

MARIAPOLI

Newsletter of the Focolare Movement



Local Communities

A new awareness for the whole Opera

Meeting at the Center

With the focolarinas and the focolarinos of different Churches

Assembly

Participatory journey without precedent

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Create and recreate the community



Brasile, 1991

[...] The Movement [...] gave it life, we know it, the Holy Spirit acted in a certain way.

He put the first focolarinas in a situation that made them take the Gospel totally, I would say as the only important thing; he enlightened its Words and he gave them the push to live them.

The effect? We know it, unexpected and marvelous: because of the Word lived radically, because of the Word live seriously, a community that soon became numerous was born, and soon it spread to 100 little towns in the Trentine area: it was the Focolare Movement. People, who ignored each other before, became a family; Christians, who were indifferent towards one another, became joined as one.

The Word of God therefore can produce this miracle: to give life to a visible community.

We then said to ourselves: we are still living the Word today, but does it produce

the same effects? We distribute the Word of Life all over the world, in all the languages to our members and to many others and we strive to live them. But are we sure that a living community of people is born everywhere, just like before? Do we live the Word of God with such radicalness that it breaks our ego, it destroys our egoism, it nails us on the cross with Christ in such a way that it is no longer we who live, but the Word, who is Him, alive in us?

And does the Word, which is the only thing that can do so, build the community around us? Does the Word may serve, in general, and almost exclusively, like some sort of balm for our souls, to console it, encourage it, to justify our consciences, making us fall back into a poor and languid individual spirituality, which is not even this? We know in fact, just how complex and rich the individual spiritualities are: aside from the attention to the Word of God, they also include penances, long prayers, fasting, vigils, etc.

Maybe we are content with that little bit of spiritual coating, that meditation or remembering the Word can bring, and we believe that in this way we are okay?

This is why we felt the need to go back to those early times ...

They were times in which, one can object, that asied from the Word of life lived, other useful elements were no doubt added to make us form a community: the recipro-

cal and continuous communication of the experiences on the Word, which we must put into practice even today. There was the possibility of continually drawing from the light of the new charism, that illuminated not just the Word of God, but also made us foresee glimmers of our future, making us grasp, for example, with certainty, the goal for which we were born: l'«ut omnes unum sint», and suggesting to u the key to attain it: Jesus Forsaken. Then we also saw the calling of young women and men, by God, to consecrate themselves totally to Hlm, with the possibility for them to live together and to build thus the example of small communities wherein living the Word was everything; the surrounding environment itself underlined, in the midst of the terrors of war, the Ideal embraced; the extremely numerous needs (wounded, orphans, the sick, the hungry, the homeless and those without clothing) pushed us to live the Word, often those with regards to love.

All things nevertheless that also today are not lacking: rather! We have a marvelous Opera from where we can draw forth, starting from the jewel box of its archives, light and more light; we have marvelous statutes and regulations, approved by the Church, like an ever ready compass to show us how to live and for what purpose; we have, thanks to God, a continuous flow of totalitarian vocations in the Opera; we have the world wide open in front of our sight and even more in our heart (which has by now entered through the mass-media, into our homes), that cries out the sufferings of war, of natural catastrophes, of calamities of all kinds, to which we can dedicate ourselves with eagerness just as during the early times we loved those who were suffering the most... We have everything. Nothing is lacking. And it is with the Word lived and all these other gifts that we can, also to-

day, continually give life, everywhere in the world, to new communities for the good of the Church and of humanity, for the joy of Mary, for the glory of God, as a fruit of the Word lived.

God wants fruits, the effects: this is why the grain of wheat dies, so as to bear fruit. For this reason the Word must make us die toourselves, to our way of thinking, of loving, of wanting, so as to take on that of Christ, who knows how to create a community.

Naturally there are those in our Movement who live more internally, and so they have less contact with the outside world. For this reason, to create the community withthe Word means above all «ricreate» continuously that portion of the Movement wherein one lives, raising the temperature of charity, making sure that Jesus is always present everywhere, placing one's self beneath the others, at the service of others, to bring everyone up and more towards God.

But most are in contact with people of all kinds. For them, to create the community means to take advantage of every occasion (a telephone call, meetings, letters, concrete acts of love, conventions, etc.) to build relationships, forge friendships, cultivate hearts.

Only in this way we are ourselves, the Movement is what it must be. Only in this way our spirituality is the way the Spirit wants it to be: lived together, communtarian, collective. [...]

Chiara

From the Collegamento CH, Rocca di Papa, 27 december 1990, published in *Santi insieme (Saints together)*, Città Nuova, Rome, february 1995



Bear witness together

With the world in my arms

**At Castel Gandolfo the first meeting of the leaders
of the local communities with representatives from all over the world**

The impact is notable from the first moment one enters the hall: faces, dresses, colors, speak for themselves saying that here we find ourselves in front of a worldwide representation. We are at the Mariapolis Center of Castel Gandolfo, at the much awaited meeting of the leaders of the local communities, the first in the history of the Opera. Those present are a little more than 300 people from the most varied vocations, a small group if you will, because we wanted to give the convention the characteristic of a workshop. The presentations confirm the initial feeling. The names of the Countries present flow by, from Nepal to Malaysia, from Nigeria to Congo, from Syria to Egypt, from Cuba to the United States, from Albania to Germany and on to Italy. Nations about which we hear tragic news on television of conflicts, persecutions, civil wars, poverty, assume the faces of people committed to building a different world, who live so as to realize that imploration of Jesus to the Father «That all may be one». What comes immediately to mind is that which Chiara had defined at a certain point, as her «last wish», that the Work of Mary,

can repeat, making its own the words of the Belgian theologian Jacques Leclercq: «...on your day, my God, I will come to You... I will come to You, my God [...] with my craziest dream: to bring you the world in my arms». Yes, these are the people who bring in their arms their own little piece of the world, their local community, with their gaze aimed at «Ut omnes».

A demanding service, is what is asked of the leaders, in this present moment of the Opera that is in evolution, wherein the dimension of the community is taking on an always more specific physiognomy. On one hand, in fact, the Movement itself was born within a community, that of Trent and even before that it was also like this for the life of the Church in the early times. On the other hand, one cannot deny that in its seventy years of life the Opera had undertaken a journey in which the life of the community has gone through various stages. For this reason the program of the congress included on the first day a «return to the origins», with the focus on Trent, where it was natural to announce the discovery of the love of

God, to meet together to share the fruits of the life of the Gospel, to realize among all a true communion of goods, to nourish the spirit of family that takes in persons of all ages and social status.

During the four days of the meeting many experiences were shared. The variety is obvious to everyone: there are newly started communities, with their «contagious» enthusiasm, others more historical in their search for new dynamics; some have a lot of vitality while others find it difficult to start again. Everything is a precious capital that belongs to the worldwide community of an Opera that has no boundaries, where each one brings their own contribution with both successes and difficulties, the surges forward, the slowing down, the pauses.

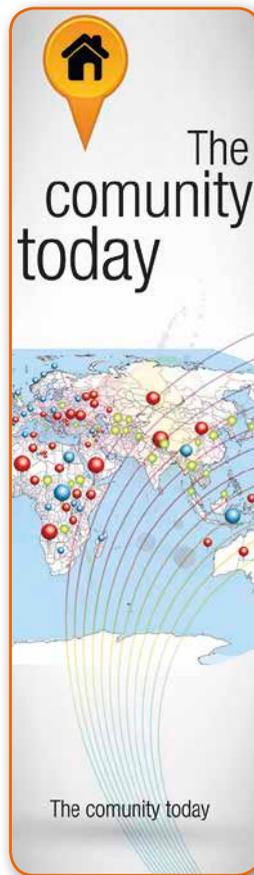
We spoke of the characteristic of the convention as being that of a workshop. In fact we worked quite a lot. We were divided into 25 groups, each one with a moderator and a secretary, and we reflected on the dynamics of the local community and on the role of the leaders of such communities. The moments of working together with the characteristic of communion, were undertaken so as to strive – without silencing the challenges, the difficulties, the points to improve – to answer to the design of God on the Opera today. It is impossible to summarize in just a few words the result of this communion. What comes to light is how much the daily relationships, the collaboration with other Movements and Associations, beings antennas that grasp the needs of the territory, the opening up to new things, is the DNA of the community. Certainly, we

are on the way, but Emmaus and Giancarlo, on the last day of the Congress, invited the whole Opera to take the necessary steps to realize a design that is manifesting itself in all its beauty and power.

