being", a concept that is much broader and which includes also the physical, psychological, morals aspects, the integral development of the person in the different stages of growth. And in this document we present what the Focolare Movement is doing to reach this goal».

A concept that sinks its roots in the dawn of the Movement itself, when Chiara understood that the Ideal of unity was made also for the little ones, so much so that she gave life to the gen3 and gen4 movements.

Why then did we arrive at developing a real and true document?

«From what has been said so far – Corrado and Cristina explain – it is understandable how important is the figure and the role of the persons to whom the formation of children and teens is entrusted. It is common knowledge

At the roots of a document for the well-being and protection of minors addressed to all the communities of the Focolare Movement in the world

too, that in the past years, the Catholic Church extended an invitation to all the Episcopal Conferences and therefore to all the associative forms to adopt strict and transparent procedures, drawn tightly to prevent and eventually to manage episodes of abuse of minors, that is why the Opera decided to deepen this theme and to draw up some guidelines». «Seeing how in various Countries in the world – Matthias Bolkart, person in-charge at the Center for the gen4 boys continued – we have already tried to give an adequate response to the phenomenon of sexual abuse of minors through the study of preventive measures, and we were able to hold courses of formation in the Movement for persons involved in the accompaniment of minors, during the meeting of the General Council in the Holy land, in February 2011, I was able to suggest to Emmaus to create a "worldwide platform" with a basic document that explains the attitude of the "governing bodies" of the Movement regarding the theme of the protection of minors».



From here the journey that was mentioned at the start began, which aside from the centers mentioned also involved persons of different professions: jurists, psychologists, experts of the development age, educators, pediatricians. The guidelines that were drawn up serve as an orientation for the communities of the Movement present in the various Countries around the world, giving then the different national centers the task of adapting them to the respective cultural and juridical realities.

«Our challenge, in fact – Christiane Heinsdorff underlines, responsible at the Center for the gen4 girls – is that of being an international Movement and therefore we have to consider the different sensibilities of one continent from another. We must not be afraid, we just have to do things gradually, according to one's strength, the local habits. The important thing for us was that of creating the consciousness of the need to be aware of this theme and to act consequently.

The figure of the assistant/ animator is very well-defined within the Opera, thanks to the more than ten years of experience that has been done all over the world. Is there anything else to add in this document? Does it present a sort of identikit?

According to the two Counselors «the assistant/ animator is certainly a significant and important figure in the growth of the teens. Chiara called them "guardian angels" who help the teens to draw out and develop the qualities, talents and everything beautiful that they possess. What does the document add? An awareness of a greater attention, on the part of the person responsible, in the choice of assistants and animators, offering them a course of formation where they can deepen the spiritual, psychological aspects and the relative juridical responsibilities involved». The persons responsible of the gen3 and gen4 Centers share: «Chiara during her life had given a great push to the formation of the new generations. In 2007 she called for the first international meet-



ing of all the people involved in this task, with the wish that "a formation guideline would emerge that is suitable for all age groups". For that meeting the gen2, 3 and 4 Centers prepared reports with a collection of useful elements; later on they continued to go in depth in the patrimony of Chiara developing a variety of formative proposals and completing them with the knowledge in various fields. A next step would be that of working together with all the youth-related realities of the Movement to come up with an educational model illuminated by the Ideal that will help in orienting both the assistants and the parents».

Let's talk about the relationship assistant-parents. Do you aim at encouraging a greater «educational alliance»?

«As families – Marina affirmed – we have always believed in the great potentiality of the gen Movement from the point of view of an "alliance" that completes the educational task of the family. With this document it seems to us that we have taken a step forward in the direction of being more systematic. Those things that before were left to good will, to the initiative of each family or the assistant, now become something definite and this helps the parents to be more aware of their role and therefore of the tasks that they cannot and must not delegate to others; at

the same time it allows the assistants to be more conscious of their subsidiary role with respect to the task of the family and thus create a real and true educational alliance that aims for the same goal, and at common values. We were able to verify everything in presenting the document to the families. If the parents, then, are informed about the programming of the activities that are being done, their trust and the possibility for collaboration grows, which is necessary when we have groups of children who must be followed in many details. In fact, we have an increasing number of parents among our families who are aware of this and willingly take on the task of gen3 or gen4 assistant. Finally, the request for certain authorizations from the parents (as foreseen in the document) shows them that we don't improvise, that we look at all the aspects and this is seen as an index of our seriousness».

Maybe one of the effects of this document will be an ulterior push to make the Opera in its entirety, with Jesus in the midst, take care of the littlest ones?

Cristina: «Yes, one of the effects that we hope will happen is precisely that of a greater involvement of all the forces that will favour the "being family" that Chiara left us as her testament». Corrado: «To do things well it is necessary that the whole Opera is aware and involved in this journey. Concretely we take on together the responsibility for the formation of minors, and we don't lay it all on the shoulders of anyone».

«Chiara, already in '66 said that only Jesus in the midst would be able to give the Ideal to children – added Christiane. This has two important nuances for us: one is the life with the children themselves in a relationship of Jesus to Jesus that teaches both the children and the adults. The other aspect is Jesus in the midst with the whole Opera that must commit itself to bringing it ahead. If we look at the document we will see that it underlines the importance of having at least two adults with a group of minors: doesn't this requirement correspond to the possibility of having Jesus in the midst? So that He is really the teacher?

Certainly, with the assistants we asked ourselves how we can find the other people who are available and willing to help – our age-old problem – but we said that we must remain hopeful. It will take time, because it is not easy to look for people. But it is beautiful to see that the collaboration with the families is growing because they feel this need, so they make themselves available, they open up their homes, they are present. After all, the typicalness of our education is the communitarian aspect and in this, the role of the local communities becomes fundamental».

prepared by Aurora Nicosia

The «Guidelines of the Focolare Movement for the promotion of the well-being and the protection of Minors» is available at www.focolare.org



Gen3 LINK-UP A net of love

In Trent the international Congress of the gen3. From the first Community to the world.
Profound sharing and openness with the city



Foto di Jesse Van Dun

that upon returning to their own cities the gen3 can become protagonists of such a life, a beating heart of the Community, with the commitment of going out to look for and discover who in their city or neighborhood lives the spirituality of unity.

We started with the challenges that the gen3 live everyday. the first day was dedicated to each gen3, allowing them individually or as a gen Unit, to express the difficulties that they meet in following Jesus ...

This was what the gen3 of the Units of Trent, North West Italy, Rome, Brazil and Spain wanted when we prepared with them the entire programme.

Listening to the experiences we could only remain in admiration.

With the radicalness of the Gospel

«Precisely the evening before we left for our vacation my father came home drunk, and the morning after, he fought with my mother also in a violent way. My mother decided to go ahead and leave just the same for our vacation, leaving my father at home. But when we arrived at the beach, knowing how we left my father, I decided to take the first train and then a bus to go back to my city. I really wanted to talk to him! When we saw one another, without saying a word, I smiled and embraced him. We cried together. I spoke to him about starting again and of forgiveness.

For some years, the gen3 have been living as an itinerary of formation: «one city is not enough». Following such a program this summer, with the Worldman Construction Site that will take place in Argentina, the gen3 boys and girls (600 from all the continents are expected) are called to «look far», to the city of the other, to the Country of the other.

The Congress in Trent is part of this programme. The city of Chiara offered us the possibility of starting from the first Community and from there to look at the world.

The greeting of Emmaus underlined this: «The fact that you are together in Trent seems to me to be a very beautiful thing because it's there that everything started, and you are a generation that can make everything be born again. And one is reborn in the place where everything originated».

Start from Trent

One of the objectives of the Congress was to make an experience with the local Community, so

Together we went to catch up with the rest of the family; the trip was an occasion to talk more profoundly with him. When we arrived, my parents reconciled and we spent some especially happy days together».

Francesco shares his experience with an anorexic classmate, and how he tried to listen to her and help her to come out of her solitude...

In the hall there is a sacred silence.

There is no fear in talking about the aspect of purity, on how it must be lived, with heroism and failures. The twinning between schools, the trips to different Countries, meeting with girls, the difficulty of not giving in to the temptation of accepting the invitation to go with them to their room, the incitement of their friends...

