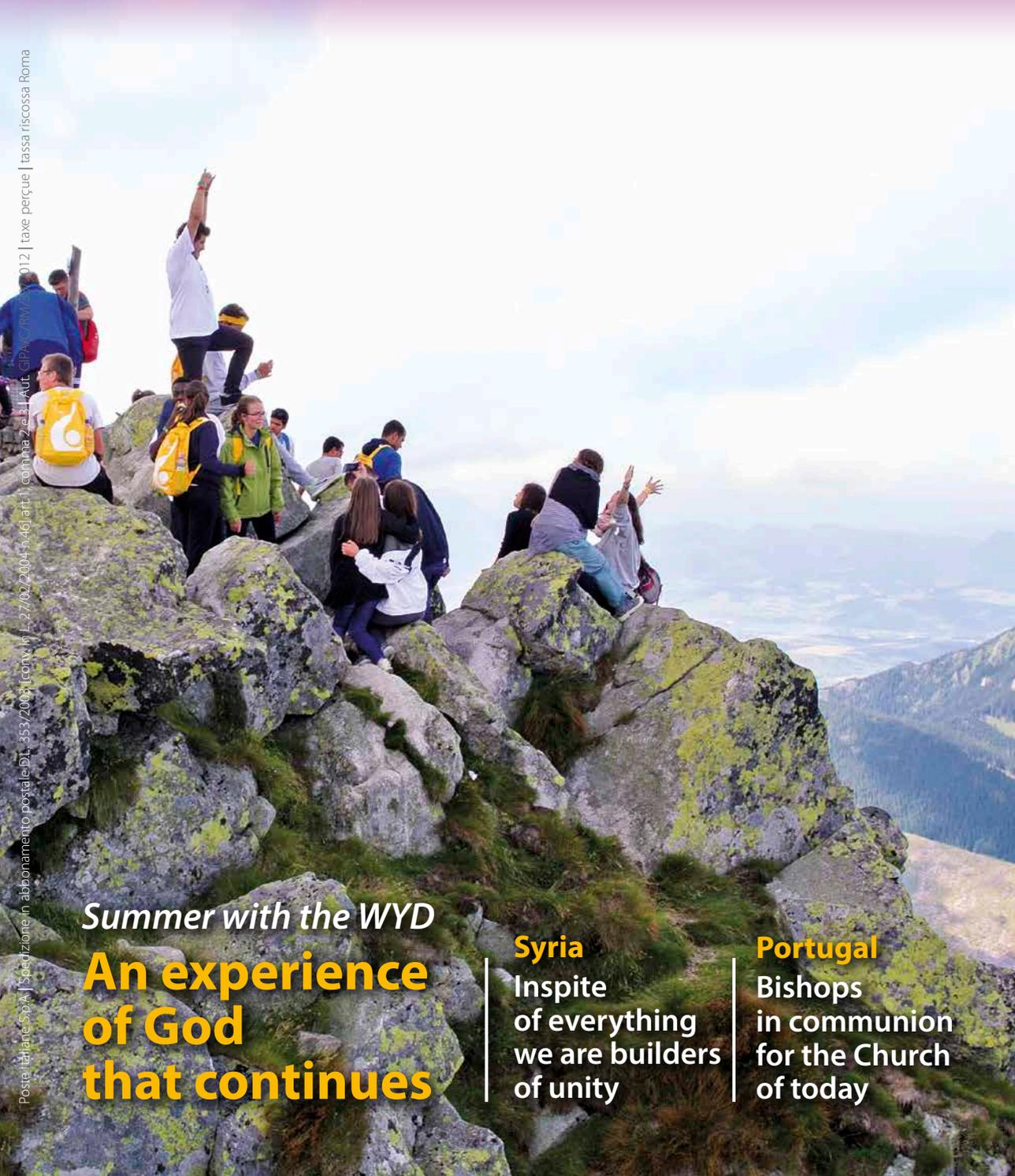


YEAR XXXIII N 7-8/9 JULY-AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2016

MARIAPOLI

Newsletter of the focolare movement

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Summer with the WYD
**An experience
of God
that continues**

Syria

Inspite
of everything
we are builders
of unity

Portugal

Bishops
in communion
for the Church
of today

With Him who recomposes unity

At the conclusion of the year dedicated to Unity, here are some excerpts from a writing of Chiara Lubich taken from the book *The cry*¹ which indicate to us the Divine Architect

In his testament Jesus had said: «With me in them and you in me, may they be so perfect in unity» (Jn 17,23).

If Jesus was *in me*, if Jesus was in the *other*, and if Jesus was in all, at that moment we were perfect in unity.

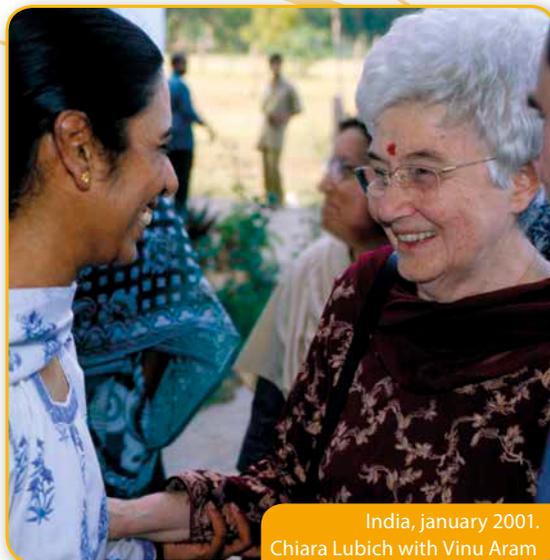
But, I repeat, in order for Jesus to be in us we had to love Jesus forsaken in all the pains, voids, failures and sorrows of life.

If Jesus was in me and in the others, we recognized each other when we met, and we felt we were brothers and sisters.

[...] Jesus forsaken is the model of those who love God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength, the model of those who are “in love” with God. Jesus forsaken loves God in fact at the very moment when God forsakes him.

Jesus forsaken is the model for those who *must create unity* with others. I cannot enter into another spirit if I am rich of my own. To love others I must constantly make myself so poor in spirit that I possess nothing but love. Love is empty of itself. Jesus forsaken is the perfect model of one who is poor in spirit: He is so poor that he does not even have God, so to speak. He does not feel God's presence.

1 CHIARA LUBICH, *Il grido*, Città Nuova, Roma 2000, settembre, pp. 50,52-54



India, January 2001.
Chiara Lubich with Vinu Aram

© archivio CSC-Media

Jesus forsaken is the model of *renunciation* and of *mortification*. He is not only mortified in every external sense because he is crucified, but mortified also in his soul. In his soul he renounces even what is most dear to him: his union with God. It is the renunciation of self of one who is God-Man.

He is the perfect model for those who wish to lose their souls in God: a model for persons for instance who must renounce not only their ideas but also their divine inspirations, in order to submit them to their superiors.

He is therefore the model of true unity with the one who represents God for us. As Jesus and the Father are one, so every person must be one with his or her own superior.

Jesus forsaken is the one who provides light to those who *hope against all hope*. He is the model for those who trust. Be confident - he said - «I have conquered the world!» (Jn. 16:33).

In fact nobody has had greater trust than he; forsaken by God, he trusted in God; forsaken by Love, he entrusted himself to Love.