Questions were not lacking. Costanza Tan and Jorge Lionello Esteban received pages and pages of them and in three planned sessions during the program, they offered answers full of wisdom, that shed light also there where the shadows seem to be the darkest. For example, it was asked how to find space for the life of the community when the calendar of the Movement in a specific territory is already full of appointments of the various branches of the Opera. In this case, it was suggested, that a new mentality must be acquired that already takes into consideration this aspect even during the programming stage and to involve the leaders of the local communities, together with the Zone and Zonetta Councils.

Another point that is very much linked to what has been said above. In the Zones that have been existing for a long time the life of the branches is very much developed and consolidated, assuming a very clear-cut physiognomy. What can be done so that this becomes an asset and not an obstacle to the life of the community? «Every branch is an instrument for “Ut omnes”; but the life of the Opera, is not visible in a nucleo, a focolare, a gen unit meeting, but in a community», Costanza and Lionello reaffirm.

How can we involve the youth in the local communities? «Don't leave them alone, trust them, take risks with them, do things together, treat them as



A family that shows what unity is



Congo

It is the last day of the Congress. Together with the joy for the results of the preceding days, the fateful question was floating in the air among those present: «And now? What will happen once we go back to our Zones?». Emmaus and Giancarlo, who during the days of the congress were following the work being done closely, knew quite well that this question existed. Everyone is confident that during the direct streaming, their intervention will contribute to bringing about a new awareness in the whole Opera. Giancarlo begins by expressing a wish: «We think that now many of

equals, do an activity that they can relate to, give them the possibility of sharing the life».

And still other suggestions: work as a team, alternate roles, value everyone, take care of relationships, make use of the intelligence of love because there is no valid recipe for all the communities. Much appreciated was the idea, addressed in particular to the leaders, but not exclusively, to be bridges: between the people of the community, among them and the focolare, with those who are not yet members

The intervention of Emmaus and Giancarlo during the direct streaming concluded the meeting. Here are some excerpts

the persons responsible for the Movement in the world are listening, and also many members of the zone councils. It is to them that we would like to handover together this experience, knowing that it was the experience of all the vocations of the Opera».

Emmaus reflected on the importance of the leader, as a necessary service to the life of the community and added underlining: «I prefer to use the expression “leader of the local communities” and not local leader, because you are not leaders of a place, you are leaders of a group that is a community». She then recalled how the local community came into particular light around the year 2000, when Chiara, reviewing the Statutes, introduced the important novelty regarding the article that spoke of this, an article that was inserted not in the part of the structures of the Opera but in the part of the aspects. There the local community is defined as that grouping of «persons of the Movement who live in a specific territory» and whose principal characteristic is that of being a family that bears witness to unity.

After all it is also the «testament» of Chiara, who before she died entrusted to the whole Opera to «always be a family». This is a concept that Emmaus took up again in one of the first letters she wrote as president which she addressed precisely to the local communities where, in reference to City-fest, she had underlined how it is precisely this that would have made visible the fruits of the Ideal lived in a city. And how

within each community there is the possibility for each one to be «a precious gift». «The teens and the youth – she noted – have already started with courage to color the city and direct it towards a united world. The children, joyful and spontaneous, are ready to weave relationships of Jesus to Jesus. The parishes: communities already in action rooted in the territory. The religious men and women with their rich charisms, masters in loving the face of Jesus in the least. The volunteers, who through New Humanity and the Inundations support us with their expertise and professionalism. In this family the focolares will be the guardians of the flame».

Emmaus noted how that description made in the letter has throughout the years acquired consistency and the local communities present at Castel Gandolfo through their leaders are «the gift that Jesus gives me and therefore also to Giancarlo and to the Opera at the conclusion of these six years».

With the gaze on the «precious gift» it will be easier to grasp the riches that each member brings to the community, «to praise one another's beauty»: vocations that live in the dimension of reciprocity and which don't look at themselves, but together they look to «Ut omnes».

An important clarification regarding the relationship of the community with the focolare arrived in a letter of a focolarino from Europe that Emmaus cites: «It came to my mind – this focolarino wrote – a passage of Dante in the Divine Comedy when, speaking of Mary, Dante calls her the “Virgin daughter of your son”. I feel that it is really like this: we are Mary who generates, but then we become children of our child – our child who is the community – because of the contribution of love that we reciprocally give to one another. To focus on the local community therefore is not simply a strategic choice or an act of democratization of the Opera, but the most profound essence, I think, of our vocation as focolarinos and focolarinas: that of being mothers and fathers and then sons and daughters as it is in the Trinity».

And then after some personal observations the focolarino concluded: «It seems to me that the local communities are the place where vocations are formed and are saved, just as Jesus is formed in the womb of Mary».

During those days in Castel Gandolfo they had experienced this, and one cannot depart except «with the desire – as Giancarlo affirmed – that this experience be repeated in the Zone so as to relive this very same grace»

prepared by Aurora Nicosia



Romania



Filippine

Towards the Assembly

The Opera belongs to everyone

A participatory journey with «the method of Jesus in the midst».

The balance sheet of the preparatory Commission

«Your work has this aim: to show the Opera that we are going ahead together, that everyone is involved, that each one can say what he or she thinks, that one can freely express his thoughts, without worrying. Naturally this is done in an atmosphere of reciprocal trust that must be our characteristic, otherwise ...».

These words, that all of us could feel were directed to each one of us, were said by Emmaus on October 15 last year, during the first meeting with the preparatory Commission for the Assembly (PCA) made up of five men and five women representing all the five continents and by other eight people representing the Center of the Opera aside from the two secretaries. On that occasion the President underlined: «You are the witness to the Opera that the Opera has no secrets, that the Opera belongs to

everyone, that the Opera is available to everyone who wants to know it profoundly the way it is, because we are placing it in his hands».

During the meeting they focused on various aspects of the journey that would lead to the appointment of next September. At a certain point Patience, a volunteer of Cameroon, asked Emmaus why the preparatory Commission was formed.

«We gathered the suggestions of many who after the previous Assembly said: "It would be useful to do this, it would be useful to do that" – this is the answer. I am not able to tell you who it was who suggested the preparatory Commission, maybe more than one person", then she talked about this as an expression of the journey of communion of the Opera. At the Assembly, she said, «we must be there with a greater awareness, with a more widespread in-



volvement. And this should be so also with the entire Opera and not just with the focolarinos and focolarinas, because the Opera has matured».

We followed the work of the PCA during these months also through the pages of our Newsletter and the website. Now the work has reached its conclusion and, just as it is written in the Regulations, it will henceforth be a group of persons belonging to the Center of the Opera who will bring the results to the Assembly. Together with the work done, the members of the PCA will also handover to the Opera an experience that is very important, fruit of that initial «mandate» of Emmaus.

Some strong points of the experience made are highlighted:

the joy of feeling oneself consulted and involved without distinction of age, of vocation, of ecclesial belonging, of religious belief;

of having made the experience of a profound listening, together with the capability of looking at even the most painful aspects together;

the capability of experiencing new methods of participation.

This is what some of the members of the PCA shared regarding the experience they made. Johannes, focolarino from Austria, commented: «This widespread capillary participation, in the preparation of the Assembly seems to me to be something historical. Members of other Churches or persons without faith who participated in this process felt that they were considered, taken seriously. I must explain that it is not an action of democratization of the Focolare Movement, but the implementation of that which is the most profound spirit of this Movement, that "on earth as it is in Heaven". It is from here that the great expectation arose, the surprise, the joy to the point of being moved to tears, for example in the German speaking Countries, wherein they saw how we tried to understand together, in the light of the Holy Spirit, starting from the needs, what the specific contribution of the Focolare Movement

could be in the Church and in society. Like a highly diversified choir, from all over the world trends emerged, like various rivers, flowing in the same direction. For example, the fact that we cannot be ourselves «if we don't go out». An aspect which touched me a lot was the desire, expressed by many all over the world, that the initiatives of the Movement be organized as something that is done all together, teens, youth and adults».

For Fr. Egidio, Franciscan conventual of Italy, «the "method" of Jesus in the midst in this commission constitutes a small model of what the Assembly will be. Having experienced other chapters, assemblies, ecclesial and religious synods, I can say that the "method of Jesus in the midst" is an original and very new method in the Church and in society».

A strong invitation to all the participants of the Assembly comes from Pablo, volunteer of Argentina: «Coming from faraway, in the beginning I was not completely sure that there would be a total welcome of the different sensitivities. Instead I can say that this was fully present. Maybe, now that we have finished the phase of gathering and putting in order the proposals, the challenge now is this: that this work of involvement continues up to the Assembly.