«I also found myself in such a situation –Alberto, 16 years old, says – and I recall the strong experience I had with the gen of my Unit, now is the moment to make my ideas a reality, do I really believe in true love? In an instant, I look at the girl and I tell her no, I decided to talk with her about my vision of love; to my great surprise this girl doesn't judge me, she listened to me and cried.

The next day, on our trip back to Italy, I experience a great joy, the laughter and the jokes of my classmates brush against me indifferently... Finally one of them confides in me that he admires my choice and my will power».

During the moments of dialogue, experiences of doubts about faith are not lacking...

All the mornings were entrusted to the gen3 of the Rainbow Units who started the day



by preparing the meditations by themselves. With much dialogue, questions, it was the gen3 themselves, in the hall who were answering. Listening to them, we had the strong impression of their maturity...

For some years now we have been differentiating the formation program of the gen3 into three age groups, those present in this congress were teens from 15 to 17 years old.

In this way we could go in depth in the themes chosen by them.

There were 30 group-Units with a gen3 in-charge. An interesting way of interaction, in the early afternoon, they talked about certain topics that are experienced by adolescents, but which often are not really discussed or talked about with anyone, if not by searching for answers in the internet.

Encounter with the city

Then there was all the external part of the Congress, the encounter with the city.

We always had in our heart the words of Emmaus: «We have a mandate from Chiara herself who gave life to the Gen3 Movement within the Focolare Movement and the mandate is that of reliving Mary who brings Jesus. And I think that no one more than you feel the importance of walking along the roads of Trent not in memory of something in the past, but with the attention of bringing to the roads of Trent that same Jesus



that Chiara wanted to bring when she started this Ideal. Therefore that risen Jesus who lives in your midst because of reciprocal love, among you and the gen of Trent, among you and the authorities of the city, among you and all the people that you will meet, that you will try to help also with the activities that you will do, but let it be truly this Jesus who lives today and who surely will give a great joy to Chiara who will see you from Paradise».

We started with the Mayor, first at the Municipal Hall then, always with him, we went to the square.



Foto di Jesse Van Dun x 4



Our last appointment was at the very beautiful gardens of the Bishop's residence, then dinner with the Community, and then at 20:30 the Holy Thursday Mass.

It was impressive to see in the Cathedral, among all the people, a big group of teens who participated in the function, but above all to see them stand up to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. 12 gen3 represented the apostles whose feet the Bishop washed.

After the greetings of the gen3 to the Bishop and his greetings to the gen3, he surprised us with this intention during the prayers of the faithful: «Where there is charity and love, there is God»: may the experience of the Focolare Movement, the Work of Mary, above all in its youth, continue to spread in the Church and in the world, the spirituality, the style, the

practice and the Economy of Communion, according to the ideals of Chiara Lubich».

Then, late in the evening, witnesses during the night, as we walk along the roads of the city to bring this experience of mutual love. A flashMob in the square, songs, animations and launching of the lanterns...

The next day, Good Friday, the meditation is on Jesus Forsaken the Worldman.

In the afternoon, by groups, we live moments of dialogue with persons of the Community. How do they go out to meet Jesus who suffers? There were very touching experiences not only for the gen3.

The day ended with a profound «heart to heart» with God. It was very important to have given them the possibility to go to confession...

A beautiful moment of communion took place when some of the 38 gen3 who were moving on this year to the gen2 shared their experiences.

The gen2. We cannot end without talking about their great contribution, also present were 14 gen2 from the school of Loppiano.

Moments of relaxation, games were not lacking; a parking lot was transformed into a football field and a volleyball court, a trip to the lake, hiking in the mountains...

The impression of one of the assistants: the authenticity of the gen3 is a precious treasure that we have as Opera..

gen3 Center

Week for a United World That «stubborn courage» for fraternity

This year the launching of the Week for a United World (WFUW) was done by a big event in Nairobi, from april 25 to may 5, linked to the Project «Sharing with Africa», promoted by the Youth for a United World in the African continent



During the event, the first edition of the «Atlas of universal brotherhood» was launched; it is a report which contains 800 «fragments of fraternity»: courageous actions that have been done by people of the Opera that are spread in the cities, building bridges among people, groups and cultures, opening pathways of dialogue and indicating new ways.

The document is a result of the work done by the United World Project, launched in 2012 at the genfest of Budapest, to promote the principle-value of universal brotherhood (www.united-worldproject.org).

Fruit of the collaboration with the international NGO New Humanity (www.new-humanity.org) and the work of a commission made up of youth, experts, professors and students of the Sophia University Institute; this first edition takes into consideration the good practices promoted in the world from September 2012 to September 2013.

What are the next steps? To make the fragments of fraternity emerge, to continue to gather them and to work to obtain recognition of the WFUW by international institutions.

Emmaus sent a message wherein, among other things she says: «Thank you dearest

young people, for your commitment in following the objectives of a United World. Thank you for the stubborn courage with which you commit yourselves for this and which the launching of the Atlas for universal brotherhood documents. We



Since 1996 the WFUW has as protagonists the youth of the Movement, in the most varied initiatives to create public opinion in the more than 180 Countries wherein they are present and bear witness together that building a united world is possible. It is a proposal to the city, to the institutions, to everyone, to promote fraternity and peace on all levels.

This 18th edition concentrates in particular on the African continent, where the Youth for a United World through the «Sharing with Africa» would like to promote the spirit of «Ubuntu», which can be translated as: «I am because we are», a proverb at the basis of the African communitarian culture. In Nairobi there were present young people from 29 nations, 12 of which were African.



have in front of us, truly, an immense construction site, but we are dealing with the "dream of a God", as Chiara Lubich loved to call it. And this is a guarantee. Universal brotherhood is not a utopia, rather: if it requires the laborious journey of humanity it is also the irreversible prospect [...].

Simultaneously, from May 1 to 11, the WFUW flourished in all parts of the planet.

In **Mumbai (India)** for example, the walls of a neighborhood devastated by the monsoon



Italia

transformed into a big square (#Spiazzaci was the motto) to give visibility to a different Italy with the ongoing initiatives on «Legality, Interreligious dialogue and Immigration». 2000 youth were present.

Particularly significant was the experience in **Nigeria**, the day after the bomb explosions in the capital and the kidnapping of the female students in Borno. They wrote us: «With the community we had programmed various activities both in Onitsha and also in Abuja and Jos. But, when the second bomb exploded the next day, we asked ourselves if we could go ahead. Unanimously we decided that now more than ever, we had to continue to live for peace and to give hope to others! And so on May 4, at the Millenium Park of Abuja, in 80, Muslims and Christians together, we lived a day centered on "Welcoming the other and fraternity". At 12 noon we stopped for the Time Out for peace. In Onitsha, we spent the day working in an orphanage, another cleaning the environment at the market and a short programme that gathered everyone together at the Mariapolis Center».

prepared by the editorial board

For more information: www.y4uw.org



Portogallo

rains were repainted together with the teens from an orphanage that was affected and with a local NGO they planted more than 200 trees. In **New York (Usa)** a «Walkathon» in the neighborhood of Harlem encouraging the youth to abandon life on the steets. «We continue to love» is the motto of the youth of **Bangui (Central African Republic)** who shared with several hundreds of people in the refugee camps not only basic commodities and school supplies, but also experiences, music and thoughts on the «art of loving», medicine for the deep wounds of those who had lost everything. In **Abidjan (Ivory Coast)**, they reflected on «Solidarity, the measure of African cohesion», a value which is at the risk of disappearing, and they also started contacts with a village of lepers, Marchoux, giving them hope. In **Paris (France)** the theme «Bridging Cultures» took into consideration the objective and the project of Europe. In **Portogallo** more than 1200 youth took up the invitation to «take the world», with a crowd gathered at the Little Town Arco Iris. In **Tagaytay (Philippines)** the activities took on a sportive flavour; a concert was held in **Ambatondrazaka (Madagascar)** with a thousand young people. Like every year the **City of Loppiano (Italy)** was



Nairobi

Towards the Assembly

For this we commit ourselves

At the congress of the Rainbow Units, 134 gen from all over the world developed a document that expresses the commitments, the priorities and the expectations of the gen2 Movement for the coming six years. With an interesting ... method

A congress which everyone felt was historical, in the context of the Easter Triduum, with a concrete final commitment: to present to Emmaus a document in view of the Assembly based on the 665 answers to the questionnaire that was sent to the Zones. With the gen Centers we read the answers and grouped them according to 10 topics. Then we formed 10 working groups according to the topics and each participant received the answers that concerned the topic of his or her group with the aim of formulating three proposals for the coming six years in not more than 100 words (six of the groups were Italian-speaking, four English-speaking).