Jesus forsaken is the model for those who wish to give *glory to God*.

In his forsakenness, annulling himself completely, he says God is all.

Jesus forsaken is the model of the «dead who die in the Lord» (Rev 14,13). In fact he is mystically dead and in that state dies also physically in God. The Book of Revelation says: «Their good [works] go with them» (Rev 14, 13).

Jesus' work was to give the Father many children, giving them rebirth with his own life.

If we were to highlight *each exhortation* of Jesus in the Gospel, we would see that he lived all of them at the moment of his forsakenness.

Jesus forsaken relives in himself, in that instant, the words, «he who does not *re-nounce* father, mother and even his own life » (cf. Lk 14:26)

Jesus forsaken can repeat in himself all the *beatitudes*.

In Jesus forsaken, *the virtues* are uniquely resplendent: fortitude, patience, temperance, perseverance, justice, magnanimity ...

In his forsakenness Jesus seems to be nothing but a man, and so never has he been as *close to us human beings* as in that moment and never, therefore, has he loved as so much. And, at the same time, never has he been as *close to the Father*¹, it is out of love for him that he dies, and that he dies in that way.

If the «law and the prophets» (Mt 7,12), consist in love of God and love of neighbour, Jesus has fulfilled completely *every desire and commandment* of God.

Jesus forsaken therefore is the *direct path* to holiness because he brings about unity with the Holy One.

So it was enough for us to look to him, to live like him in every moment, and we would have done everything.

We did this. Everything became simple.

Chiara Lubich

1 To Catherine of Siena, after a grave temptation overcome with a supreme effort of will, Jesus crucified appeared to her and said: My daughter Catherine, do you see how much I suffered for you? So do not be sorry to suffer for me...". But she said: My Lord, where were you when my heart was troubled with such temptations? And the Lord said, "I was in your heart" » (G.JOERGENSEN, *Santa Caterina da Siena*, Torino 1941, p.49).

New publication Jesus Forsaken, Chiara Lubich

In the year 2016-2017 dedicated to the eighth point of the spirituality, Città Nuova is publishing *Chiara Lubich – Jesus Forsaken* prepared by Hubertus Blaumeiser. This volume invites the reader, through pages, often never before published, taken from notes, letters, talks, diaries, to discover a God who did not hesitate to become the question of all questions: «My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?».



«I waited twenty centuries to reveal myself to you. If you don't love me, who will love me?», this is the question that Chiara Lubich felt within her one day. Since the beginning of her spiritual adventure, she had in fact asked the Crucified One: «Give me the passion of your passion». In the cry of Jesus on the cross she progressively discovered the greatest love, the key to unity, the face of God who most speaks to humanity of today.

Meeting of the Delegates of the Movement

It's done in three so that we are more One

The annual meeting of the delegates of the Movement this year will be done in three stages:

- 7 - 17 september for Latin America, North America and Oceania;
- 28 september - 8 october for Africa, Asia and the Middle East;
- 15 - 23 october for Europe and Italy.

The formula, structure and participants are changed in harmony with the new set-up. We spoke about it with Severin Schmid, Maria Gabriela Melo and Joseph Assouad, respective councilors for Europe, Latin America and Africa.

How come you thought of three meetings?

The main objective of the three meetings is to encourage the communion of each Big Zone with the Center, allowing for a more profound reciprocal acquaintance of the life of the respective Zones. For this reason the number of participants from the Zones for each meeting will only be around a hundred.

Everything came about from the new set-up which, with its novelty, could not but bring some changes also in the structure of this meeting. The new set-up highlights how the Movement must be guided on all levels by Jesus in the midst.

So this year, together with the Delegates, around half of the persons responsible for the small zones or of some of the territories and also some of the Councilors of the Zone Center, will also be invited. Next year there will only be the Delegates of the Zone and then in 2018 we have foreseen a meeting similar to the one of this year, with those who did not come this time. This is to facilitate the coming to the Center, every six years, of more persons responsible of the Movement possibly from the different geographical areas. Today at the Center of the Movement among 30 components, 22 nations are represented and therefore the needs and sensitivities from all over the

world are – if we can say it in this way – are all the more present. This arrangement will hopefully allow for a more equal participation of those coming from Countries that are further away or which are economically disadvantaged.

Can you tell us something of how the programmes will be?

The structure will be the same, but the programmes will be different according to the needs and requirements of the various Zones. The preparation is being done by the Councillors of the Big Zones together with the Delegates of the Zone. Every meeting will be an occasion to look at a continent or a geographical area together – the Center and the representatives of the Zones – so as to reach a common and unified vision on what to do, what answers to give as one Movement. It will also serve to focus on specific topics. For example, for the six Latin American Zones, this will be an occasion for a unique communion with the Center and among themselves as they bring ahead the realities of the Continent; for Africa we will try to find new strategies for inculturation after the meeting in May with Emmaus and Jesús, aside from striving to activate the synergies of the various Zones so as to continue to «go out». For Europe, the following topics are in the programme: the refugee emergency, dialogue with Islam, but also the unity of the Continent...

In preparing the programme we always kept in mind the priorities given to the Movement in the last Assembly. We hope to collect the experiences already done and to encourage new ways to go out, together and more suitably prepared.

Every meeting will begin with two days of plenary with much communion so that everyone will have the chance to get to know very well the life of the Zones and of the Center; with the reality that we will be

living this year with a particular intensity: Jesus Forsaken; with the deepening of the new set-up under the various aspects, among which is the reform of the Church being done by Pope Francis. The experience that we are living with the new set-up, is in a certain way, also the experience of the Catholic Church, but not only.

The following days will be dedicated to the meetings of the Zones with the various realities at the Center and on the topics that are specific to the geographical areas present.

It is also planned that each Big Zone will meet with Emmaus and Jesús. The entire General Council will be present during the first two days and at the conclusion of the three meetings.

How are you preparing here at the Center?

First of all we are trying to do everything in full unity among all the centers, always keeping in mind the variety of the Zones, which are living in societies and whose peoples are facing very different challenges. We are preparing ourselves to welcome everyone with the love of Chiara, in such a way that they can feel that we are a family, that they feel at home, trying our best to meet all their needs even the practical ones. This atmosphere of Jesus in the midst will undoubtedly help us to eventually understand how and where to focus our attention, what dynamics we have to face, to come closer to «*That all may be one*». Another aspect that we are concerned with is formation, just as the Assembly underlined.

We hope that we will be able to make a strong experience of unity that will multiply all over the world.

prepared by the editorial board

In Mariapolis online
www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli
you can follow each day's events,
in various languages.



From Krakow to the world

A network that continues

From some Polish gen and youth, an experience on the WYD wherein they were the protagonists

The World Youth Day (WYD) in Krakow now belongs to history. The pilgrims went back to their homes, and the city returned to its daily rhythm. But we have to say that the experience continues. Who among us can count how many friendships, conversations, experiences and testimonies of love, faith, mercy and unity were born during those days? Pope Francis touched many hearts through his call to get up from the couch and not to retire even before starting to do real work, and those who needed motivation, confirmation and light for his or her path allowed themselves to be called. Now, the only thing we have to do is to act, and we will undoubtedly see the fruits. We believe that it was a period of many graces. Everyday we had many occasions to meet God and the neighbour: during the Catechesis in the parishes, at the Youth Fest, during the meeting with Pope Francis, the vigil ...