In these two months, with three more months to go, the participants to the Assembly can have the time to work before coming, so as not to arrive as if it were a meeting where you just come to listen. Otherwise the work that has been done up to now will be ruined; not so much our work, but the work of everyone in the world. For example, from the 3050 proposals that arrived, we were able to summarize them into 12 pages, but to understand these 12 pages with one's soul the Holy Spirit must be present. And for the actions of the Holy Spirit to be present one needs to "work"».

prepared by Aurora Nicosia

More in depth material can be found at
www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli

Anniversary To Eletto the gratitude of the youth

On June 21 in Loppiano the death of Eletto (Vincenzo Folonari) which happened in 1964, will be remembered. An important person for the gen Movement, which he started

At Loppiano, on June 21, we celebrated the life of Eletto (Vincenzo Folonari). We did so through dances, songs, experiences, together with the youth of that time and of today, his relatives and many who were touched by his life.

We wanted to thank him to whom we owe much, just as Chiara had said many times. It is to him, in fact, that we owe a part of the birth of the Little Cities: Eletto inherited the land of Loppiano together with his sisters and he gave it to the community, pushed by the evangelical desire to put his things in common. But above all we owe him the birth of the youth Movement. Among the many talents



that Eletto had one was truly particular: he had a special relationship with the teens.

«But can you imagine if this ideal of unity – he often repeated – would seize all the teens, the youth... what will come about?». The

facts proved him right. Upon the news of his death, which happened tragically in the lake of Bracciano, Chiara said: «We hope that from this suffering something will be born for them». And it did happen.

The words of Carla Sitzia, an 18 year-old gen, expressed very well that which everyone had in their heart: «Thank you Eletto for your generosity, without which maybe we will not be here in Loppiano today; thank you for having dedicated your time to the children and the teens: most probably I would not be a gen now if not for this.

Eletto, we don't feel that you are farway inspite of the fact that you left for heaven fifty years ago. [...] Thank you my brother, Thank you our brother».

Emmaus sent a message in which she said among other things: «How much fruits he has brought! How many have known and have grasped how limpid his soul was, that transmitted the Ideal that had fascinated him in a genuine way: the charism of unity. And just as it happens for the saints, precisely upon his departure



for Heaven the authenticity of his life came especially to light, which ended with an act of heroic love. Let us entrust to him our Little City and especially all our young people spread all over the world».

the gen2 centers

A school of life

The gen2 school in Loppiano celebrates its 30th year. From the initial go signal of Chiara, with the invitation to have «only one Teacher», to today, it has seen the passage of around 1330 youth from all over the world

Last May 31 the gen school of Loppiano «St. John the Baptist the protester» celebrated its 30th year. Founded in 1984 by Chiara, who invited the gen to have only one Teacher, «Jesus», it became a venue of intense communitarian life. Around 1330 youth passed through this school from all the continents,



belonging to different Churches and also of other Religions. «An experience of going in depth with myself, in my relationship with the other, with God»; «it has helped me to understand the Will of God, my vocation»; «there I learned how to love, to be generators of unity»; «a place where I was able to build true relationships»; «it helped me to understand that

to find God means to build a united world, to go beyond the barriers, beyond myself»; «I discovered God in my daily life and I understood that it is with reciprocal love that we go ahead»; «a rebirth of life». These are just some of the many messages received during the commemoration of the anniversary, which was celebrated in various moments in the Little City (from the recitation of the Rosary, to the Mass of the 30° to the feast): a great thanksgiving to God, who had inspired



Chiara to launch this experience, to all the focolarinos and focolarinas who had given their contribution and to all the gen who had made this experience.

A beautiful fruit of the work done by the gen present in the school in this moment was the exhibit «Gen School: a journey in time», wherein through photos, videos, statistics, they went through the history of the school in these 30 years. A beautiful moment for the gen of the school, of experiencing a personal relationship, was the skype with Emmaus, during which she underlined the meaning of being «protesters today», of living the word of life given by Chiara to the school: «Whoever is not with me is against me».

Our wish is that the gen school can be always more at the service of the Opera all over the world, by contributing to the formation of the youth who want to live for «Ut omnes».

Junior Mendonca

Young Religious Passion in the present, hope for the future

A year rich in initiatives in various nation that have involved the Opera in that place.
Many expected developments



The years of the '70s and the '80s saw the flourishing of the GenRe. In some historical meetings with Chiara she defined its physiognomy and gave them a push. Then a period of stasis: the numbers were drastically reduced, leaving the impression of an uncertain future for the branch of the religious in general.

In the last fifteen years we reflected together to search for new ways to solve the problem, involving all the religious responsible for the branch at the Center and in the Zones all over the world. We reached the conclusion to dedicate 2014 to the young religious with meetings in the Zones (or groups of Zones) in the continents, not just having one meeting, but various moments to organize freely and adapted to the different geographical, cultural situations and on the local presence of the young religious men. In these activities the young women religious were also involved in time.

It is important to underline some common fundamental points. In the first place, the commitment of the whole Opera of the various Zones, who really took as their own these moments both on the level of unity, as well as

in the concrete organization of the initiative. In the second place, the involvement of the young religious themselves, which showed a great maturity and responsibility in the preparation and management of the meetings. In the third place, the unity between the first and the second generation of religious, with the encounter of the experience of the first generation with the enthusiasm and creativity of the second generation. Finally, as already mentioned, the collaboration of the religious men and the religious women, which has marked

Here are some of the various meetings that have been held so far.

For **Italy**, from April 23 to 26 more than 100 young consecrated men and women came to **Loppiano** coming from 36 nations and belonging to 56 religious families. The title of the convention was meaningful: «Yes! We choose the Gospel!». In fact, it was not a meeting to study, but to live together, wherein the prior-





ity was given to living, to the concrete experiences on the Gospel, to sharing. In this context a very special effect was experienced due to the location of the convention in the Little City with the possibility of meeting with its inhabitants, with the Sophia University Institute including its new methodology of studying based on unity. The highest point of the meeting was during the final morning with Card. João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life. There was more than two hours of reflection and spontaneous dialogue with all those present. Here are some of his thoughts: «It is no longer enough to follow Jesus alone: we must follow Jesus together. [...] Whoever does not live a communitarian life does not follow Jesus, he follows himself». And going more in depth, he affirmed: «We must not be frightened in front of difficulties, but we must learn from Jesus crucified. If we don't understand his cry of abandonment, we will never be able to love each other truly ».

Fr. Piero Trabucco, missionary of the Consolata, religious of Rome, concluded a trip to **Asia**, reaching some Countries, among which was **Taiwan**. Here last April 27, in the Curia of Taipei and on April 30 at the Faculty of San Roberto Bellarmino he held two meetings with the participation of more than a hundred among men and women religious, a good percentage of which were youth.

On May 3 it was the turn of **Indonesia**: in **Yogyakarta** 80 religious men and women gathered together belonging to 18 congregations to listen to the theme on reciprocal love in the context of consecrated life, that was giv-

en by Fr. Trabucco. The next day a numerous group continued this experience in the men and women focolare centers.

A young postulant shared: «I hope that this meeting can continue to give its contribution so that among the various congregations of consecrated life a bond of fraternity can start that will attract others and help us to mature ».

On May 20 in **Manila**, in the **Philippines**, 20 young religious men coming from four communities met together and they decided to meet every month and to invite other young religious.

Finally, on May 22 at the Pontifical University John Paul II of **Krakow**, in **Poland**, a Symposium was held: «The youth choose the Gospel as their rule of life. Consecrated life after the Second Vatican Council». There were 150 consecrated persons present and many expressed the desire to remain in contact with our religious. they said that they have never experienced such an interesting Symposium, that was not theoretical, but which touched their hearts and minds.

In **Africa** they are preparing a meeting to be held at the Mariapolis Piero in Nairobi, **Kenya** and in Kinshasa in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**. In the beginning of September it will be **Brazil's** turn with a meeting at the Mariapolis Ginetta in San Paolo. **Spain** concludes in November this chain of meetings of the new generations of consecrated life that are contributing to realize the wish of Card. de Aviz: «To live the past with gratitude, the future with hope, the present with passion».

The Center of the religious men

Focolarinos and focolarinas of various Churches at the Center A new sowing

**A workshop to check on the growth in unity,
a treasure for the whole Opera**



Walking through the corridors of the Center of the Opera in Rocca di Papa in mid-June one had the pleasant surprise of meeting focolarinos and focolarinas of various Churches who are meeting already for the fourth consecutive year in the «house of Chiara» for a moment of communion and of verification, with Emmaus and Giancarlo, Serenella Silvi, Hans Jurt and other members of the General Council.