In the first plenary session we had to evaluate the contents of the proposals made by the 10 groups. We chose the method of «consensus». Each gen had a blue card («I agree, we are going in the right direction») and an orange card («stop, we are not going in the right direction»). Each proposal was rated and if around 10 % of the gen raised up the orange card, two of them

could present the reasons why they did not agree. All the proposals– except one – including some modifications, passed the evaluation.

At this point during the night, the editorial team prepared a first draft of the document that was then translated into english and distributed to everyone before the second plenary session, wherein they had to approve each individual part and in the end to vote on the entire document. Each part was evaluated just like on the first day, but the eventual modifications had to be approved with the consensus of two thirds of those present.



In the presence of Eli Folonari, Silvana Veronesi, Bruna Tomasi, Gusti Oggenfuss and some of the counselors of the Center of the Opera and the General Council we participated in a moment that was quite special. Some topics were approved without any modifications, for others it was necessary to go more in depth in certain parts or change them. After almost three hours the document was approved unanimously: «Habemus documentum», as someone said. You cannot imagine the joy that there was in the hall!

We sent the document to Emmaus with the commitments, priorities and the expectations of the gen2 Movement for the coming six years. A well-developed document, that can be consulted in the gen website¹. The Youth for a United World Movement, the dialogues, the life of the seven aspects and the relationship with the rest of the Opera are the major topics that were tackled: a call and a strong commitment to be radical, and to live together with the whole Opera so as to realize the dream of Jesus «That all may be one». Local dimension and global openness, to look at society in all its economic expressions, communication with all the means available and a desire for wisdom. We would like to share with you, to make it short, the final part of the document that concerns and involves the whole Opera.

Gen 2 Centers

¹ gen2.focolare.org or you may request for it from the gen2 centers (gen2m@focolare.org / centrogen2f@focolare.org)



The gen2 Movement and the Work of Mary relationships and structures

The Movement is a family that must continuously renew itself through personal relationships among its different vocations. This is the root of its structure. For this, we commit ourselves to:

- listen to the concrete needs of people in different places, adapting the structure and avoiding strict cliché;
- facilitate a deeper and mutual relationship among the various vocations;
- participate more actively in the life of the Movement especially during decision-making moments;
- become more responsible for the Gen 3 Movement – our future – together with the Gen 3 assistants and sustain greater unity and continuity between the Gen 2 and Gen 3 Centers.

Moreover, the entire structure of the Gen 2 Movement must also be more and more at the service of this experience of communion. For this, we commit ourselves to:

- emphasize the equally shared responsibility among all the Gen – Gen and Gen in formation, the Gen Whites and members of the Rainbow Units – in bringing ahead the Gen 2 Movement as protagonists; a fluid exchange of the roles of service is useful and necessary;
- offer to all the Gen and the Gen in formation the possibility of living an authentic experience of unity together with the whole Gen 2 Movement, right from the start of their journey.

We ask that the focolarinos/focolarinas and the Gen 2 Centers strengthen their communion and trust in the Gen boys and girls, and that the Gen 2 Centers, as an expression of the Gen 2 Movement of the whole world, gather more and more the ideas of the Gen before taking a decision.

Interfaith Communication – communication between us and the world to enter in better relations and relationships between Gen. Needs for a better world, the peace and social justice need to get to know more about the Gen life, it is essential to find ways towards communication... For example, creating a new role that helps you around the world and experiences, dialogues, address different social activities. Also to spread news on social channels, social networks, Facebook, Twitter, etc. (depending on what means of communication the groups of the Gen use most often). To have our Gen website more for a more direct service more consultative and responsive, so as to attract more youth to discuss their website. Also to make it more visible so as to avoid other badly represented websites and values about the Movement.



In Loppiano A consignment give God

A few months before the General Assembly and the opening of the celebrations of the 50 years of Loppiano's existence, the visit of Emmaus and Giancarlo to the Little City (5-10 May) marked an important stage in the journey and in the reflections of the inhabitants



Emmaus con Stefano Fontolan e Joxepi Zubillaga al Consiglio della Cittadella

In six years it was the fourth visit of Emmaus and Giancarlo to the Little City of Loppiano, a precious occasion for a brief assessment of the journey made in this first «six years» after the departure of Chiara and to search for the prospects of an answer to the challenges of today through a profound communion.

In the programme of this visit were two moments of encounter and dialogue with the schools: the first is to get to know the focolarinas and focolarinos who will be attending the first year of formation, with the presentation

of those who had just arrived; the second, extra-special, with the participants of the 11 permanent schools of formation that represent all the realities of the Little City, with a lesson held by Emmaus and Giancarlo, together with Alberto Lo Presti (responsible for the Igino Giordani Center). In three sessions that outlined a link of wisdom between today and the luminous moment of the founding of this new work in the Church, sketching the «designs» of those who had started it: Chiara with Fr. Foresi and Foco.

The meeting with the Council of the Little City, two hours of rich and participated dialogue, was a moment of «handing over» the work done throughout these years, reviewing the steps taken towards a reality that is always more united and integrated among the various components: schools, focolares, branches, university, industrial park, shrine... Emmaus emphasized how it is precisely the riches and diversity that make up the Mariapolis, and makes it a unique experience of witness that one could ever make: «What a person finds in the Mariapolis he will never find in 100 specialized conventions with particular topics... the Mariapolis is something special,

because it is precisely the expression of the people of Chiara, the expression of the community that Chiara desired, that together welcomes and bears witness».

A specially strong moment, that marked each one, was that of aiming once again at the heart of bearing witness: to give God.

Aside from the many personal and informal contacts, there was a greeting at the school of the men and women pre-volunteers from the continents, the visit to the Casa verde of the focalarios that was reopened after a recent renovation, the visit to an exhibit on Chiara prepared for the meeting on the 1st of May «#Spiazzaci». Friday afternoon, the last day of their stay in the Little City, a moment of celebration and updating with all the inhabitants took place: a special focus was given to the recent meeting, that saw the youth involved in the frontline not only in building the programme but also in managing all the logistics and organizational aspects through a network of relationships built with the Italian Zones.

The gen were able to share the experience of this last period, when they had to work day after day on the scenery, the stands of the expo, but above all in preparing the interactive exhibit on «Silvia Lubich, a yes that made her Chiara», that was studied so as to make the viewers experience a direct, intense and personal encounter with Chiara.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Giancarlo said: «I believe that we have never experienced such a living encounter, that is so warm with the involvement of each one of you... We can see that the Little City is alive, is pulsating, it lives moments of suspension, of searching, and in this it re-acquires an unexpected new, vitality...».

And Emmaus, moved in a special way by the gen4 from all the continents who sang and mimed with a moving vivacity and harmony,

concluded by saying that at a certain point it seemed that she could see Jesus physically present on the stage among them, and, referring to the experience in the square that was built together with the youth of the 1st of May she added: «Jesus is not a fantasy, he is a reality... this is how the life of the local community must be: a square, a place of communion, a place of exchange, of joy, sometimes of worries... but a place where one can meet Jesus [...]. The life of the Mariapolis is this: it is not the lesson, work, the welcoming of groups, even if we do need them, but this interweaving of reciprocal love among everyone allows Jesus to live among us».

Let us allow Emmaus' words to conclude this visit: «We leave from this Little City with the strong impression of having walked with Jesus, and with the desire that this life become more and more strengthened, more and more constant, more brilliant, in spite of the problems and the difficulties, because Jesus also walked amidst the problems and difficulties when he was here on earth, he didn't walk in the Glory, but he was Jesus, he was God. Therefore with this certainty and with this hope: we have seen it, so it was present... each one of us must put ourselves in front of Him to do his part, which is that of mutual love, so that He will always be with us. And since He is here, He will always be here, because He wants to be here!!!».