One of the events of the WYD that was very much awaited by the us, by the youth of the Focolare Movement in Poland, was the event organized within the framework of the

Youth Fest. Together, we wanted to let ourselves «fall» into the net of mercy. We spent four hours in celebration, of faith, of the Holy Spirit, living with God and for God. In the first part, we proposed to all those present to join in one of our initiatives of prayer in common that we have been doing in Poland for more than six months now, wherein we establish relationships with many precisely through prayer.

In the second part of the meeting, in a programme with music and dance, we meditated on the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. We were helped by some writings of Chiara Lubich and life experiences. The culmination of the event was the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament accompanied by the Gen Rosso.

An impression «While lining up for meals, tired from the journey, we experienced a search for love. Some of us were probably frightened by the differences. Others realized that in the end, we are all alike, because we



share the same values and we learn how to love the other inspite of his ideas, inspite of the things that divide us.

Each one of us experienced his or her own endurance test. For me it was the preparation of the Youth Fest. It was a training ground to live every moment with the same intensity. "The how, where, why during the practices, the performance, the prayer, were not important. I wasn't planning on attending the Sunday Mass at Brzegi. Instead

it was a fundamental moment. I found myself there thanks to Providence that guided me and told me to go here and then there, where I understood that I could remain like this all of my life, always in an attitude of listening.

Every moment brought with it a grace for each one personally and for all those in Krakow. Now the experience can continue! A friend wrote me: "I didn't leave, I remained"».

prepared by the gen girls and boys of Poland

You God/t me

A school post-WYD for more than 600 youth in the Tatra mountains in Slovakia

«WYD: an important event for all young people including those of the Movement! And so why not do something after the WYD for all those who are participating? And why not do it in Slovakia, in the Tatra mountains, 200 kilometers from Krakow?».

This was the conversation two years ago between and Argentinian priest and a Slovakian priest during a school for the Parish and Diocesan Movements. It seemed like a good idea, calling on the Zone of Slovakia, who readily agreed. But we wanted it to be for all the young people of the Movement. Talking about this among the various youth realities at the Center we launched ourselves: a post-WYD School for all the youth of the Movement, without distinction of vocation or commitment.

As the preparations gradually went ahead, which began in June 2015, the physiognomy of the School began to take shape:



to begin with the words of the Pope so as to go deeper into one's faith, in the relationship with God, with oneself and with others. And so the title was born: *You Got(d) me*, with a double meaning (You - God - me or You - got/captured - me). It recalled the mountains where God captured us to speak to us of Himself!

An idea came up of involving a theologian (Michel Vandeleene), a philosopher (Gianluca Falcone) and a psychologist (Antonella de Ponte), so as to go in depth with the themes proposed. And we were off!

The agreement of the youth was enthusiastic. We prepared 400 places but 650 registered.



Among them a group of 50 Orthodox from Rumania with whom we have been collaborating for some time now, a group of evangelical and even some who declared themselves atheist. This inspite of the fact that they knew that we would talk about God, of Jesus and that we would be proposing a lifestyle based on the Gospel! Around 30 seminarians were also present.

Bruno Venturini, to whom we had spoke during the preparations in Rome, wished that this event would be a «triumph if God». The faces of the youth, the impressions, the shared experiences attested to this. Someone said: «It was a triumph of God. It was the most beautiful school of my life».

The Zone of Slovakia prepared every detail with a special attention and love, that made our path smooth so as to allow the young people (from 16 - 30 years old, from all over the world, of 13 different languages) to make an experience of unity among them and with God. Some were in contact



with the Movement for the first time. The presentation was entrusted to four youth (a gen girl, a committed youth, a gens and a young Orthodox girl from Rumania) ; we lived together with everyone a profound experience of communion, rooted in the life of the Word that each one committed himself or herself to live, so that, as we had proposed on the first day, only Jesus among us would be our Teacher.

The majority of the youth came from the WYD, touched by those days lived with the Pope and therefore they were prepared, rather they really wanted to make this experience. The talks of Pope Francis accompanied us and were interwoven with the themes presented.

Numerous and significant were the messages of religious and civil personalities of Slovakia, among whom were the Nuncio and President of the Episcopal Conference. Also present was the Bishop in-charge of youth pastoral care and the Mayor of the place who gave his support and helped us for the School.

A crown of animators surrounded us: focalini, focolarine, priests and committed members. We got to know each other and listened to one another profoundly making an experience of communion that is precious in order to unite us all at the service of the new generations. This unity is what has sustained the School: countless private talks, confessions, moments of dialogue during meals, in which these young people who are so thirsty, were able to open up, ask for advice, share about themselves. Also present were Cyril and Katka of Slovakia (a married couple), who

What do I want to do with my life?

After the WYD 140 youth in Krakow following the trail of the «personal vocation»

To go in depth in the discovery of the call of God and in the answer to Him which is concretized in a personal vocation, was the desire that pushed more than 140 youth to remain in Krakow, after participating in the WYD. Some came from the gen schools of Loppiano, others came from different Countries of Europe, a good number from the People's Republic of China. Together with some of them, we prepared the programme outline: God, the only ideal of life; the call to follow Him; the wealth of authentic and radical testimonies in the Bible and in the history of the Church and up to the present day, the call to the focolare... The invitation to «be another Jesus» was highlighted.

There were many strong moments. One afternoon we went to visit the lager of Auschwitz. «To come face to face with this reality – one of the participants said – meant to discover how the «yes» to God in a personal vocation brings one to look at the sufferings of the others, to stop evil and to let God enter this world that is suffering because of His absence, bringing many focolare (in the broadest sense) as light in the world».

«The programme was very beautiful – commented another – the experiences shared were precious, a crescendo in deepening the call of Jesus». «In these days what echoed within me were the words: "You did not choose me, but I chose you". He is my Master, and yet he does not want me as a servant but as a brother. I shouldn't be afraid, He will guide me». «I have asked myself many times what is my mission, what is my vocation in this world – concluded another – In these days I strongly feel that my mission is precisely that of Jesus = to bring God to the world».

Pilar Fernandez, Magnus Mentzel

presented the theme on the «theology of the body». A young girl said: «I came here with the wrong idea about love. I am happy to be able to start again from the beginning».

Every evening there was a celebration of which one was open to the citizens of the place, and of course hikes to Mount Chopok and other sites, some of the highest in the region were not lacking.

The moment of Adoration was one of the strongest moments wherein, with the words of the Pope as background, the youth had a long communion, sharing their joy and emotion for all that they were experiencing.

On the last morning, when we met with the focolarine, focolarini and priests, what emerged was the joy for this moment of communion and the desire to be always more united in working together for the new generations. Someone said: «We cannot go backwards». An idea which everyone liked immediately was born, that is to make this meeting a regular appointment after the WYD.

One impression among many: «All beautiful things go so quickly, just like these days. Yesterday during the adoration, it seemed to me that we have been here for weeks. It was really a piece of Paradise. To come down from the mountain will be difficult but I am impatient to do so, so I can give to others everything that I have received here ».

*prepared by the youth realities at
the Center of the Movement*



Bishops

When brothers live together...