They were 44 - from the Anglican Church of England, the Coptic-Orthodox Church and Siro-Orthodox Church, Evangelicals from Germany, Lutherans from Sweden, Denmark and Germany, Reformed Dutch and Swiss, Orthodox from the Patriarchate of Antioch, from Russia and Romania, and Catholics.

«It is already a treasure just to meet with one another - Johan a Dutch Reformed said - we are in 80 spread all over the world. We have worked three times on the Regulations of the focolarinos and focolarinas so as to propose

some changes and clarifications with respect to our life in the Opera. It is interesting to see that even among us we have very different ways of seeing things».

There are some delicate topics, such as the request for the opening of the process of beatification for Chiara, which for some can appear as an expression of a religious tradition that hardly emphasizes that «becoming saints together» that Chiara wished to live with everyone in the Charism. «But we are walking with Jesus in the midst, who will give us His light also for this».

«There is the fact that we already have this strong bond among us, as brothers and sisters, and here we can tell each other everything» - affirms Anke of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. «In these years Jesus has led us on a long stretch of the road - continued Vroni (Janua), reformed Swiss - by getting to know each other a bit more in our cultures, and



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being able to share also the difficulties due to our situation in a Catholic Opera, where many are not yet aware or prepared for a "trinitarian" dialogue among us, also with the members of other Churches».

The Churches have traditions, theology, different visions in the fields regarding ethics. The updating made by five members of the mixed commission who have been working for more than two years regarding the ethical ques-

obstacle to the fullness of the presence of Jesus on our midst. This is the greatest challenge, but if we are able to do it among ourselves, we believe that it is possible to reach a unity that is not uniformity. I always felt the preference of Chiara for the focolarinos and focolarinas of the different Churches, because she saw them as the frontliners to reach unity. We know the Way: Jesus Forsaken. This is our challenge. I feel that the Holy Spirit is very much in a hurry. It is up to us to love one another, up to the point of giving our life!».

There is a session on «the new sowing» in the program that highlights the wealth that is found in the contribution of the focolarinos and focolarinas to the life of the Opera for «Ut Omnes». From the Mariapolis of the Orthodox community of St. Petersburg, to the witness of the Anglican Abbey of St. Albans within Welwyn Garden City in England, to the experience at Sohag in Egypt with the persons responsible of the different Churches within the territory...

«We wish that the volunteers, priests, gen of different Churches can get to know our experience – Nina, Russian-orthodox in focolare in Belgrade said. We are more credible in our Churches, only if, in going towards humanity we do so with the whole Opera. We are all children of Chiara and our testimony is credible together. In these days, opening ourselves up to one another, we lose all our securities but we learn to suffer with the other, we have open ended questions, but in this dynamics of life we find the answers».

prepared by Gianna Sibelli



tions – first in two distinct subcommissions: one with members of different Churches and one with Catholic members – gave much hope. During the last working seminar in Ottmaring, where they met together for the first time, a pilot experience was foreseen in the work among Christians in the Opera.

Sarah, Anglican: «When we heard the report of the ethics commission we saw that there are different opinions, but this is not an

A very special Slava celebration

**Nina Vyazovetskaya,
a Russian-Orthodox focolarina
and a doctor has been in the focolare
of Belgrade for more than four years**

Serbia is a country with a majority who are Orthodox and a Catholic minority. The Focolare Movement, for reasons linked to history, spread mainly among the Catholics, and so the presence of an Orthodox was a novelty. Even if

Orthodox friends gravitated around the focolare, all things considered, everyone believed that the Movement was only for Catholics.

With the presence of Nina a new experience started. Some «preconceived ideas» such as that of language fell away. In Serbia, whoever is Catholic only spoke the Croatian language, whoever was Orthodox spoke Serbian. Now we



some labourers. The principal moment (the bread, the wheat, the prayers) was prepared and carried out by Nada, an Orthodox adherent. The prayer and the blessing of the bread was done by our friend Fr. Giorgio Popovich together with the deacon Rakich and the choir of Orthodox friends. A quiet prayer and then, with emotion, holding each others hands we prayed around the bread according to the rite of Slava. Fr. Giorgio expressed his joy that the focolare now has the holy women-mironosice as models and protectors of the focolare.

try our best to speak more in Serbian, to translate the books of Chiara in this language and now the focolare.org website is also translated in Serbian.

Usually in our meetings there was the Catholic Mass at noon. Now we have the Mass at the beginning of the day, while Nina and the other Orthodox participate in the Divine Liturgy. Then we all come together. This has given the possibility also to many Catholics to invite their Orthodox friends to our meetings.

In Serbia the Orthodox Church has this tradition: the people don't celebrate one's personal name day, but they have a saint protector of the family. It is the feast of «Slava» celebrated by the faithful and non-believers. Not only families but also cultural associations, religious institutions, entire cities have their own patron saints.

As a focolare, we have been feeling for some time now, that we could make ourselves one in this custom. In order to choose a saint in the ecumenical spirit of the focolare we were helped by our friend who is a monk, who proposed to us to celebrate the holy "mironosice" women (the women who went to the sepulchre with fragrant oils... Κυριακή των Μυροφόρων), to whom the Orthodox Church dedicates an entire week, the second one after Easter. Many of our Orthodox friends were enthusiastic about our decision and they helped us in the preparations. On May 4, the Sunday of the holy mironosice women, we were around 50 in the focolare, from different Churches, among whom were our neighbours, the lady doctor at the clinic, our office colleagues,

Speaking of the role of the women who followed Jesus, he compared them to us focolarinas who «just as it was then, are the salt that transforms society, and thus all of us». In the text that was read together, we found ourselves to be all followers of Jesus who announce the Resurrection, following the example of Mary!

During lunch there was a lot of celebration and exchanges. Many thanked us. An Orthodox lady saw in this «an inculturation that appreciates the other and makes his culture, authentic Christianity». Nada said that the success of the Slava was characterized by the profundity and the supernatural atmosphere.

We felt that this occasion was like a new sowing, a way of living with the other people, of building relationships, of coming closer to one another.

*Julijana (Hungarian), Martina (Slovenian), Janua (Croatian) from the Catholic Church and Nina (Russian) from the Orthodox Church
– focolare of Belgrade.*

For the Serbian people, the **Slava** is as old as Christianity itself. No other Christian nation has this type of celebration, which comes immediately after Easter and the Nativity. Since the Serbs find themselves in a geographical region that acts as a zipper between East and West, in the midst of a culture that is alien to them (Islam and Roman Catholicism) and for centuries they had to submit to slavery, the Slava became a spiritual celebration that is identified with the name of the people and the essence of their existence.

In the heart of the Opera

In the presence of Mary

In June five Catholic focolarinos were ordained priests

We are really so different: in age (from 35 to 69 years old), nationality (Italian, Dutch, German), origin (Brussels, Istanbul, Loppiano, Ottmaring, Rocca di Papa), professions (administrator, journalist, engineer, professor, ...). What we have in common is first of all being focolarinos and then the fact that between May 31 and June 14 we were ordained as priests.

After the General Assembly of 2008 Emmaus and Giancarlo made it clear that they did not want to admit other focolarinos for priestly ordination before understanding a bit more the priesthood of the focolarino. Commissions (mixed) were set-up at the Center of the Opera to attempt to study how Chiara envisioned this dimension that is present in our section.

A commission started to highlight that which Chiara loved to call the «priesthood of Mary». In February 2013 the Center of the focolarinos

presented to the Center of the Opera the focolarinos who have finished the necessary theological studies, and in whom they had seen the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood and who, according to the opinion of the Center of the focolarinos, also had the trust of the entire Opera. At the Center of the Opera there were five in the list who were chosen. It was only after this decision that the Opera – through Giancarlo Faletti – asked us if we were willing to be ordained.

Our journey towards the ordination was – in a certain sense – new. We are the first who were not chosen by Chiara, but through a process at the Center of the Opera, carried out after her departure. And in a certain sense we are also the first to go through the preparatory journey together, under the guidance of the Co-presidente.

Twice – first before the ordination as deacons and before the ordination as pres-



Da sinistra Carmine Donnici, Stefano Fontolan, Ton Jongstra, Giancarlo Faletti, Michele Lauriola, Joachim Schwind, nella cappella della casa di Chiara

byters – Giancarlo called us to have a retreat together at the Center of the Opera. This invitation gave us two strong and clear indications: our priesthood is an emanation and is placed within the Opera, and our formator is Jesus in the midst.