Joxepi Zubillaga, Stefano Fontolan

La «lezione» sui «disegni» di Chiara, don Foresi e Foco



Dialogue with persons that do not have any religious reference

Trip to Uruguay, Argentina, Cuba

A trip to Hispano-America bringing to the forefront the mandate of Chiara of 1998 in Buenos Aires: «Dialogo at 360°» as the way to «Ut Omnes»



tance of their presence in the Movement so as to work together to promote good in the world.

For our intern members it was a moment to see the importance of «going out» more so as to work together with every person of good will.

Argentina

In Argentina the Catholic faith has a favoured status with respect to other Christian denominations. The percentage of Catholics is 78%, of which - according to a study made in 2001 -

Uruguay

In this Country with a culture that is predominantly secular or non-denominational, influenced by French Enlightenment and masonry, Christmas is officially called the «Feast of the Family», Easter «Week of Tourism» and the feast of the Immaculate «Feast of the beaches». More than 40% of the population does not have any religion, 54% are Christians (45% of which are Catholic), and 0,6% includes the Jews and the animists.

The meeting with friends without any religious reference was very special; among them were a politician who is a mason, a famous ballerina, a writer, a woman philosopher, who presented the Uruguayan culture with its values and negative aspects. What was impressive was the high level of humanity of these people. An atmosphere dense with meaning was created followed by a long discussion among them. I presented the dialogue among persons of different convictions in the Opera, the way that Chiara had seen it, underlining the impor-



35% rarely go to Church. The Evangelical Churches are increasing and in 2005 they have reached 10% of the population, while 1,5% are Muslims, 1% are Jews and 16% are agnostics and atheists.

In Buenos Aires we met with a group of our intellectual «friends» who are very active, and who meet regularly around the cineforum, where around 20 to 60 people of all ages participate. They developed a document with the requests that

they hope will be taken into consideration by the Movement, above all with regards to the methods of expression that at times are quite self-referential.

At the meeting with the community, wherein some gen2 were present, we «dreamt» of a meeting for university students who had no religious problems.

At the Mariapolis Lia I met, aside from the focolarinos and the focolarinas, also the intern members and the schools of the gen boys and gen girls (around 90 of them) opening a dialogue on the problems of today in a world that is ever more globalized and diversified in faith and thought.

Cuba

The Republic of Cuba is a secularized State; the atheism of the State was abolished in 1992. The percentage of baptized Catholics is quite high, but the number of those who are practicing is low. Santería (the religion which is the syncretism of the African religions and the Catholic cult of the saints) is widespread, while up to 30% are agnostics and atheists. The Cuban population is made up 70% of the white descendants of the Spanish colonies and 30% of half-breeds and Afro-cubans.

I was able to talk with an important exponent of Cuban culture, a singer and an actress, former counselor for Culture of Fidel Castro, who had opened the doors for the Gen Rosso tours in this Caribbean island. She told me of her vision of life, her commitment to the youth to whom, as an educator, she wanted to transmit values through beauty. She confided to me of her inability to believe, but also of her faith in the human soul. I was able to share with her an answer that Chiara gave in Montet in 2001. She was deeply touched by her vision, that highlights the human beside the spiritual.



Cuba

In Havana I met with a group of «friends», with youth who were believers and non-believers, with the community.

The poverty in the capital is disturbing - once it was stupendous, looking out towards the ocean, with its refined Spanish-styled buildings - but what is even more impressive is the dignity with which the persons of the Movement live in their very precarious situation, ready to give back hope, revitalizing human values, sharing what little they have.

They were grateful for the experience that I was able to share about Eastern Europe, where we loved everyone without exception and where it was precisely this love given to each neighbour that allowed the Ideal to spread like an oil slick healing wounds, erasing every mistrust and suspicion. They found it useful for their community who finds itself in a situation similar to that which the former communist Countries faced some tens of years ago.

Vida Rus





Shomali e Mahnaz

Great religions At Qom, heart of Shiite Islam

One week in Iran

On the invitation of prof. Mohammad Shomali and his wife Mahnaz who came to know us in the '90s in England, we – Roberto Catalano, Paul Lemarié and Christina Lee of the Center for Interreligious Dialogue, with Stefania Tanesini of Loppiano – went to Iran for a week in April.

We found ourselves immersed in a world that is profoundly spiritual in the holy city of Qom that gathers around a hundred among seminaries and centers of Koranic theological formation with the number of students ranging from 40 to 60 thousand. But the spirituality, which here is combined with knowledge and reason, also has its fixed points, like the Shrine of Lady Masumeh (=immaculate), who exceptionally remained unmarried, the daughter of one of the twelve imams of Shiite isalm, who is buried here. The city developed around her tomb. They estimate that around 15 million pilgrims visit her tomb every year. Mixed among thousands of pilgrims, men and women separately, we were able to visit the various parts of the complex and her tomb. It was a unique spiritual experience, that allowed us to come into direct contact with the great faith of the Shiites and their devotion to this «saint».

The programme, which included cultural and academic contacts, was prepared with care by prof. Shomali and by Mahnaz. They introduced us to some key points of Qom: the International Institute of Islamic Studies (IIS), directed by Shomali, the University of Qom, the University of Religions and Denominations, and the Jami'at al-Zahra (Islamic seminary for women). Everywhere, relationships were cordial, sincere and profoundly spiritual. We

found out that many of them in all these years have visited our center accompanied by Shomali.

In our presentations after an introduction on the Church and her relationship with the religions, we shared the story of Chiara and a brief account of our spirituality, interreligious dialogue in the Movement and the formation in Loppiano, these were followed by moments of dialogue that showed the depth with which they were received.

We met on three occasions the doctorate students of the IIS. We were able to go in profundity with them. Shomali gave a big witness saying that has seen for more than 10 years now how the spirit of the Movement is found with the same intensity both at the Center as in the farthest Countries, and that the spirit and the structure go together.

In the women's seminary there are twelve thousand women who are studying. We were able to meet with a group of students of the international faculty and we realized what a strong experience it was for the 12 who came to visit us in 2013. They have a great love for Chiara whom, as some of them said, they feel is like a «Muslim woman».



Al Santuario di Lady Masumeh

With the youth of the Rissho Kosei-kai

A united world is no longer a utopia

«Think globally, work locally»
the commitment at the conclusion
of the Symposium among the young
Buddhists and Christians, that was held
for the first time in Japan

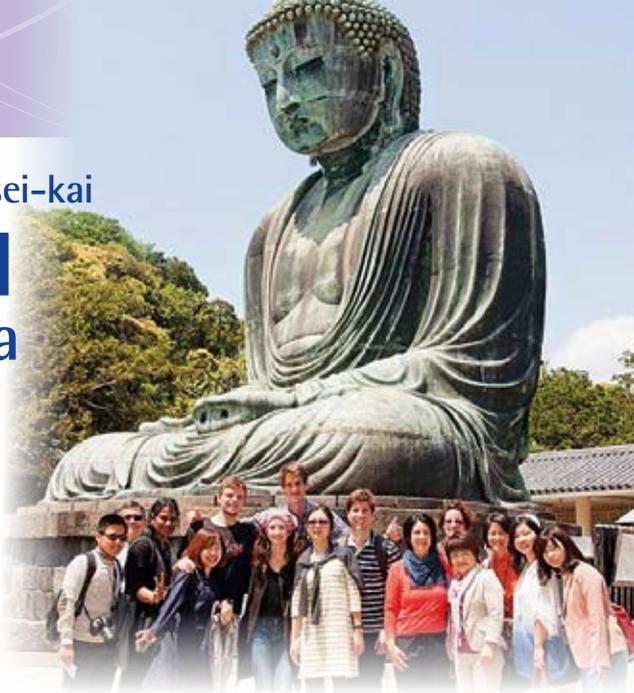
«I will bring home with me the smiles, the conversations, the words, but above all this strength that is born from the fact that, even if we are different, we are many and we can be one family all over the world. A united world is not a utopia but a reality because we are already living it». This is one of the many impressions of the gen who participated in the seventh «Symposium of young Buddhists and Christians of the Rissho Kosei-kai (RKK) and the Focolare Movement» on the 3rd and 4th of May in Tokyo on the theme: «Let us conserve our faith in our daily life and transmit joy»

The programme was varied and dynamic, with moments of discussion and workshops on: love, peace, youth difficulties, concrete projects to realize fraternity. A motto was born: «Think globally, work locally».