The «Ephesine» 2016, in Braga, Portugal



© Seg/ies

Imagine a hotel that is transformed into a «home», thanks to the life of a Bishop friend of the Movement and to the community of the Focolare in his small zone and in his city; and imagine around sixty exponents of the Catholic hierarchy, among whom are four Cardinals, who spent ten days together without any formalities, without «your Excellency» and «your Eminence», living as brothers and friends, carrying the most diverse experiences on their shoulders, often challenging, but nevertheless simple and happy. These friends, with very different skin colours, talk, joke, listen to one another, take walks, reflect, share ... as day by day they feel that their burdens have become lighter and they are filled with new hope. It is the miracle that the «Ephesine» did also this year, that summer of living together among Bishops who, profoundly committed to the charisma of unity, would like in some way to live with the Movement the experience of the apostle John with Mary in Ephesus.

The place where we witnessed this «spectacle», is the João Paulo II Hotel near the Shrine of Our Lady of Sameiro which overshadows the city of Braga, situated on the surrounding hills as if on a balcony. The archbishop of the place,

who according to ancient tradition carries the title of «primate of Spain», is Dom Jorge Ortega, archbishop for the past 17 years, and who in all appearances aims above all for the primacy in charity. Everyday he lives a communal life with his auxiliary Bishops, of whom a good number today are at the helm of other Portuguese dioceses. In these days instead he does not lose the occasion to surround his brothers, coming from 27 nations, with countless signs of a delicate and attentive hospitality, and who knows how to wisely offer also the specialities of the Country, from *vinho verde* to *bacalhau*.

A vacation for Bishops then? If it was just this, it would not have been justified to undertake an intercontinental trip. The fact is, all those who have come are the soul of a series of meetings and conventions of Bishops, even in an ecumenical context, that take place throughout the year from Asia to Africa, and from the Middle east to Latin America. But before this, they strive with all their strength to give life to the episcopal collegiality and to the Church-communion there where they live. It is not surprising then that they feel the need – after a year in which they are often alone if not isolated – to experience some time together so as





to relive di un tempo insieme per rifare l'esperienza di vita con il Risorto da cui si ottiene ispirazione, si condivide ciò che si è vissuto a livello personale e nella diocesi, e da cui si trae nuova luce per poter interpretare le spesso complesse e contraddittorie situazioni in cui si trovano a operare. Significa scoprire modi per un ministero pastorale che ha il popolo di Dio come «soggetto» e non come «oggetto», e a sapere come aprirsi al dialogo anche con chi non crede o chi professa una fede diversa.

Un'aspettativa che anche questa volta non fu rimasta senza risposta. Durante le sessioni plenarie esperti nel loro campo presentarono le loro interventi come Pasquale Ferrara sul tema «Lo stato del mondo oggi» o Piero Coda su «Riforma nella Chiesa, lungo il cammino di Papa Francesco». Emmaus Voce e Jesús Morán furono anche presenti per tre giorni, parlando rispettivamente su «Gesù abbandonato dalla finestra di Dio e dalla finestra dell'umanità» e su «Il genio ecclesiale di Chiara Lubich», mentre Paolo Loriga e Cecilia Capuzzi, Josyane (Pace) Nasr e Antonio Borges del Centro del Movimento, illustrarono come il Movimento si sforza di rispondere alle sfide del presente e come lo fa, o piuttosto delle Chiese e religioni. In ogni intervento fu tenuto un dialogo con i relatori.

Come si può essere vescovi oggi, in questi scenari, e come si può esserlo con il carisma dell'unità? Questa è la domanda che fu affrontata via WebEx da Rocca di Papa, dall'arcivescovo di Aquila, Mons. Giuseppe Petrocchi che, come molti dei vescovi presenti, ha già vissuto l'ideale mentre era ancora un giovane,

ricevendo la sua formazione durante i suoi studi in vari campi e allo stesso tempo ha accumulato la sua esperienza pastorale, prima in Ascoli Piceno dove con Chiara Lubich hanno iniziato il Movimento diocesano, e poi come vescovo a Latina. Il vescovo – ha spiegato – deve contemporaneamente andare a Betlemme, Nazareth e Efeso: a Betlemme è nato come discepolo di Gesù, a Nazareth è formato, e a Efeso impara a esercitare il ministero con l'anima di Maria, con lei che come nessun'altra fu fedele a Gesù fino in fondo. È da qui che può nascere una autentica cultura pastorale.

Diverse esperienze sono state condivise come conferma di questo intervento: Mons. Brendan Leahy dall'Irlanda ha raccontato come, attraverso un sinodo diocesano, ha iniziato un cammino di corresponsabilità e di discernimento comunitario. Mons. Lazzaro You ha parlato di riunioni mensili di comunione tra un gruppo di vescovi della Corea. Don Antonio Tosi del Brasile ha spiegato come nella sua diocesi ha potuto sviluppare l'interazione tra le comunità ecclesiali di base e i movimenti e nuove comunità, che per un po' di tempo erano state marginalizzate se non oppresse. Mons. Gerard Alminaza dalle Filippine ha raccontato come cerca di essere non solo padre ma anche fratello e amico ai suoi sacerdoti, dimostrando così che non è vero ciò che qualcuno aveva predetto alla sua nomina: «Da oggi in poi vi darò da mangiare ma non vi dirò mai la verità».

È il desiderio che queste e molte altre esperienze possano essere studiate in profondità e rafforzate in futuro anche con l'aiuto dell'Istituto Sophia University che – come ha annunciato Piero Coda – si sta preparando per offrire corsi di aggiornamento teologico-pastorale nello spirito della Lettera Apostolica *Evangelii gaudium* di Papa Francesco.

Per due giorni, tre vescovi di altre Chiese sono venuti a Braga, Eberhardt Renz (Germano-Luterano), Åke Bonnier (Svedese-Luterano) e Mar Theophilose (Siro-Ortodossa dall'India). Nuovi orizzonti sono stati aperti. Sette vescovi dal Portogallo hanno anche accettato l'invito per una riunione pomeridiana. L'ultima serata

was spent with the community of the Movement in the north of the Country: after a dinner out in the open in the stupendous park of the Shrine of *Bom Jesus*, the Bishops were entertained by the community with a short musical programme. Their being, strong and full of conviction, spoke louder than words!

We were really very, very happy during these days. We lived as brothers. We felt free and we were able to open our



Card. Francis Xavier Kriengsak K. with the Swedish Lutheran Bishop Åke Bonnier

assistance for our future journey.

Card. Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanij

hearts to one another. The only Teacher was truly among us. The three priorities that will accompany us this year: to grow in the life of the focolare; to be «Marian Bishops» in the Church today; to live with the Movement for «That all may be one», are the guarantees and

New publications

A fruitful meeting of culture and charism



For several months during this year, the Chiara Lubich Center dedicated itself to reconstructing the various phases that led to the academic decisions to grant the doctorate degree *h.c.* to Chiara Lubich by various Universities all over the world, and to collect the academic speeches she gave during each of the ceremonies, so as to offer, in one volume, the scientific documentation relative to this. To find all this documentation, aside from referring to the Chiara Lubich Archives, previous contacts were re-established or strengthened - also through persons of the Movement in the local venues - with the Rectors of the concerned Universities, from the far East to the Americas, passing through Europe.