The last retreat was a «living» in the heart of the Opera: the meditations and two meetings with Emmaus in the sitting room beside the hall of the General Council; the Mass held at the tomb of Chiara and of Foco; the whole day spent in the house and the garden of Chiara; the visit to Fr. Foresi who welcomed us with great joy; the dinner in the focolare of Giancarlo; the lunch at the Center of the focolarinos. These were – as Giancarlo had programmed – the places that gave us our most profound experience, up to the point of experiencing a very intense moment in the chapel of Chiara in front of the tabernacle, an hour in which it seemed as if the limits of time and space dissolved and a time of profound unity with Chara and the whole Opera.

A very important moment was the last brief meeting that we had with the General Council, the place where the invitation to carry out this priestly service for the Opera and where this service is anchored came from. We presented ourselves, in a moment of communion that was simple and profound, to our «authority» who is none other than the presence of Mary, who welcomed us, embraced us and enwrapped us and who will lend us a hand in the future so that we can understand always better how to exercise this service.

As the special intention Emmaus told us: «That there may be the fullness of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly». Giancarlo too told us a wish/intention: «That the Opera may be rich in God, open to evangelizing and able to give the Ideal to the realities of today».

Even if the ordination took place in different venues, they were all characterized by an authentic simplicity and by the great and joyous participation of the Opera, just as Emmaus assured us in a letter addressed to each one of us. Her wish will remain as the programme of our priesthood «the priesthood of Mary»: «To always have God in the first place, to let ourselves be forged by Jesus Forsaken and by Mary Desolate and to be at the service of unity».

*Carmine Donnici, Stefano Fontolan,
Ton Jongstra, Michele Lauriola, Joachim
Schwind*

The new focolarino priests

Carmine Donnici (57 years old), Italian, in focolare since 1979, presently in Istanbul. Administrator, ordained on June 14 by Bishop Giovanni Dettori in Pompei.

Stefano Fontolan (56 years old), Italiano, in focolare since 1988, presently in Loppiano. Electronic Engineer, ordained on May 31 by Bishop Breandan Leahy at Prosperous, Co. Kildare, Ireland.

Ton Jongstra, (56 years old), Dutch, in focolare since 1984, presently in Brussels. Professor of religion, ordained on June 9 by Bishop Jan van Burgsteden in s-Hertogenbosch, Holland.

Michele Lauriola (69 69 years old), Italiano, in focolare since 1971, presently at the Center of the Focolarinos, he has a diploma in Physics, ordained by Bishop Giovanni Dettori on June 14, 2014 in Pompei.

Joachim Schwind (53 years old), German, in focolare since 1985, presently in Ottmaring, journalist, ordained by Bishop Giovanni Dettori in Pompei.



Families

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«the great mystery of married love»

A school in the spirit of the coming Synod

In front of the challenges and the growing fragility, the family can find new strength through the light of the Gospel lived. The families must be accompanied in such a way that they don't feel the alone in facing difficulties and can rediscover their role in the Church and in society. It was with this spirit, with which Pope Bergoglio dedicated the coming biannual Synod on family pastoral work, that the International School of the New Families was lived, where around several hundred young families coming from different parts of the world were able to deepen the choice of their

«yes» forever. To some of them who were present at the general Audience of June 4, Pope Francis turned to them with a special greeting, encouraging the newly married couples to often invoke the Holy Spirit: He is in fact, the indispensable light in the choices to make and a support during the difficulties that are met daily in the family life.

The School, entitled «the great mystery of married love» (Castel Gandolfo 5-8 June, 2014), was opened by Giancarlo Faletti, co-president of the Focolare Movement, and was animated by an atmosphere of reciprocal welcome with a strong participation of families coming from Countries outside Europe, in particular from Asia and Africa, but also from South America and from Eastern Europe.

The experiences of different geographical areas and of different cultures, revealed common problems. The commitment of the married couple was also deepened through experiences and reports made by experts on various themes regarding the family (the diversity of man/woman, the unity of the couple, fertility,

The family talks to the media

In Rome, two informal meetings were held in June, with the representatives of New Families, of which one of them is a person who is separated but has remained faithful and another is a divorced woman in a new relationship, and 11 journalists of the major Italian newspapers. A comment: «Here we experience answers which the Synod is searching for»..

sexuality, education, suffering, openness to society). In the numerous moments of dialogue between the spouses and during the plenary



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sessions, they were able to share questions, experiences, initiatives.

The families were also involved in a big game held out in the open prepared by the gen4 Center and during an evening session the musical «the world of Lucy» was presented, which tells the true story of a very special little girl.

The renewal of the marriage vows was an important moment for the families, who left with the commitment to increase their love as a couple and as a family and to bring this love to all those peripheries that are waiting for the joy of love lived.

Giovanna Pieroni

With the professors of the University of Cluj

The «thought» of Chiara spreads

Interesting exchange with the Abba School and the Sophia University Istitute

On June 11 three Romanian Orthodox priests – professors of the faculty of Theology of the «Babes-Bolyai» University in Cluj, Romania – celebrated a prayer for the dead (parastas) in the chapel of the Center of the Opera in Rocca di Papa. Entirely sung in three voices, with this prayer they wanted to express their gratitude for the gift of the charism of unity. «Chiara is happy to see us united here around her tomb, she is here with us!», exclaimed Fr. Vasile Stanciu at the end of the ceremony.

The three professors, Rev. Ioan Chirila, Rev. Vasile Stanciu, and Rev. Cristian Sonea, are in contact with the Focolare centers in Romania. They have already organized four symposiums at their faculty to introduce the thoughts of Chiara. They spent two days in Loppiano where they signed an agreement for an exchange



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of students and professors with the Sophia University Institute. When they visited the house of Chiara and the Chiara Lubich Center, Fr. Stanciu, speaking with Eli, expressed his profound gratitude to Chiara, whom he had met personally. With some members of the Abba School in the Klaus Hemmerle Hall the professors were able to get to know more profoundly «the root» of the luminous pages of '49 and the working method that highlights the doctrine that is emerging from it.

The next day, after greeting Emmaus and Giancarlo, they met ten members of the group of involved in ecumenical dialogue and the external members of the Abba School.

The next appointment is fixed for November 2015 at Cluj for a Symposium on «The Holy Spirit».

Maria Wienken

With the Community «Verbe de Vie»

The charism of unity, a light in order to live better the contemplative and missionary vocation of a community born in France

Last year, through various circumstance that seemed to me providential, I was invited to hold the annual retreat for the «Verbe de Vie» Community, a new ecclesial community born in France 28 years ago within the ambit of the Charismatic Movement (<http://www.leverbedevie.net/fr>).

Sr. Claire Baude, the present general moderator, asked me to propose some «key points» in order to live well the motto of their foundation: «The Word of life, that which has existed from the very beginning, we have heard it and we have seen it with our own eyes; yes we have seen it and our hands have touched it. [...] we announce this also to you, so that you are in communion with us» (1 Jn.1,1-3).

I mapped out a path made up of eleven steps in the way of unity and of the «trinitarian life» drawing abundantly from the Scriptures, from the writings of Chiara Lubich and from the magisterium of the Church of the Vatican Council. Last August then, we met together – around sixty people among whom were laity, priests and religious



– for four days in their mother house at Notre-Dame de Fichermont, in Brussels (Belgium). It was a profound experience of that «communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ» that must distinguish Christians. This found its culmination in an «alliance of reciprocal love» whose formulation was the object of a profound and frank discussion before being submitted for the approval of everyone. At the conclusion of the retreat, it was sealed by the members of the Community in the marian shrine of Banneux.

The Community had found in the charism of Chiara a light in order to live better its contemplative and missionary vocation. We experienced the presence of the Risen One who healed wounds, gave back hope, opened new horizons.

After this first retreat another three followed – always with the collaboration of the focolarinos – for their adherents: in France with Gianluca Falconi, in Switzerland with Jean-Louis Hôte and in Belgium with Eric and Lut Mattern. In each of these meetings the discovery, demanding and moving, of the importance of mutual love as the basis of Christian life.

Michel Vandeleene





loppianolab

a road map for Italy

From October 3 to 5 LoppianoLab returns, the national laboratory of economy, culture, communication, formation promoted by the Lionello Bonfanti Industrial Park, Città Nuova Publishing House, the Sophia University Institute and the Little City of Loppiano.