They are roads that are opening up for a future dialogue that is profound and profitable.

Love that is attentive, constant and fraternal, that accompanied us constantly, allowed us to meet with a people so little known in Europe. During our last meeting at the IIS, the president of all the seminaries in Qom was also present, and he gave us his blessing encouraging us to bring ahead this dialogue.

Center for interreligious dialogue



The youth shared every moment of the day experiencing and collecting the inheritance of profound communion transmitted by Chiara Lubich and Nikkyo Niwano. The exchange of spiritual gifts highlighted the profound similarity in the radicalness of the choices and the faithfulness to the charisms of each one. «I strongly felt that the desire of unity of Chiara and Nikkyo Niwano has reached us – this is what Suichi, of the RKK said - I too would like to commit myself personally. The joy of faith was the theme of this Symposium, and I learned from you what this means». The day spent with our community of Tokyo was very beautiful. Men and women Volunteers, families, gen3 and gen4 made a «home» for the youth of the RKK who at the end said: «We have found a family!».

At the end of this experience the gen boys and girls wrote to Emmaus: «We came back with a great gratitude in our hearts towards Chiara, whom they love very much and who surely has guided us in these days, and also with a great passion for interreligious dialogue, which we have discovered as a very important road in our race towards a United World».

Anna Maria Rossi, Ramiro Herrera Solano



European Award of St. Ulrich given to *Together for Europe*

The motivation

On May 3, the Steering Committee of *Together for Europe* which represents 300 Movements and Christian communities received the prestigious European Award

«Fully aware of the rich and millennial cultural history of our swabian-bavarese region, the province and the city of Dillingen on the Danube have instituted the "European Foundation of St. Ulrich".

The province and the city of Dillingen on the Danube, the country of di St. Ulrich, wish through this Foundation to give a push to increase the unity of Europe in a Christian spirit.



La consegna del Premio



Il presidente della Fondazione Europea St. Ulrich, Landrat Leo Schrell con Eli Folonari del Comitato d'orientamento

Starting from 1993 - a thousand years after the canonization of the bishop St. Ulrich, a great figure of note for Germany and for Europe - the European Award of St. Ulrich is granted regularly to Initiatives of Institutions that have distinguished themselves through their extraordinary merits in the area of European unity in the political, ecclesiological, scientific, cultural, economic or social fields.

"To Build a Christian Europe" is the task of all those who, based on the artistic and cultural heritage and on the fundamental values, want

to collaborate for the future of our history. Great witnesses of the faith in our country, such as Bishop Ulrich, Alberto Magno, Margarete Ebner, Pietro Canisio, Johann Michael Sailer, Johann Ev. Wagner and Dominikus Ringeisen have given us illustrious examples.

The commitment of the international network of *Together for Europe* is guided by the vision of unity in diversity reconciled. The Movements and Christian Communities who adhere to it don't want to level out the national or confessional identities, but rather, together they commit themselves to safeguarding and promoting the treasure of the Christian inheritance in Europe. They build bridges in continental Europe taking steps towards reconciliation and weaving friendships that go beyond the various borders. And thus a current of hope inspired by the Gospel that involves men and women who commit themselves for our society was born. Recognizing its extraordinary merits, the European Foundation of St. Ulrich grants the European Award of St. Ulrich 2014 to the network *Together for Europe* to which 300 Movements and Christian communities take part».

Our translation from German

To know more
www.together4europe.org

From Egypt A very different Easter!

The Egyptian gen boys are involved in alleviating the difficult situation of the refugees who were stopped before they reached the Libyan coast to cross over to Europe

I have been in the military service for a year now. Two weeks ago before Easter 180 people from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan arrived in my barracks; they were largely Christian youth and among them were children of ten and four years old.

They left their Country under very difficult circumstances, they undertook a long journey with the hope of reaching the Libyan coast and to face the crossing in rubber rafts towards Europe ... in search of a better future.

Clandestine, they were stopped at the border of Egypt without valid documents and placed in detention in my barracks. I was very much upset by the hygienic condition in which they had to live, eating only a piece of bread for breakfast, lunch and dinner with a plate of rice once in a while. In spite of this, I realized that, since it was the season of Lent, they were fasting!

I felt that Jesus was calling me to love Him Forsaken concretely. These brothers who suffered so much and without anything, who lived in a subhuman situation, reminded me of that cross that I would

be kissing during the Good Friday liturgical celebration. I immediately talked to the gen of my city and I also involved my friends in gathering money, medicines, food to be able to offer them a feast worthy of the day of Easter.

We immediately went to work and in a short time we were able to prepare a festive lunch with meat, fruit, vegetables... all the things that they have not eaten in a long time. My father also got involved and he offered to bring me with his car to transport everything we had prepared; unfortunately I was the only one who could enter the barracks.

It is impossible to describe their joy when they saw me come in ... specially that four year old little boy who, due to their difficult situation of hygiene and nutrition, was already very sick; we were able to find the medicine he needed.

On the night of the Easter Vigil, while everyone was going to Church in their best clothes, I was going to the barracks, tired and sweaty but very, very happy; I felt I was the expression of a body, a very big family, because we took to heart this suffering and crucified Jesus. It was my «Easter Mass»... an Easter very different from all the others and that I will find very difficult to forget.

M.A.



In Ecuador Protagonists of the Local Communities



A «Mariapolis Scuola» in Ecuador with 243 intern members of the Opera, from the local Communities of the Andine Zone

The idea of this Mariapolis (18 - 20 April) came about because of the felt need to start together with all the local Communities in this new reality of the Opera in the Andine Zone.

The programme - prepared via skype with the leaders of the Communities and the gen «whites» - was centered on the life of the Community: each one presented their own characteristics, their strong points, the challenges and the limitations. The experience of the community of Guayaquil was very significant after the closure last January of the focolare there. People determined to bring ahead the Opera, and to make it grow taking on full responsibility.

They were living Communities because of the Gospel lived in the local Church, in the

world of the families, in the education of the youth, through social works. It was beautiful to enjoy the unity in diversity that characterizes our people.

It's Impossible not to remember the answer of Emmaus in 2012 on the «blue continent», during the trip to Latin America; all these diversities of colour and of culture made us understand the gift of engaging in dialogue among us, with Perú and Bolivia, so as to give our specific contribution to the whole Opera.

The participation of the youth, teens and children was numerous.

It seemed to us that this Mariapolis was a starting point of walking together with new prospects, it offered spaces of fruitful communion among everyone and the possibility of re-



ciprocally getting to know one another also with Lidia Erbetta and Walter Cerchiaro, the new delegates of the Zone.

A woman volunteer: «The faith is reborn to continue in the Pact to live for humanity». A male volunteer: «God always wants something more from me» summarizing the consignment that I will bring within me, ready for the new challenges that God will propose». A teen-age boy: «I asked myself how my mother was able to bring ahead our family made up of herself and three children; here I saw the family of the Opera, you were beside her helping us to grow, not only with financial help but in a special way with love». A gen girl: «My family life is difficult.

I felt strongly the call to forgive my parents and also myself, to start again with greater strength to live the love that Chiara left us.

the focolarinos and focolarinas of Ecuador



In Trent School for peace

An event for the 70° anniversary of the bombing of the city, during the Second World War. A date noteworthy in the Movement as the «night of stars and tears»

Last May 13 we lived the eleventh edition of the event «Trento city of peace». In May, all the schools in the city met together to share how they had tried to live the phrases of the «dice of love» throughout the year and of how they were able to be «actors of peace».

On the 70° anniversary of the bombardment – for us «the night of stars and tears» – the city was invaded by a «wave of peace». This is what some children commented: «Seventy years ago the bombardment with its destruction, today a bombardment of acts of love!».

We were 2500 in the Cathedral Square, belonging to 23 different scholastic Institutes: pupils, students, teachers, parents, grandparents, representatives of the Institutions, Mayor Andreatta, city assessors, in a splendid day of sunshine, everyone in a festive mood, enthusiastic and convinced that «peace begins with me». The Mayor, very much involved, participated enthusiastically, remaining with us the whole time.

The subtitle on the front page of the newspaper Trentino of that day was significant: «What a beautiful injection of hope to see thousands of children dressed in their berets and sweaters of all colours, to become almost a living rainbow and shouting out all together "peace", while the daily newspaper the Adige with many photos had as its headline: «The square invaded by heralds of peace!». The regional television news report, the local Tv and radio stations gave a wide coverage of the manifestation.