And thus, twenty years after the first doctorate *honoris causa* in Social Science conferred on Chiara Lubich by the Catholic University of Lublin, we are happy to present this volume prepared with the collaboration of the Sophia University Institute. This work contains the documents of sixteen *h.c.* doctorate degrees that were offered to Chiara, from 1996 to 2008, in recognition of the charism of unity¹. The volume – prepared by Florence Gillet and Rosalia Parlapiano with the preface of Piero Coda – illustrates a fecund encounter between culture and charism: sixteen Universities recognized the gift that it offers for thought reflection and, through the conferring of the Doctorate, they wanted to give it visibility and insert it within their own patrimony, ratifying somehow the role that the paradigm of unity could have for the various disciplines. The variety of the Faculties which recognized the contribution of the charism is significant: from the Communication Sciences to Theology, from Economics to Art, from Philosophy to the Social Sciences.

This new publication therefore, offers an instrument to all those who desire to get to know better the impact of the charism in the contemporary world and to make their own contribution to the spread of a culture of peace, of fraternity and of unity.

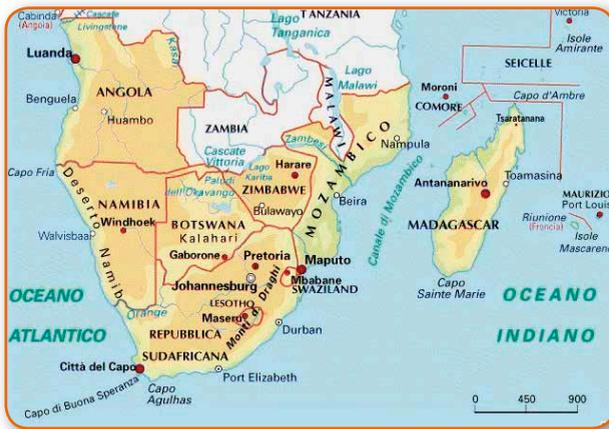
Alba Sgariglia, João Manoel Motta

¹ Centro Chiara Lubich in collaborazione con Istituto Universitario Sophia. *Dottorati Honoris Causa conferiti a Chiara Lubich*. Città Nuova, giugno 2016



Tongasoa eto Madagasikara Welcome to Madagascar

**A trip to Madagascar by Juanita Majury and Joseph Assouad,
the Councillors for Africa at the Center of the Movement**



nature, unique animals and a particular variety of flowers. The population is 23 million inhabitants and is among the poorest in the world: the majority live on less than a Euro a day. Famous for its spices, especially vanilla, the economy is based principally on rice production.

In two weeks we visited the communities of Antananarivo, Antsirabe and Ambatondrazaka. We already had difficulty in pronouncing the names of the cities and in the time we spent there we never managed to go beyond saying «*Salama*» (hello) and «*Misotra*» (thank you).

Even before presenting our documents, as we landed in Antananarivo we were welcomed by a friendly voice saying: «Are you of the Focolare?». The warmth of the family of Chiara spread all over the world embraced us immediately through someone of «ours» who is working at the airport and who offered to facilitate our entry. A warmth that grew with the small group that welcomed us outside.

Madagascar is one of the biggest islands in the world (bigger than France), with its original

One of the first meetings was with some Bishops, among whom was Mons. Désiré Tsarahazana, president of the Episcopal Conference, and Mons. Antonio Scopelliti, who, together with Sr. Luciana, is among the pioneers of the Movement in the Country. We had the occasion to get to know adults and youth, to see their commitment to form themselves in the ideal of unity and their desire to spread it as a gift to others. We were impressed by their openness and the beauty of this people



who possessed a heightened sense of harmony and music: they would often spontaneously break out in singing their traditional songs in three voices that fused into a sublime melody. The gen and New Families Movement are flourishing. In **Antananarivo** the gen boys and girls organize the Week of a United World with various activities, among which are visits to the prison and a concert, of which part of their earnings were used for the trips of the families who went to the School of inculturation held at the Mariapolis Piero (Kenya).

We moved on to **Antsirabe**, where there is a women's focalre center, inserted in a community which is committed to bear witness to the Gospel values. Persons of all ages shared their experiences that were truly moving, while it was precisely the children who asked us to tell them about Jesus Forsaken. In a letter, they shared to Emmaus: «I suffered so much when my father was imprisoned. I loved Jesus in him. That's why I didn't cry in front of him everytime we went to visit him» (Miora, 7 years old). «One thing that made me suffer is the fact that mother only comes home every Saturday because she has a lot to do at work. So I tried to help my little brothers and sisters» (Johane, 6 years old).

Minosoa, a 14-year old gen3 of Antsirabe, shared with us: «I started to help another girl in her studies and after some time she was able to get good marks. We became true friends. But in

school, some of the teens started to engage in drinking alcohol which then led to drugs, and unfortunately this friend became involved too. I realized that she was in serious trouble and so, urged on also by the others, I spoke to her, first agreeing with Jesus to let only love reign. In the beginning she accepted



my advice but later she began to avoid me and even our other friends. I tried to take another step asking her to forgive me if I had said something that hurt her and all the others in our group did the same. In the end the harmony in our

relationship was restored and even the incidents of drugs and alcohol in the school were solved. I felt that it was Jesus Forsaken who gave me the strength to go against the current, trying to save also my friends. Now one of them has become a gen3 and together we have the great strength of Jesus in our midst».

After two days of travelling, we arrived in **Ambatondrazaka**, the cradel of the Ideal and home of the two zone centers. With all the communities we had the occasion to share the experience of light of *Paradise '49*. «We travelled» in that extraordinary experience shared by Chiara Lubich and Foco. Each one felt at home, which we built from within in orde rto launch ourselves outwards, to live, also in Madagascar, so that «all may be one». Two impressions: «Even if the time spent together was short, it seemed like we were able to gather all the graces that God wanted to give us. A new light illuminates our journey, both personal and collective». «... to live for unity brngs us to Paradise. In Madagascar there are many difficulties, its up to us to bring unity and inthis way to build Paradise also here on earth».

Juanita Majury, Joseph Assouad

Family focolares

Ubuntu, be happy together

Maria and Raimondo Scotto, persons responsible for the family focolares at the Center, and Amadeu and Rosaline Jamba, a family focolare from Angola, share their impressions after their experience in Kenya in contact with the treasures of the families from the different African countries

We too from the international Center of New families were present in the Mariapolis Piero (Kenya) last May during the visit of Emmaus, Jesús and a delegation from the center of the Movement. We were three families - Scariolo, Salerno and us – all of us on our first trip to Africa. An unforgettable experience: the peoples of this continent present in the Little Town appeared to us in all their beauty. The participation in the School of inculturation, which had the family precisely as its theme, and the retreat with the family-focolares, allowed us to get to know deeply the many traditions, from which we discovered many «seeds of the Verb».

The School of inculturation was useful for everyone: for those coming from the different Countries of that continent, it meant to become more aware of the values of which they are the bearers; for us European families, it meant to enter into the daily life of many African families. In everyone, the conviction was strengthened, as underlined by Emmaus



and Jesús, that Africa can be on the frontline to bring *ubuntu* (be happy together), the united and open family with its indispensable relationship with God, to the secularized world.

Also present were 24 family-focolares. Some, who have moved to areas far from their respective focolare centers, are bringing ahead the Work of Mary there where they are just like a true focolare. It was moving to see their suffering at being far from the focolare which they could visit only once or twice a year

because of the enormous distances and the high cost of airfare. In spite of this they strive to live the life of unity totally, by always keeping alive the presence of Jesus in the midst in their family.