An initiative that maps out the goal of the fifth edition with a format that by now has been happily consolidated: through debates, workshops and roundtable discussions, the event would like to be, and is, a venue of encounter and exchange for those – men and women, citizens, entrepreneurs, workers, youth and adults, teachers, representatives of Institutions, men of culture – who work daily within the territory in the search for a participatory way out of a crisis that is not only economic, but also cultural and social.

The title of the next edition is: «A road map for Italy. Between relationships, work, culture», that promises to be full of novelties. The first is regarding the «house» that will welcome the event.

This year Loppiano will have a special place in the programme: in fact, it will celebrate its fif-

tieth anniversary (1964-2014). The appointment will start with a calendar of events which in the succeeding twelve months will commemorate, in various ways, the most important stages of its history highlighting the specific vocation it has for the life of the Opera in Italy and in the world.

Two appointments will serve as the trailblazers: from September 27 to 30 there will be the event «Governing the charisms today»: a moment of formation directed at the men and women superiors, General and Provincial Councils, men and women economists of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life who are responsible for administering works born from charisms; from October 1 to 3 Workshop School EoC for the youth: «Realize yourself at work», a stimulating occasion for a discussion with professionals and entrepreneurs so as to make use of one's formation and one's own talents.

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, LoppianoLab will officially begin with the «Italian



Convention of the Economy of Communion» and with the Expo 2014 which has a new format. In the Hall of the Industrial Park, in a designated area, company videos will be projected prepared with the help of teens aged 13 to 17 that were made during workshops handled by expert video-makers; matching areas will be set-up between the companies to allow for meetings among the entrepreneurs. Thanks also to the use of a webTV channel, social networking and visual stations, the company videos will be replayed throughout the entire year within the Industrial Park.

There will also be events of a cultural nature, being fully aware that by investing in culture, an authentic renewal – both human and social – is possible for our Country.

On Friday, October 3 the Auditorium will host an evening prepared by the students of the Sophia University entitled: «Augustine of Hippo: a legacy, a resource». The thought of this great Father of the Church – always considered as the milestone of Italian and European culture – is it still valid today? What does it have to say to our times that is in search of a new road map of values? The dialogue between Piero Coda and the philosopher Umberto Galimberti will center on these questions.

On the morning of Saturday, October 4, the Publishing House will present authors and collaborators – of its magazines and publishing house. In dialogue with the participants they will animate a series of workshops on some themes of compelling topicality: gender, le-



gality and the relationship between the governing and the governed, in synergy with all the realities that Project Italy is bringing ahead (mpfu, New Humanity, New Families, Teens for Unity, New Youth).

The heart of the event will be the big convention of Saturday afternoon prepared by the four organizers, on the key-themes of the 2014 edition.

The following conveyed their attendance, among others, Card. Gualtiero Bassetti, vice president of the CEI, the director Pupi Avati, the entrepreneurs Matteo and Marco Cabassi and Vincenzo Linarello.

A particular attention will be reserved for the new generations. The editorial board of Teens, a magazine of the Città Nuova Publishing House made by teens for teens, proposed a workshop on journalism open to adolescents from ages 12 to 17. Experts in the field of communication, photography, video, social media will interact with the teens helping them to experience first-hand the different information techniques.

Saturday morning the children up to eight years old can participate in the workshops with the editorial board of the new magazine Big, Bambini in gamba (Clever children), that will include many games, drawing and activities with personalities of the Big Band and of the A-mici family.

To register just fill up the participation form, published on the websites of the four promoters: • www.cittanuova.it • www.loppiano.it • www.pololionellobonfanti.it • www.iu-sophia.org e sul blog: • <http://www.loppianolab.blogspot.it>

You can avail of package deals for accommodations especially made for the youth, families and groups. For more information please call the telephone no.: 055.9051102

Elena Cardinali



Pathways of peace

My «Holy Land»

The experience of Margaret Karram who was invited to the «Invocation» for peace held in the Vatican on June 8

The trip of Pope Francis to the Holy Land led to the historical event of peace wherein the premiers Shimon Peres, Israeli, and Abu Mazen, Palestinian, participated together with Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople. A focolarina was part of the Christian delegation – the only woman to recite a prayer.



Margaret, Christian Arab, born in Israel, and who was for many years the Delegate of the Opera in the Holy Land: «Three months ago I arrived at the Roman Mariapolis, after having lived in Jerusalem for 25 years. I knew that the Pope would be going to the Holy Land where I also helped in the initial preparations. It was a very strong experience to leave those places, to leave the people that I have loved so much and with whom I had made plans throughout the years, and it was not always easy, a journey of dialogue and of solidarity, with many initiatives to promote a culture of reciprocal trust.

Now my "Holy Land" is here, I can love Jesus in every person and at the same time make my contribution for the much-awaited visit of the Pope in that Land. To my great surprise I received an invitation to participate in the name of the Opera, in the prayer for Peace,

in the Vatican. It was the love of God that was inviting me to be, with the unity of everyone, the presence of Mary and of her Opera. What a gift and a joy to know that I would meet various personalities from Israel and from the Paletinian Territories who already know the Movement: Jews, Christians and Muslims, and to live together this historical moment with the Holy Father!».

Javer Garcia of the Centro Santa Chiara media was also invited to collaborate in the television transmission by the Vatican Television Center. (See: www.focolare.org/it/news/2014/06/10/il-coraggio-della-pace/)

Christian Movements

Bonds of friendship that are strengthened

1-2 June Olympic Stadium, Rome. The 37th national convention of the Renewal in the Spirit with around fifty thousand people, during the meeting with Pope Francis there were also representatives of various Movements and Communities present. For the Focolare among the others, a delegation of «Together for Europe» with Eli Folonari, Anna Pelli, Iride Goller, Gabri Fallacara and Ada Guazzo, together with Anna and Alberto Friso of the New Families.

15 June, Santa Maria in Trastevere. On the occasion of the visit of Pope Francis to the St. Egidio Community Eli was invited to share in this moment of joy. Others were able to follow this event through the various TV channels.

Gen3 in Vietnam The «art of loving» during...

vacation!



A camp for teens where, together with other gen3, there were teens belonging to different Churches, religions and those without any religious references

This year the appointment with our friends took place in Ho Coc, Ba Ria, at 125 kilometers from the city of Ho Chi Minh, where a beautiful beach and tree-lined hills created a suitable venue for our camp, whose characteristic was the involvement of many people, from the Master Scout, a Buddhist, in his first encounter with the Movement, who came with four of his youth to lend us a hand.

Among the participants who came for the first time, there were teens coming from another Church, Buddhists and teens without any religion: it was the occasion for a true collaboration, each one becoming a gift for the other!

It was a moment to relax, to learn things such as how to cook, to work as a team, to know how to live without the usual comforts of home and above all to build fraternity with new friends, of different faiths, placing as the basis of those days the «art of loving»!

The challenges to be faced were not lacking, but what reigned in everyone was the joy of working together, in spite of our diversity.

Even the climate did its part: sun throughout the day and bright stars during the evening; we were able to also do some star gazing. Strong rain that fell continuously during one night was a small trial for us as dead tired, we had to face the programme of the following day. But there was a race in putting into practice the «art of loving» that gave us the possibility of growing in living well the unforeseen events, by putting ourselves in the present moment ...

Providence came to us in abundance and in many ways! A sign of God's blessing!

Some impressions: «I met new friends and I was able to learn many things about life, for example how to love». «This experience in the camp made me understand among other things, how much my parents must have worked so that we children can be formed and educated. Now I feel a greater love for them...». «I understood that if I open my heart to the others, we can work together; and if we know how to love the others as ourselves, we can give joy to God. I would not have realized all this if I did not come to this camp. Thank you for this experience that was very important for me!».

the gen3 of Vietnam

The city goes to the Mariapolis

«Dimension of fraternity». In the Piedmont capital. An innovative experience that involved more than a thousand people

«A not so closely packed calendar», «support and encourage the life of the local community», «to think of a common point of arrival for the annual journey», these are some of the ideas that emerged in preparing the yearly programme. After having placed in common dreams, doubts and fears we took up together a challenge: the Mariapolis in Turin, in the heart of the city, open to all and accessible to everyone (also economically) so as to bring the Ideal of fraternity, God to the masses. A survey revealed that many were ready to open their homes to those who were coming from far away.

With the passion, the creativity and the work of many, the Mariapolis was built: «Dimension fraternity», from May 31 to June 2, housed at SERMIG, the Arsenal of Peace founded by Ernesto Olivero.

More than 1200 persons passed through the Mariapolis (everyday we were around 900) with many new ones. We had to invent a programme that would go well for everyone and the Holy Spirit enlightened us.