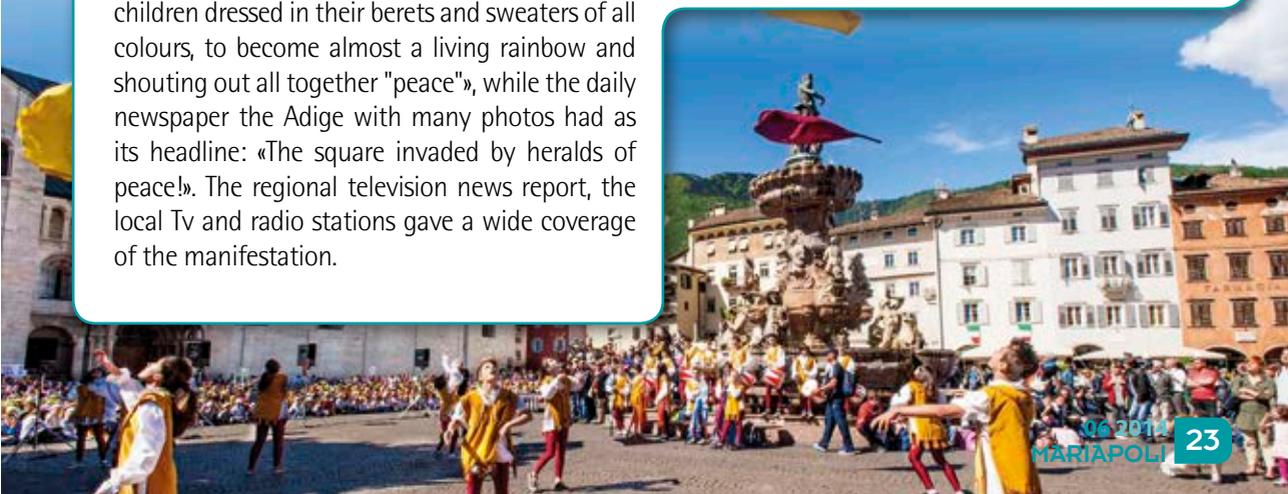
The city was fully involved in this annual appointment, that is always more awaited, also because of the thousands of notes with messages and acts of love distributed to the passersby, to storekeepers... aside from the hundred of designs made by the children that coloured the main street of the city's historical center.

The celebration for peace is the conclusion of annual jppurneys of education to values that is brought ahead in the schools and shared in the monthly meetings of the «Tavolo Tuttpace» (All Peace Table) that at present gathers together around a hundred teachers from the various school levels.

The Time-out that gathered the entire square in a deep silence was moving.

Once again, astonished in front of what Jesus in the midst can do, we continue to live all the words of Chiara, so as to bring her heart to each one in her-our splendid city.

A group of teachers



The world of Priests For a new sowing

In the Philippines a mini-school for priests
of various Countries of Asia



we were able to contemplate the relationships between Mary and the Opera, discovering it as a reality that has much to give to the Church and in which a «marian» priesthood flourishes.

This reality Opera-Church was made especially alive during the visit to the Moonwalk Parish of Manila, which has been entrusted to the Opera for more than 35 years, with a very alive laity belonging to various expressions but in some way all permeated by the spirit of communion. An example which touched us in a particular way and which has awakened in us the desire to spread the Ideal in the parishes.

The push was great to give more regularity and concreteness to the life of unity among priests who are more committed and geographically close to each other. At the same time the desire grew spontaneously to contact those who met the Opera years ago, and to look to the seminaries. Thus this «mini-school» has gathered the work of tens of years, allowing us to experience the ardour and the light of the origins and to go out for a further sowing.

With the resolute decision to go ahead as protagonists in one's own Zone, together with the Opera, we made an appointment – on the whole – to meet again in two years time.

Fr. Hubertus Blaumeiser and Fr. Tonino Gandolfo

«In this school I learned how to live concretely», this was maybe the recurring impression at the end of the «mini-school» for priests, held at the Little Town of Tagaytay from April 29 to May 8. Just as in the other experiences lived together (Africa, Brazil, Lebanon, Korea) it seems to us that we must say a big thank you for the surprises that the Holy Spirit never failed to give us.

It started with the number of participants and their origins: more than 30 Filipinos, 3 Indians and 4 pakistanis, 6 Thai and 2 Indonesians, majority of them young priests. Coming from nations and cultures that are so different gave the meeting a special flavour and had the effect that was reciprocally stimulating, culminating in an experience of family and of unity rich with vivacity and joy.

Much life came to light, and this made us feel that we were all involved in a great and fascinating adventure. «In this school we were not only disciples», commented one of the participants.

Enwrapped, moreover, by the love and the life of the Little Town and enriched by the presence and the interventions of the Delegates of the Zone in the Philippines, an experience of the Opera was realized. The grace of the local communities also stood out, in that they multiply the «focolare» in every place. Upon this very vital background,



Summer reading

What shall I read on vacation? What books will I put into my suitcase? These are the questions that we ask ourselves behind the much longed for summer holidays. And this is the right time to think about it. Whether we have prepared for a trip or whether we will stay in the city, a book should never be lacking. Certainly it is nice to read, but it should enrich us. Some of the new publications of Città Nuova are heading in this direction. Books for meditation or formative books, written in a refined language with a narrative style. For adults and teens.

This is the case with the latest book of Michele Genisi: **Quando fioriscono i melograni. L'amore ai tempi della Bibbia (When the pomegranates bloom. Love during Biblical times)**. Why the pomegranate? Its fruit, the Author explains, «evokes abundance, passion, richness, fecundity, joy: it is the symbol of love. Of human love as well as divine love». In this way, Genisi, in the Introduction explains: «Love is an act of madness, but it is the wisest of all the acts of madness», according to Shakespeare. [...] And the Bible often talks of love: of the love between a man and a woman, of divine love. Sometimes it uses it as terms of comparison for the other. Because, we know, that

the Bible does not like abstract things». Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sara, Isaac and Rebecca, Samson and Delilah, David and Bathsheba, Ruth and Boaz... the book is therefore a gallery of love stories and of couples from the Old Testament, both well-known and less. An enjoyable text, that can be read in one sitting.

Wit **I detti di apa Pafnuzio (the sayings of apa Pafnuzio)**, Fr. Fabio Ciardi accompanies us into the desert. A place of solitude, of silence, of peace, far away from the frenzy of everyday life. And thus the fathers of the desert chose to live, monks who lived in the IV century A.D. in Palestine, Egypt and Syria. Testimonies of a Christian faith lived in simplicity and radicalness, they left us only very short writings, just «sayings». Brief texts filled with divine and human wisdom. Fr. Ciardi proposes the meditations of one of them, an imaginary apa (father) Pafnuzio. Even if he is in a dimension of life totally different from ours, apa Pafnuzio reveals himself to be very close to us and to our sensibilities. He lives our same fears, his thoughts are our thoughts, his frailties are that of man today.

And for the teens? What do we suggest them to read this summer? Certainly a more «contemporary» book: **Vivere per gli altri. La storia di madre Teresa (Living for the others. The story of Mother Teresa)** by Michele Gualano. The Author imagines himself to be the little woman in a white sari bordered in blue who is sharing her own story. «To serve the poor is not a duty, but a privilege, Jesus said this in a very clear way: "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, you did it to me"». This is how Mother Teresa of Calcutta explains her vocation beside the needy; a strong choice that led her to become that giant of charity of our times. A concrete and positive example of that invitation of Pope Francis addressed to all of us to go towards the least, the poorest, the weakest.

Elena Cardinali



*Telegramms of Emmaus
for Marisa Riva
and Susana Urioste de Mendez*

Marisa Riva

«And we believed in Love»

Marisa Riva, a focolarina from the Roman Mariapolis left for Heaven at noon, as she was praying for peace during the 'time out' – an appointment she never missed.



Marisa was a pioneer of the Movement in many lands such as Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Paraguay where she transmitted to many, many people the light of the Ideal of unity. The many letters, telephone calls and messages which arrived in these days bear great witness to this.

Let's take a look at the 'golden thread' of the love of God in her life.