There are also family-focolares who, without being transferred, live also far from the focolare centers: heroic families, pioneer families with their natural, and often also with many adopted children. It seems to us that it is important to initiate once again a



new worldwide communion of goods to meet their many needs.

The day dedicated to the retreat of the family-focolares in the Mariapolis Piero, saw the participation also of Emmaus and Jesús who, in an engaging dialogue, tackled important topics: how to live well one's work for the Movement, especially the trips for the spostolate, without relying too much on the family budget; how to harmonize the desire to bring the Ideal of unity to many and the desire, which is just as important, to safeguard the intimacy of the family; how to be more adequately formed to answer to the needs of the territory.



See you again Africa! You taught us how to hope inspite of everythings; to roll up our sleeves to work with a renewed committment for a more equal and fair world; to not allow ourselves to be overcome by consumerism. Twelve days, a strong experience of God, which allowed us to intuit, at least a little, his plan on theses peoples, bearers of important traditions and ready to listen to the voice of God.

Maria and Raimondo Scotta

Family, image of the Trinity

Africa, family, culture. We can say more: African Jesus. Before it seemed just a prophecy. Now this prophecy has become reality, a reality that is lived, that can be felt, that can be touched. This is the sentiment pervades in us. Our hearts are burning with a visible fire. It is definitely a revolution of fire, fire which burns, but leaves behind life, life in abundance.

After these days spent at the Mariapolis Piero we understood, as Piero Pasolini, our ancestor used to say, that we are a seed destined to be sown in the ground, to die and decay so as to generate fruits in abundance.

We spoke in these days of the family. That family which in Africa still contains within it many values, thus making Africa a repository, a cultural reserve for the world. Nevertheless, there are many windows and doors wide open that allow cultural rubbish to enter, the

countervalues. In spite of this, these windows and doors are also a new opportunity to gather the sufferings of humanity and to transform them through the love for Jesus Forsaken.

Another thing that has strongly touched our heart. God made the family in the image and likeness of the Most Holy Trinity: Father-Son-Holy Spirit. What a sacred place! We must not become proud, just as Emmaus rightly said., but we must thank God who has allowed such a great grace, this gift of being a family, consecrated through matrimony, family-domestic church, where we are sanctified. Yes, we want to become saints, together, doing the will of God, in the family.

We understood, that in being a family, as the basic unit of any society, an African family illuminated by the charisma of unity, God is realizing «*That all may be one*» day by day.

Amadeu and Rosaline Jamba (Angola)

Earthquake in Central Italy

Face to face with suffering

An earthquake struck central Italy last August 24, causing almost 300 victims and several thousands of evacuees. entire towns were razed to the ground.

From 3:36 on the 24th of August, awakened by the strong first tremors, we followed live the development of the events, in contact with our numerous members, who live in the regions affected. A continuous exchange of *WhatsApp* message kept the family of the Movement linked together and made us share the suspense of waiting to hear who would be rescued from beneath the ruins and the suffering for those, who unfortunately did not make it out alive. This is what happened to Rita, an adherent and her two grandchildren, Elisa who was 14 years old and Gabriele, 12 (both had participated in the activity of the Teens for Unity and were also present in the Mariapolis at the beginning of August) and the other grandmother, «they all went up to Jesus», their parents wrote us that evening.

For all of us it was a solemn way to start the year dedicated to Jesus Forsaken!

We immediately ran with the others to offer something to drink and food, to bring blankets and basic necessities, to give comfort to the survivors in the tents as well as to the relatives of the victims who were in the morgues; then we tried to understand what were the needs that we could meet. During a webex telephone call between a group of members of the Movement from various regions in Italy - not those struck by the earthquake - we exchanged information that we knew and also shared the different actions planned.

«Here the associations immediately sprang into action - those from the most devastated zones shared - and we too of the Focolare Movement are totally involved».

The youth of the Movement, just like on other occasions, are ready to leave for the devastated areas where there is a need and they are making the necessary contacts with the Civil Protection authorities.

Others have taken the plight of the children to heart: «We must really think of something truly meaningful for them», without forgetting also the elderly. «Who knows, maybe a project of artistic animation could be done - a pianist said - and it would be good also to continue to work together with others even after the earthquake, just like what is happening during these days».

Works in progress, therefore, because the main task is that of being there to listen to the needs and to offer concrete answers, that which is needed and nothing else. Updates on the situation may be viewed in the website www.focolaritalia.it.

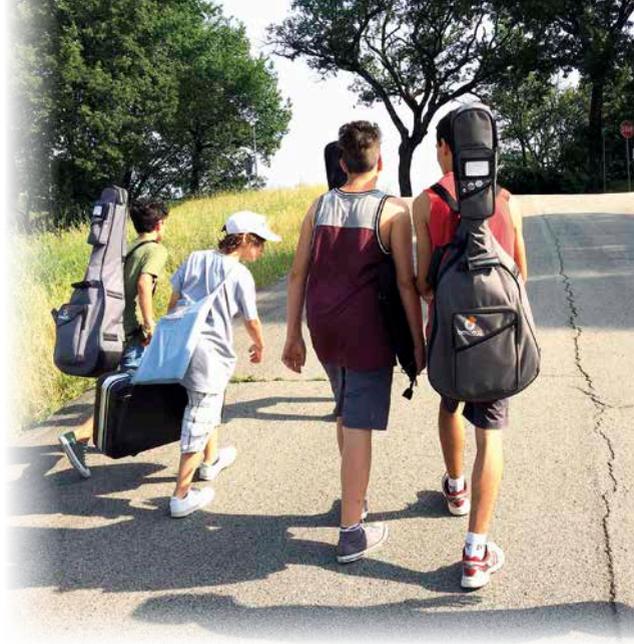
prepared by Aurora Nicosia and Antonio Olivero



Workshop

Between passion and talent

The first music workshop for a united world was held in Loppiano for the Teens for unity from various Countries



A real musical training ground was experienced by teens coming from Scotland, England, Portugal and Italy from June 26 to 30 in Loppiano, under the direction and supervision of the production company «Azioni Musicali (Musical Actions)». Teens of different ages participated in the workshops for guitar, drums and percussion, collective improvisation and hip-hop music: seven days of music, dialogue and sharing.

Every morning, taking from musical terminology, we started together by setting the «tone» of the day through words like harmony, silence, rhythm, melody... that would accompany us throughout the various workshops. By why a school of music? There are many teens who play in a band with their friends. Some do it during their free time, others at-

tend a music school or the Conservatory. At times these activities don't allow them to participate in the appointments with the Gen3 or with the Teens for unity. The objective of these days was to help the teens understand that what they are doing is important, and that one is a gen there where we are, and that the talent God has given us is a gift that will grow everytime that we know how to give it to others, but that it is also important to become more perfect, sharing with others our talent. This is true not only for musical talents.

The workshops are born along the trail of Chiara Lubich who had launched this to the Teens for unity Movement since its birth.

In the message of foundation she wrote among other things: *«I am often reminded of Don Bosco, who, in order to teach a bit of catechism to those boys of his times, invented games, improvised as a tightrope walker, an acrobat, etc. so as to attract them, excite them and to talk to them about God. I would like youth of Don Bosco to be reborn in your hearts and so that they return to the world to conquer the teens. (...) Think, think! Plan!»*.