One afternoon we went out by groups to discover the city: communion with modern charisms (still the SERMIG), with the always living social saints of Turin: in the places of Don Bosco and the Cottolengo, walks in the hills, artistic pathways, an ecological activity on the Lungo Dora. In this regard the person responsible in the Town Council of the Public Venues of Turin wrote: «Obviously there are not enough words to thank you for this initiative, also on behalf of the City».

Among the many impressions gathered: «This is my first experience, invited by my very dear friend. It was a discovery that led me to overcome some prejudices. Above all the one in which I thought that the Movement was only made up of people who are a bit fanatic, full only of theories about love. I listened to rich experiences, which is accessible to everyone and shared without any personal satisfaction but only with real love and an authentic spirit of service. In short: beautiful and enriching». «A very youthful Mariapolis and nothing was lacking». «A Mariapolis of joy, of a living community». «the most beautiful Mariapolis... the rediscovery that the various charisms can help to build a united world».

On June 2, 12 years ago Chiara upon receiving the Honorary Citizenship, wished that Turin would become the «Capital of fraternity». Maybe we have seen a piece of this. Someone said: «We will continue the Mariapolis in the normalcy of everyday life so that it will become extraordinary». The experiences and initiatives that blossomed immediately confirm this.

La comunità di Torino



P. Casimiro Bonetti ofm cap.

«Dio la ama immensamente»

Così Maria Voce ha voluto esprimere il ricordo e la riconoscenza per l'operato di p. Casimiro da Perarolo, nell'ambito della storia del Movimento dei Focolari, ai suoi inizi, a Trento.

«Il Movimento dei Focolari esprime la propria sentita vicinanza all'Ordine dei Frati Minori Cappuccini per la dipartita di p. Casimiro Bonetti. La Provvidenza di Dio ha voluto legare la sua persona agli albori del Movimento dei Focolari.

Fu lui, infatti, che il 7 dicembre 1943 accolse la consacrazione a Dio di Chiara Lubich. Fu lui che in diverse circostanze si rivelò strumento di Dio. Si pensi alla risposta data a Chiara, avendone colto la generosità: "Si ricordi signorina: Dio la ama immensamente!". O al pensiero da lui espresso il 24 gennaio 1944 a proposito del momento più doloroso della passione di Gesù, che a suo parere era da individuare quando Egli gridò: "Dio mio, Dio mio, perché mi hai abbandonato?" (Mt 27,46).

Tali affermazioni, di cui egli stesso si è poi stupito riconoscendole frutto dell'agire dello Spirito Santo, hanno avuto nell'anima



di Chiara Lubich una risonanza particolare. Grazie al carisma da Dio a lei donato, esse, insieme ad altre intuizioni da lei avute, sono divenute nel tempo fondamenti della spiritualità dell'unità che anima la vita del Movimento dei Focolari.

Conservando vivo il ricordo di p. Casimiro Bonetti, insieme a quanti in diverse maniere fanno parte del Movimento dei Focolari, assicuro la comune preghiera per lui con gratitudine e riconoscenza».

Amerigo Petruccelli

Maestro nell'«arte di amare»

L'11 giugno è partito per il Paradiso Amerigo, della Mariapoli Romana, accompagnato dall'amore di tutti i focolarini di Villa Emilio, assieme ai quali aveva ricevuto nei giorni precedenti il sacramento dell'unzione degli infermi, anche se nulla faceva sospettare una immediata «partenza».

Era nato a Milano il 7 gennaio 1930. Sua sorella, alla quale era molto legato, raccontava

che lui da piccolo era un «terremoto» e che la sua vivacità era ben nota non solo in famiglia ma anche in tutto il vicinato.

Amerigo conobbe il Movimento nel '50 attraverso Ginetta Calliari e di quel momento così racconta in una lettera ad un amico: «... è cambiata totalmente la mia gerarchia di valori. Compresi che la carità andava capita in tutt'altro senso, che la parola doveva venire dopo aver amato il prossimo e che il senso del dovere era espressione della Volontà di Dio... Man mano che cercavo di vivere questo Ideale di

vita, vedevo che mi completava sotto ogni aspetto sia spirituale che umano».

Nel maggio '60 scrive a Chiara dicendole che, dopo averla ascoltata, aveva sentito la vocazione al focolare. E qualche anno dopo le dice ancora: «...sento la necessità che anche la mia vita, come la tua, diventi un grazie continuo per poter rispondere almeno un po' all'Amore di Dio». Nella stessa lettera le chiede una Parola di Vita che gli sia sempre di guida e Chiara gli propone questa frase del Vangelo: «E noi abbiamo conosciuto e creduto all'amore che Dio ha per noi» (1 Gv 4,16). E tanti ricordano il suo amore, così come la sua semplicità, la sua accoglienza che stabiliva subito un rapporto profondo. Scrive a Chiara nel '74: «L'amore che devo avere verso tutti, ma specie per i focolarini, deve diventare sempre più puro e non devo mai aspettarmi niente da nessuno, ma essere da parte mia il primo che inizia ad amare; questo non è che non mi fa vedere anche i limiti di chi mi sta accanto, ma quello che una volta mi avrebbe fermato un po', ora sta diventando un motivo maggiore per amare ancora di più».

Un signore che lo aveva conosciuto mentre parlava in un raduno, qualche tempo dopo andò da un sacerdote e gli chiese: «Ho bisogno che lei mi aiuti a trovare una persona». Alla domanda del sacerdote se avesse qualche indirizzo, l'altro diceva di ricordare solo un sorriso e un nome: focolarino. Al che il sacerdote capì e gli diede l'indirizzo di Amerigo: era proprio lui che cercava.

La gran parte della sua vita in focolare l'ha vissuta nella zona di Catania, dove ha fatto nascere e sostenuto tante comunità. Qualcuno l'ha definito come «uno dei padri fondatori dell'Opera in Calabria, un maestro dell'arte di amare». Un focolarino testimonia: «Spiritualmente è la colonna del focolare, perché vi porta una vita di unione con Dio profonda, una lunga esperienza e una virtù provata dalle sofferenze fisiche di questi ultimi anni».



Chiara gli aveva dato come nome nuovo «Vangelo vissuto», per esprimere la realtà della sua vita.

Preghiamo per Amerigo e chiediamogli di aiutarci dal Cielo a testimoniare l'amore di Dio e la gioia che dà il vivere il Vangelo.

Dal telegramma di Emmaus ai focolari

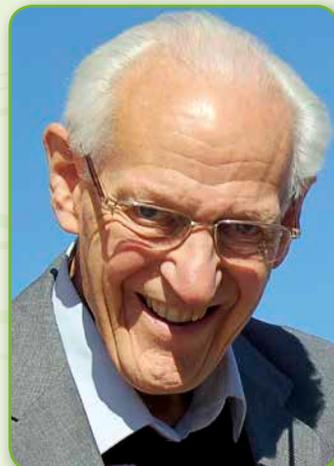
Fr. Michel Brenninkmeyer sj

A giant in spirit

«Fr. Michel: gigantic physically (he was more than 2 meters in height), but even more so he was a giant in spirit. He died a priest of God, a priest saint». These words of Bishop Armando Bortolaso, describe Fr. Michel very well, a Dutch Jesuit who lived for more than ten years in Syria, and who worked untiringly for the spread of the Ideal in the region. Weakened by a serious illness, he died on May 23 in Beirut.

«Whoever met him was always touched by this encounter: I believe that this is also why the Ideal was born and grew around him in Syria, in all its purity and with a vivacity that doesn't seem to die down » continued Mons. Armando, who had shared with him countless years of life in Syria.

Fr. Michel, was born in Holland in 1932, he entered the Society of Jesus in '51. Coming from a very rich family, he made himself extremely poor, not only in spirit, but in his entire being, in his clothes, his personal belongings, in furnishinh his room. He met the spirituality of unity in '71 from three focolarinos (among whom was Guido Brini), who were animating a spiritual retreat and were the guests of his



community in Homs (Syria). Fr. Michel was touched by the fact that they didn't comment on his unusual height and so he decided that he wanted to know more about them; he participated in a Mariapolis in England and from that moment on he made his own the charism of Chiara. With another priest, they went all over Syria to bring the Ideal in almost all the Christian villages and they animated the meetings of the Word of Life. Roland Poupon shared: «He and his little Volkswagen were famous. He had to fold himself almost in half with his head bent and his knees almost touching the steering wheel: but how many people he visited with his immense charity; how many people and goods he transported in this way!». Robert Chelhod added: «I never saw him sad; he was always welcoming, he didn't speak much because for him the brother was more important». Thanks to him, the first groups of youth and the first vocations to the Opera were born. In the Mariapolises he could sleep like everyone else on a mattress on the floor and a volunteer recalls how he was touched to see Fr. Michel cleaning the bathrooms.