Marisa was born in 1928 in Milan into a very united family. As a youth she lived the drama and deprivation caused by the war which formed her to become resolute and decided. Often she would recount: "My father had lost his job which forced me to leave my studies to work for the family... The war left in me the desire of new things, and of a different world... I was a bit pessimistic as if I would not find love..."

In 1951 she met the first group of focolarine in Milan. Hearing the experiences of the Gospel lived in everyday life, she discovered a completely new measure of love. She recounts: "It was then that I began to love those at home and my colleagues... as soon as I heard the phone ring I would exclaim: 'this is Jesus!' I worked in the accounting department of a company... one day a customer arrived and I was drawing up the accounts, I felt his presence but I didn't look up. At a certain point this man asked me, 'Miss, what is wrong with you today? are you worried about something?' I immediately felt that it was not the customer talking to me but it was Jesus calling me to do my part."

The first time she met Chiara in Trent was a vivid and important moment about which Marisa would say:

"... I remember she looked at me and I looked at her and within I felt, 'I want to be like you, I want to follow you.'"

She spent a period of time in the focolare in Milan and other cities in Italy. In 1963 she left for Latin America which were years of sowing, trials, joys and the development of the Movement.

During Chiara's visit to Argentina in 1964 Marisa received a Word of Life from the book of the Song of Songs directly from her: "Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" (Song 8:5) that is, on Jesus Forsaken. This word of life would sustain her entire life.

During those years she wrote to Chiara: "It seems that before your visit here, Mary Desolate was in my thoughts but I hadn't relived her, as if outside of me. You now have built her within me. You made me relive her and in my soul I found unity with you, in the truest sense because it is established by Mary." She continued, "... it is so true that since you have arrived here and for all the gifts that Jesus continuously gives us; the ocean between no longer exists." (meaning the great distance between them – Latin America and Italy)

In 1977 Marisa returned to Italy and worked at the Secretariat of Chiara for 16 years. In 1993 she went to Beirut to follow the life of the Movement in the Middle East and the beginning of the new little town "Ain Aar" (Fountain). She later became a counselor for this 'big zone' until 2008, a role she carried out with great generosity.

The phrase, "And we have believed in Love" seems to perfectly define Marisa's personality. She gave true testimony of it always and particularly during this last long period of illness. She lived it with tenacity, dignity,

patience and joy. She was so present in the Focolare, a luminous point of unity. Her decided temperament was counteracted with great humility; she knew how to ask pardon and begin again with an always new love and ardor. Up until the end she lived her life offering and praying for everyone while participating in the drama of today's humanity.

We now think of her next to Chiara forever. So grateful to Marisa for what she did for the Work of Mary, let's pray for her and ask that her family be comforted.

Susana Urioste de Mendez

Faithfulness and giving

On April 16th Susana Urioste de Mendez, a married focolarina from Rosario (Argentina) arrived to the Father's house. She was born in 1940 into a numerous and well-to-do family. She married Juan at age 25 and they had 5 children: Juan Antonio, Lia, Sofia, Federico and Andres.

Together with her husband Juan (now a volunteer) she met the Ideal in 1965 and in 1985 moved to Argentina because of work. They immediately became part of the community of the Movement in their country and for many years served in the zone secretariat for the New Families Movement bringing the Ideal to many cities. They too followed the "Adoption at a Distance" project with much dedication, passion and respect for each child and their family.

Susana suffered greatly at the loss of their son Andres shortly following his birth. She always had a very concrete love, was generous, delicate and showing a profound sense of mercy towards each neighbor. Her presence in focolare guaranteed the presence of Jesus in the Midst and one could count on her in every moment.

Responding to her letter, Chiara gave Susana this Word of Life: "Mary treasured all



these words and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

Preparing for her 'final promises' in 1982, she wrote Chiara: "At Loppiano when we signed the 'Pact of Unity' (I had the grace to be present) this gave me the sense of connecting myself to the whole

Movement with the measure of giving my life." She continued, "You never fooled us because we espouse Jesus Forsaken and He is always present and faithful. He keeps me on the right track".

Many people throughout the zone in Argentina have acknowledged their gratitude for Susana. A married focolarina wrote: "She was a realist; she possessed a great deal of common sense. Often I'd ask her about the bringing up of my own children. During the years when both our families were going through hard economic times, she and Juan were attentive to this and would arrive at our home with desserts or some small amount of money for us".

For the last year Susana was troubled with physical ailments due to a blood disease. As a result her deterioration was rapid. She lived out her illness in full unity with the focolare always wanting to hear the latest about the Movement, giving value to what she offered loving Jesus

Forsaken. The community remained close to her and her family.

Often she was not conscious but in the final weeks, she regained a particular lucidity. As her physical condition worsened she relived the Desolate: stripped of everything, projected towards loving her neighbor. In her life not only was she detached from material goods but also of spiritual consolations since she ended up in intensive care, she was alone, with Jesus Forsaken and serene, yet without the presence of her loved ones.

Let's recognize her faithfulness and generosity by offering prayers for Susana and asking consolation for Juan and their children

Angelo Francesconi

«I want to shout to the world how much You have loved me!»

«Although my mother always tried to put God in our hearts, when I passed my adolescence I drifted away from her teachings, and from then on, I never again posed the problem of God». This is often how Angelo would start the story of his life. At 13 years old he embarked as a ship boy on the sailing ship captained by his father and remained at sea until he was 45 years old, passing through the Second World War and numerous trials and tribulations.

In 1968 he was offered a chance to work on land and so with his wife Niva and daughter Antonella they moved from Viareggio to Ostia, at the doorstep of Rome. «Arriving in a big city, with all its problems, reinforced in us – we of marxist ideology- the desire to bring justice using all means and whatever the cost».

But it was here that God was lying in wait for them. This is what he wrote to Chiara: «The

instruments of Jesus, for our conversion were some gen, who completely overturned our family». Angelo was struck down by the hymn to charity in the first Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians: «I understood that everything I had ever done up to that moment were all in vain ... Only charity remains». «Now I felt that I had to make a big step but in order to do so I had to call on all my strength because at 53 years old it was difficult to reorganize my ideas so as to be able to present myself with a minimum of dignity in front of a priest. God helped me and I was able to do it».

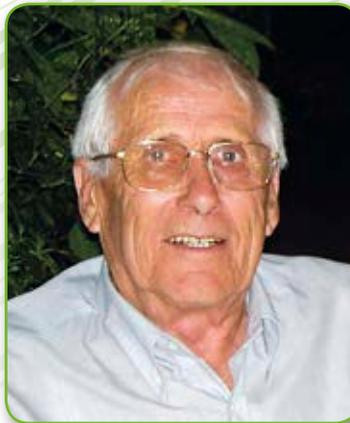
And so a divine adventure began for him too. With Niva he is an enthralling force for many families. Soon he became a volunteer of God and together with other volunteers they put up a Center for the elderly «Valle Aurelia» in the heart of Rome. And when he was already

retired – and his daughter in the meantime entered the foculare – he and Niva moved back to Viareggio, and together with a woman volunteer they start the Avo (Associazione Volontari Ospedalieri / Association of Volunteer Hospital Workers) .

In October of 1990 Chiara gives him a Word of Life: «What great love has the Father given us to be called children of God and we are truly that.» (1 Gv 3,1), with

the wish of «bearing witness always with your life of this splendid reality of being a child of God, so that many will want to share your experience». For a long time Angelo was entrusted with the formation of the men volunteers and many owed their spiritual and human growth to him; his sensitivity was such that he did not bring out his pearls (the writings or video of Chiara) until a true, supernatural fraternity had been established, which merited the presence of Jesus in the midst.

With his wife, they were the soul of the growing local community of Viareggio. They wrote to Chiara after the first meeting: «It was



Irma Porta

«Or you are a saint, or you are a failure»

Irma, a committed member of the Parish Movement, reached the Heavenly Mariapolis on January 19 at the age of 88. She met the



ideal together with her brother Fr. Dario, a priest focolarino, whose cause for beatification is ongoing. In that circumstance she expressed herself in this way: «I am extremely happy with this goal because I feel that Fr. Dario is not only my

brother, but the brother of everyone». She had a humble and hardworking nature, and she followed him in various parishes in the diocese of Parma (Zone of Bologna), in an experience of unity which was witnessed to up to the end, when Fr. Dario reached Paradise. Irma always supported him with her prayers and above all with her presence that gave life to Jesus in their midst, in an always renewed «yes» to Jesus Forsaken. «We were always surrounded by peo-

ple in need, many non-European migrants– she answered to a journalist who was interviewing her regarding her brother. Our days were full, they began and ended with prayer. I think that in life either one is a saint or a failure».

ple in need, many non-European migrants– she answered to a journalist who was interviewing her regarding her brother. Our days were full, they began and ended with prayer. I think that in life either one is a saint or a failure».