1 Chiara Lubich, Ai gen 3 Chiara, Città Nuova, 2006, pp.18-19



This was the first workshop, but others are already being planned: from design to sports, from theatre to politics.

«The workshop is effective because it adapts itself to the level of the musical knowledge of each one of us, but at the same time giving us a wider vision of music in general» one of the participants said. «An experience that makes us grow musically speaking, thanks to the experience of those

running the workshops» observed another. And a third said: «Here we learn from each other, getting to know each other profoundly both from the personal and musical point of view».

What can music mean for a teenager? An incredible adventure! When music reaches the point of «clicking» with one's interior life, a profound and marvelous story begins that will never end!

«I have just met this reality of the Focolare through the tours of the Gen Verde in my Country – one of the young musicians said. I liked their music and so I decided to participate, and I'm very happy that I did, also because I discovered that I had a talent: playing the drums. These days I have learned to believe more in myself».

«It is the first time that I was successful in inviting one of my classmates to an activity with the other gen3» confided another.

Music then becomes a new and very rich venue wherein to grow, a mirror where one can recognize and get to know oneself again: every melody a discovery. Music cultivates and reawakens interior life, and a strong interior life makes one free. «I simply believe that music is the musical score of our life and, like in the movies, it changes according to the moments marked by our state of



mind or mood. – written in one of the long impressions left by the teens – Think of how sad and empty life would be without music, without those seven notes that each time elicits and emotion, a thrill. What other art form can fill up the silences, the emptiness or the simple moments of everyday life. Think of all those times that music was beside you

to keep you company when all around you there was no one, when it was just you and your insecurities, your fears. How can you do without a reason for living? A sound, a melody that enters you and touches your soul. And what would life be after all without music if not a painting without colours?».

Ago, Alex, Daniele del centro gen3



New Set-up

To be a «Global Person» in the Caribbean

During the phase of the changes in the Zone brought about by the new set-up, a group of Gen from the Dominican Republic share their experience.

In the geography of the Movement, the Dominican Republic has always been part of the Zone of North America, together with the USA. Recently, in the new set-up, we are going towards a significant change, with the constitution of the small zone of the Caribbean, which most probably will be integrated into the Zone of Hispanic-america 2. Just as it is everywhere, there are unknowns, questions, new relationships of unity to be built. From Santo Domingo, the gen wrote their experience.

«We were invited to participate in a gen2 congress in Cuba with Gabriella Zoncapè and Marius Mueller, responsible for the gen2 Movement at the Center, together with the gen girls and boys of the Zone of Hispanic-america 2. We are grateful for the privilege, that we the second generation have been given to start this exchange that is taking place in the Caribbean.

Being part of the Zone of North America allowed us to be living witnesses that nothing can impede unity, neither the language barrier (we speak Spanish), nor distances, nor the cultural differences. The Mariapolis Luminosa was for many of us a place of formation, exchange, growth and strong experiences, so much so that there is a “before” and “after” our stay in the Little Town.

Our participation in this congress in Cuba and the sharing with the gen from three Countries very similar to ours (Colombia, Venezuela, Cuba), allowed us to have a wider

view of a united world. It was as if we had always been looking towards the North, even if we were so near and so similar to these other countries, it was incredible that we didn't even know each other. During these days we felt a great openness in our sharing with the other gen. We could identify with many of the experiences shared and we were able to build relationships with the others precisely because of our social and cultural similarities.

Having been able to listen to the formation themes without the need for translation brought many fruits and we were able to go in depth. Even the sharing during the communion of soul became easier.

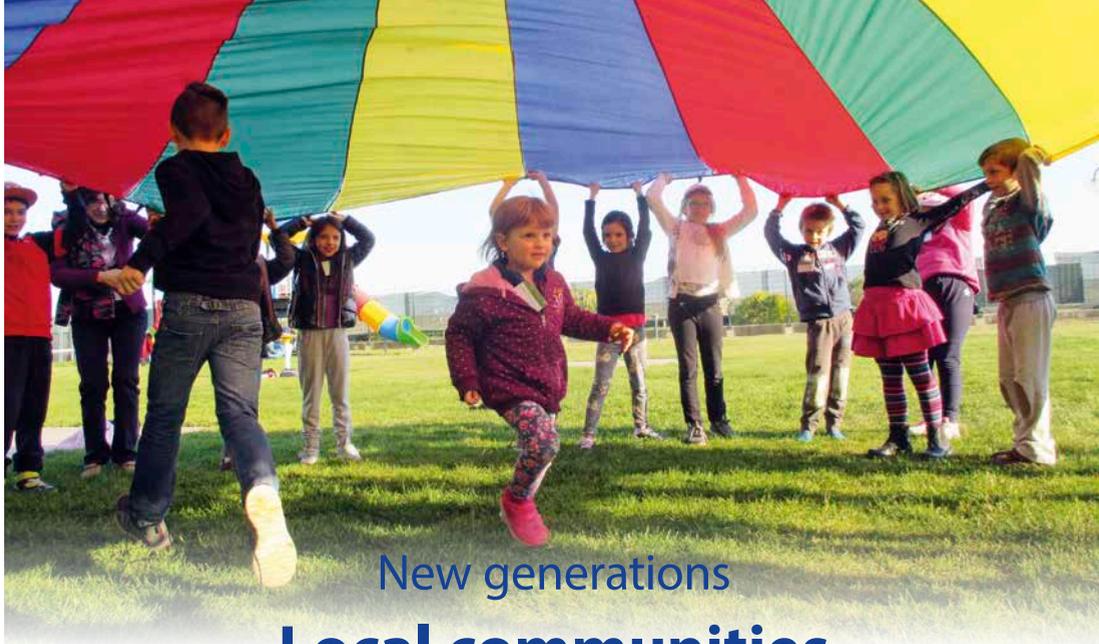
We know that we can achieve a united world only if our gaze is universal. But we feel that our experience could also be a gift, as a point of reference for the decisions that must be made.

We realized that there is no geographical structure that can break up relationships and the unity built in these days. It is for this reason that we feel more than ever that in whatever decision is made, we must continue to work for a more united Caribbean.

In the end we understood that we must be the way Chiara had thought us to be: Global persons. And just as she herself told us, we must «break the mental structures». It is for this reason that we will be equally happy and faithfully committed to bring the charism of Unity in any Zone to which we will eventually belong.

Zoila, Annamir, Luigi, Violeta, Jochy, Javier





New generations

Local communities «cradle» of the gen4

Working with children and for children is a gift and a moment of growth, for everyone, of any age and vocation

During this year, the activities for children have been more and more planned and brought ahead in the local communities. These communities, which serve as the «cradle» of the young generations, are enriched and strengthened by their contribution. A new blossoming of life that is born from the daily faithfulness of the gen4 in living the art of loving. «One day together with the other gen4 - Valentina, five years old from Brazil shared - I threw the “dice of love” and what appeared was “love your enemy”. Thinking of one of my classmates who would beat me during breaktime, I thought that it would be difficult to put into practice this phrase, but nevertheless I wanted to try. Some days later I came home from school very happy: when I went to my class I sat beside this classmate who was also a little bit my “enemy” and I kissed her saying: “Now we are friends”. «Last Monday – Apollonio, a gen4 of Congo wrote – one of my companions asked me if he could borrow some money so he could take a ride to go home. I understood that I could

love him the way I would have loved Jesus if he were to ask me. I gave him all that I had and instead I walked home. My heart was full of joy!».