Not all his fellow-Jesuits understood how it was possible for him to live «two spiritualities». But he would repeat, through his life and with his words, that the charism of unity strengthened his love for the spirituality of St. Ignatius.

The joy of Fr. Michel was great when the men's focolare center was opened in Aleppo in '90. Robert cont by his presence... He had a personal relationship with all the members of the Opera, from the oldest to the youngest: he understood the Syrian people more than us».

In 2012, he moved to Lebanon for health reasons, and he remained in Beirut, also due to the delicate situation of Syria. «He would come to the focolare almost every Wednesday, he would call us often to update us about his activities, assuring his unity and prayers». A year ago, his health deteriorated and it seemed as if the end was near. Christian, a focolarino of Beirut, shared: «I remained by his side, his face was radiant and he had a splendid smile in spite of all the tubes and lines attached to him. I asked him how he was; he answered me with a phrase of Saint Teresa of Avila: "Nothing disturbs me, nothing frightens me, only God is enough". And he continued: "This is the position of Jesus Forsaken, I am not always able to

say my "yes" to Him, but I start again immediately". When I asked him: "Are you ready?" he answered with a smile: "Yes!"». Fr. Michel then recovered. In the same clinic, there were to elderly Jesuits there for a period of time whom he often visited. On April 9, in the focolare – for the last time – he celebrated Mass, also for Fr. Franz, his fellow-Jesuit who was recently killed in Homs: they had lived together for around 40 years in the same community and Fr. Michel suffered greatly, nevertheless he was serene as always, with the certainty that evil will never have the last word. In the hospital, for the final greeting, the focolarinos met a Muslim nurse who was very much impressed by the continuous smile and love of Fr. Michel, in spite of his sufferings and discomforts of his illness.

Everyone, in Syria and in Lebanon, upon hearing the news of his departure, know that now they have a big brother in Heaven who will support them, especially in this tragic period.

Giorgio Antoniazzi

Constança Maria de Siqueira de Almeida



Fuoco dell'Amore

Nata in una bellissima famiglia di nove fratelli e sorelle, tra cui Maria do Carmo ora focolarina nel Lussemburgo, Constança conosce il Movimento nel 1968, diviene una delle prime gen del Portogallo e riceve da Chiara la Parola di vita: «Le grandi acque non possono spegnere l'amore» (Ct 8,7).

Nel '91 ha ricevuto in eredità un terreno di più di 200 ettari ed immediatamente lo offre a Chiara, che le risponde dicendo che quel terreno potrebbe essere per la costruzione di una Cittadella nel Portogallo. Per vari motivi non è

stato possibile occuparlo, ma la Cittadella Arco-iris nascerà in un terreno accanto.

Volontaria, era perno locale del suo quartiere a Lisbona. Con un cuore grande, seguiva tantissime persone, anche qualcuno che aveva lasciato il Movimento; aiutava chi le passava accanto, specialmente i più poveri.

Nel 2007 le è stato diagnosticato un tumore e nel 2013 la situazione si è aggravata. Scriveva: «Sento la forte esigenza di un cambiamento radicale nel mio quotidiano, una nuova



Florette Bouillon

In Belgium, in the early times

Last June 2 Florette reached Heaven, a 76 year old volunteer who, with the others, was one

of the pillars of the Opera in Belgium. As a young wife, together with her husband, both of whom had no religious affiliation, they were looking for the profound meaning of life. Her husband, impressed by the doctor of Hamme, the place where they lived, who was so «different», went to meet him and through him both of them were struck by the Ideal, eventually becoming volunteers of God. Florette, in order to build the Opera with the enthusiasm of the early times, would run from one point of the Country to the other. Then she became the delegate of the women volunteers; she lived for seven years in their house in the Little City where she was that «open door» to the outside world. Because of family reasons they often had to move their residence: as soon as she arrived in a place, she immediately took an interest in the local reality and to get to know the people around. After the first encounters, many wanted to know more, they would form part of the Word of Life groups and thus the community was born. Florette used to say: «I am convinced that wherever God puts me, I must respond to His loving

e più profonda scelta di Dio... andare dagli altri essendo niente e cioè più Lui e meno io».

Ha vissuto gli ultimi tre mesi all'ospedale, la sua stanzetta era diventata come un «santuario» di amore, tanti che la visitavano vi trovavano un po' di cielo, si è assistito a riconciliazioni con Dio e degli uni verso gli altri. È «partita» serenamente il 12 aprile a 57 anni. Ai funerali, celebrati dal fratello, gesuita, sono accorse centinaia di persone, a testimonianza della sua vita, «fuoco» dell'amore di Dio. Ora riposa nel cimitero accanto alla cittadella Arco-iris.

Teresa Guedes

invitation everyday with regards to the brothers that I meet, I must feel myself in solidarity with him so as to realize fraternity and become saints together».

She received from Chiara the Word of Life: «The Word of the cross is the power of God» (1Cor 1,18). Much later she had to remain beside her husband and her father who were both seriously ill. Florette said that this «gave me the chance to discover humility, patience and perseverance. To put myself back in God was not easy, but in the present moment I discover His Will ... and my life becomes dynamic...». With her husband they helped each other to make Jesus Forsaken their «living friend» and, when he left for Heaven, Florette said: «From that moment it seemed to me that I discovered, maybe for the first time, what it means to truly recognize and love Jesus in His total abandonment, where one becomes nothing, one has the impression of not existing and one waits for everything from Him».

She had just recently moved to Francia, at Bourdalet, near her daughter, when her health deteriorated and she left peacefully.

Maria Verhegge

Our relatives

The following passed on to the Next Life: **Consuelo, mother of Delia Pairetti**, focolarina in Mexico City; **Hans, father of Baerbel (Lea) Schiffmann**, focolarina in Austria; **Paolina, mother of Enzo Rizza**, focolarino in Catania.



Elly Broux

A life with «wings»

Elly, volunteer of Eigenbilzen (Belgium) reached Heaven on June 3; she was 80 years old. Her encounter with the ideal took place in 1960, and it gave «wings» to her life as she launched herself to live it. Soon she felt the call to give herself radically as a volunteer. Cultured, intelligent, she carried out her profession as an instructor for nurses, with a great sense of responsibility. She inspired respect from her students. For her, the sick person was the center and she demanded the same attitude from her students, forming them both in the technical aspect of their profession and also according to the professional code of conduct and behaviour. She was widowed at a very young age, the death of her husband remained within her like a wound for the rest of her life. But the love for Jesus Forsaken, discovered and loved, was the strength she drew from to launch herself into loving always.

The nucleo was in the center of her heart. She knew how to be beside this or that volunteer who was passing through a difficult moment; the experience lived with her has remained as a luminous moment in their lives. She lived for the community and for those whom she met and with whom she had shared the Ideal, with faithfulness, multiplying small and big occasions to maintain the «warmth» of love, with a preference for the youth and for the sick who were alone and whom she followed with great responsibility.

For many years she worked for the Nieuwe Stad. Lately she had lost her memory and, she was confined in the home where she had worked for many years, surrounded by relatives, by the volunteers and also by the community; she passed away peacefully, accompanied on her final farewell by our people and by many whom she had loved.

Maria Verhegge

Maria do Carmo Carmona e Costa Portela

Grateful for her example

On May 26, at 90 years old, Maria do Carmo left us for the house of the Father. She was one of the first volunteers of the city of Oporto (Portugal) and she belonged to a very famous family: her grandfather, António Óscar Carmona, was the President of the Republic during the years 1926 - 1951.

She met the Focolare Movement in a meeting of the Word of Life, at the beginning of the '70s. She found her total realization as a Christian, a wife and mother in the vocation of the volunteer. She was a concrete support and a source of light for many, without distinction. She was very hospitable, she would meet everyone simply, causing them to experience great surprise when



they came to know that she was the granddaughter of President Carmona. Gifted with an unusual culture and intelligence, her recollection during prayer reflected her profound relationship with Jesus.

Her illness progressed throughout the years, limiting her life progressively. M. do Carmo was a model in accepting the difficulties and countless sufferings, embracing with faith Jesus Forsaken, she rarely complained. We are grateful for her example of the total giving of herself to God, for her testimony of love.

Teresa Guedes

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