In her final years, she stayed in the hospice of the diocese, followed and supported by a cousin (a woman volunteer) and by the persons of the Movement. During her last meeting with Gloria, a focolarina, a few days before she left, Irma, in a weak and feeble voice and a smile, said: «I am offering everything!».

Maria Palladini

Gina Fronzuto Coccoluto

«Remain in my love»



«There is a revolution within me; as I gradually start to love the resurrection of my whole being begins.

[...] The Eternal Father thought well to make Himself known as an unexpected gift. He revealed Himself to me as a God Father and God who is infinite Love who watches over me and my family always». This is what Gina wrote in 1966 after participating in her first Mariapolis, invited by her brother Fr. Cosimo, priest focolarino, with whom she shared a very special human and supernatural relationship.

Gina was born on April 15, 1934 in a family with profound faith. Wife, mother, volunteer, she always kept intact the amazement of that discovery of Life and the immense gratitude to the Father for the gifts received. Many of us have experienced her concrete love, the welcome and the refined charity with which she made a «home» for the growing community of the Opera; she followed the new generations, living the Gospel with Minimo her husband

enough to entrust ourselves to Him to make this little community visible which seemed inexistent before. [...] it was truly the celebration of the «new people», your people Chiara».

Angelo concluded his «holy journey», at 91 years old on the night of March 14.

Many testimonies arrived. During the final greeting, in a church overflowing with people, the personal prayer that he repeated every morning was remembered: «In the name of Jesus whom I have found once more, I want to shout to the world how much He loved me!». It seemed to us that this was the message that also in that moment he left to everyone.

Marcello Catalucci

and with her children Antonio, focolarino, Giesepe and Immacolata and then also with her grandchildren.

After her being brought to the hospital of Formia in the beginning of April, her condition rapidly declined but Gina was well prepared, for some time now she had already understood her situation, and almost up to the end she was able to avoid making it a burden for anyone, just as she had done all her life. The whole year was a moment of special grace for her as she entered into a dimension of union with God that was palpable, after many difficult years, in which she was purified both physically and spiritually. This final stage which went so quickly, without prolonged ulterior suffering was a gift from God for everyone because it allowed each member of the family the right amount of time to grasp the design of God on her that was being fulfilled. In fact everything took place in an atmosphere of peace, serenity and unity.

Up to the end she was a consistent disciple of Chiara and worthy sister of Fr. Cosimino. She told Fr. Gianfrancesco Bagnulo, Capucin of the Opera, who went to visit her in the hospital: «Of all the presences of God, my fixed point was Jesus in the brother and the Word».

Gina left for the Heavenly Mariapolis, during the early hours of April 13, realizing fully the words of Jesus: «Remain in my love» (Jn 15,9), that Chiara had given her as her Word of Life, adding: «And may your life be totally filled and enlivened by it».

The funeral was truly a moment of God, with a church packed with many from the family of the Opera, with six priests who celebrated and in an atmosphere of meditation, decorum and sobriety precisely the way she would have liked it. On her coffin she wanted to have an open Bible and... three red carnations.

Bonaria Gessa e Antonio Coccoluto

Agnes Larssen

To become «a nothingness of love»

This was how Agnes was: a person with a big heart, ready to give, with a lot of desire to live and with a marked sense of humour. She met the Ideal in the '70s and after a short while became a part of the first pre-nuclei in Münster in Germany. With all her acquaintances, in the family with her husband Heinz and their five children, of which two sets of twins, Agnes always looked for that which unites, she knew how to «build bridges». Chiara in '93 gave her the Word of Life: «If we love one another, God remains in us» (1Jn 4,12) and Agnes wrote back that she wanted to become a «nothingness of love»; and she did it as a responsible for a nucleus, towards every volunteer.



She was always available, and accompanied her grandchildren to the gen3 meetings in Solingen. With them and with other children she organized «flea markets» along the road, transmitting to the little ones the responsibility for the others and their needs. A grandchild: «I owe it to my grandma if I am what I am now».

She acquired an illness of the eyes, and so she had to give up driving a car and a bicycle, but found all the means to remain in contact: email very big characters, audio transmissions of written words, through the computer. Her first audio-book was the Sacred Scripture.

Three years ago an inoperable illness. Agnes talked about it realistically, without complaining. She followed everything that her doctor told her, but for the rest she said: «What Chiara tells me is enough: to love always and to love everyone, and like Chiara Luce to say: if God wants it, then I want it too».

Pat Williamson

A strong and true friend in heaven

Pat was born in Lancashire, in England. Due to a congenital heart problem she passed her youth in a very cautious way. She graduated with a degree in Theology and was teaching in Liverpool when she met the Movement and also met Derek who became her husband. After a decisive heart operation Tim was born. Because Derek's work they moved to South Africa where Clare was born; while the children were still small the tragedy happened. Derek was killed in a traffic accident. Two years later Pat returned to England and went to Harpenden, where her brother lived. She taught at Loreto College of St. Alban's; she became the directress of the Department of Religious Education, a position she maintained until her retirement. She was a teacher who was truly gifted and who had a strong influence on the students. Two of them said: «She transmitted to us the love for the scriptures, especially the Old Testament»; «She encouraged me when I was quite young, helping me along the road of discovering the love of God for me».

Pat's love for her children and grandchildren was great. Tim expressed his joy at his mother's involvement in the Movement. In the different hospices of the zone she would hold lessons on the Bible and with the volunteers

With great faithfulness she participated in her nucleo, up to two weeks before she died. She was in the hospital only for two days. A short while before, she said: «We are aware of the reason behind suffering. If I could, I would like to go now». On November 29, at 74 years old, the Eternal Father called her to him. The funeral Mass was a feast of the resurrection. Agnes, model of faith, had prepared the texts and the songs.

Andrea Rösh



she placed herself at their disposition with her vigour and her humour, with generosity and affection. In the Word of Life group, she would make her contribution through her profound knowledge of Scripture and her experiences. Her faith was deeply rooted, made up of great courage in front of trials. Her last years were a spiritual ascent; in her

sickness Pat was supported by the focolare, by friends and by the community, so that on December 19, 2013 at 74 years old, she reached the end of her «holy journey» in peace, going straight to the goal, ready to leave everything.

«Marvelous mother», «splendid teacher», «a strong and true friend in heaven» as the streams and streams of thank yous and prayers from all those who went to visit her during her last months have proven.

Noreen Lockart

Our relatives

The following passed on to the Next Life: **Caterina, sister of Pinin (Donata) Paris**, focolarina at the Roman Mariapolis; **Margrit, sister of Christa Nadolle**, focolarina in Berlin; **Agnese, mother of Gabriella Rossi**, married focolarina in East Veneto and **Angela Maddalena, mother of Graziella Marangoni**, married focolarina in West Veneto; **Mario, father of Rita Casu**, focolarina in Sassari; **Maria, mother of Luciano Poletto**, focolarino in Trent; **Fr. Nicola, brother of Rosanna Zanoni**, focolarina in Rome; **the father of Rosalba Poli**, focolarina in Pescara (zone of Rome); **Miguel, father of Miguel Tejerina**, focolarino at the Mariapolis Lia (Argentina); **Adão, father of Margarete Peres da Silva**, focolarina in Paraná (Argentina); **Antonio de Jesús (volunteer), father of Sofia Afonsina Graça**, focolarina in Angola.

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- 4 Project. A Work that educates. At the roots of a document for the well-being and the protection of Minors

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- 7 In Trent the international gen3 Congresso. From the first community to the world
- 10 United World Week. The «stubborn courage» for fraternity

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- 14 In Loppiano. A consignment: give God

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Ai sensi del D.lgs. N. 196/2003 per la tutela dei dati personali, comuniciamo 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.