This year the gen4 congresses, multiplied in the Zones, also thanks to the help of many of the Movement, became moments of family and a school of life. «When the gen4 mini-congress ended – a gen2 girl of Lubiana (Slovenia) said – I felt that all the things that were not beautiful in me had disappeared. I was full of love, with a new freedom, even if I was very tired. What was interesting is that even for us this meeting left a very strong mark: a gift and a time of growth working with the gen4; I learned many things». During many moments in the life of the Movement, the gen4 boys and girls have given their contribution. Often the Mariapolis is an occasion to let other children know about their way of life. In Liguria (Italy) the Mariapolises and the gen4 congresses were held simultaneously.

Nella foto in alto, i gen4 del Veneto, Italia

A characteristic of these moments of formation is the getting to know the world and the different cultures. Thanks to the help of a focolarina from Mexico, the gen4 of Myanmar experienced a truly Mexican celebration. With the *sombrero*, the typical Mexican hat, they played games, made paper cut-outs and learned dances. Each one then went home with a bag of coloured erasers and the commitment to share them with their friends. And why was this? Together they had listened to one of the answers of Chiara Lubich to a gen4 from Mexico who asked her what she should do so as not to be attached to pencils and erasers, just because they were brightly coloured. *«Don't worry, because I too like colourful erasers and pencils too – Chiara reassured her. [...] You rightly said: "If these colourful things stop me from loving, then I have to throw them away". For example: one of your classmates says: "Give me that colourful eraser". So you should give it to her, even if you like it, because you should love always. Do you understand? So don't worry about things. But if they take love away from you, then no; you must put them aside and love your classmate».*

The gen4 boys and girls of Welwyn Garden City (Great Britain) also went on a «trip»: an imaginary train brought them to Trent where Chiara lived, and then to Africa and to Asia to discover how the ideal of unity arrived there and then, so as to get to know more about the Last Supper and to prepare them for Mass, they «arrived»



Run4unity in Camerun



Festa messicana in Myanmar

in the Holy Land! A gen4 girl said that it was the most beautiful day of her life, everyone tirelessly made acts of love. An important and enriching contribution was the presence of two mothers. The congress of Montet instead was built «as a team» among the gen4 assistants of Switzerland and the «big family» of the Little Town: the focalhe various corners of the world, while Milene Benjamin and Pep Cànoves, responsible of the gen4 Centers, brought the life of the gen4 in the world. Palmira Frizzera, one of the first companions of Chiara, invited the gen4 to make many acts of love: «I am already very old – she told them – and I no longer have many things to do, that is why I can make many acts of love... just like you».

In various small zones, together with the gen4 congresses, formation courses were also held for the assistants and animators. *«Thank you for having shared with me the beautiful news about the congress – Emmaus wrote to Loretta and Franco of Sicily (Italy) – Just seeing the photos I could feel the happy and active atmosphere wherein the gen4 boys and girls were the protagonists. I was particularly happy about the meeting that you had with the assistants. The unity built is a contribution to the journey of the Movement towards "That all may be one"».*

In the Marche (Italy) for the past two years they had begun to look at the youth realities (children and teens) as a whole. In this way they helped each other in bringing both ahead by giving value to what is done in the community and involving also those adults who would like to help out. Among the objectives for the next three years: to do it in such a way that every community

will have groups of children and teens to be followed locally.

Peace was one of the topics at the center of the formation of the gen4 this year, and it was especially strong to talk about this in places of conflict. In the north of Camerun for example, there is a difficult situation almost of war, with the continuous violent incursions of terrorists of Boko Haram. «To of peace made our gen4 understand – wrote the assistant – that inspite of all the challenges, the world is tending towards unity. On the occasion of the Run4unity we wroked together with the gen3 and the Teens for unity: sports, games, songs, artistic creations and experiences prepared in a way that children and teens could live peace among them, without quarelling. A way to help them to grow with a mentality of peace to bring then to their families and in society».

During the trip in Kenya a gen4 girl asked Emmaus if she believes that it is easy to forgive the persons who hurt us everyday. «No, it's not easy, because if someone hurts you the first reaction that comes to you is: I will hurt him back too – Emmaus answered – And yet instead Jesus tells us that we must forgive. It is not easy. But Jesus asks this of us. Since we have chosen to live what Jesus wants, so we also want to forgive. So how can we do this? Let's think of that person who has hurt us: first of all we don't know what he or she has in their heart, if he was passing through a difficult moment, if maybe someone also hurt her and that's why she was a bit angry that's why she took it out on you ... Nevertheless we see and meet Jesus in that person. Certainly, it's not that I have to forgive Jesus, because Jesus didn't do anything against me, but I have to love Jesus in her». «To love Jesus in that person I have to forgive – she concluded – and i can forgive because I love Jesus. I become strong because of the strenght that Jesus gives me, and so I can forgive in this way. [...] Sometimes I am able to do it, and when i am not able I start again, just as I always tell you to start again».

Anna Lisa Innocenti with the gen4 Centers

Let's live the Gospel together

Together is the key word in this itinerary of preparation for First Communion and Confirmation published by Città Nuova and made up of four volumes for children and four guidelines for the catechists, as well as four supplements prepared for the family, in the belief that the whole community, even the relatives, should be involved in a child's faith education. This was the idea of Maria Helena (Milene) Benjamin and Pep Cànoves, responsible for the international gen4 centers; Eugenia Bersani, a Volunteer, catechist in the diocese of Milan; Mario Iasevoli, formator and author of the magazine for children called *Big* published by Città Nuova; Fr. Emilio Rocchi and Fr. Mario Cataldi, animators of the Diocesan Movement of the Focolare.

The most relevant novelty is the centrality of the relationship, one passes from the scholastic model «teacher-student» to that of a dynamic relationship: it is the core of the relationship – where the adults and the children are the protagonists – where the transmission of values and the growth of the person takes place. Knowledge becomes an element to be shared, deepened, to reflect upon, to play with and to experience.

The workbook is divided into illustrated worksheets that can be detached and inserted into a ring binder. The experiences of children from all over the world are important since they allow the message and the Christian values to move from a conceptual level to a concrete, daily and simple level. The guide for catechists is enriched by the contribution of psychologists, educators and teachers.

Elena Cardinali



Local communities

Leaven for «*That all may be one*»

A great variety of experiences at the meeting of the leaders of the local communities

The Holy Spirit gifted us with a very special preparation to this meeting: a trip to Africa, to Nairobi, together with Emmaus and Jesús and others from the Center. Our contact with the reality of that continent, which Chiara had envisioned as the «specialist» in the aspect of irradiation (Orange),

The meditations of Chiara or the reading of passages from «Paradise '49», were welcomed with profundity, as special nourishment of the Charism. The specific themes prepared by the Councillors were also received in the same way: the in-depth reflection on «*That all may be one*» - a novelty and a challenge - so as to be able to look at one's commitment in the Movement from this perspective; formation; service to communion of the means of communication in its various aspects; the new generations including sessions with the gen3 and gen4 Centers that shared new ideas for the care of the youngest in the local communities.

The theme of Agnes van Zeeland and Flávio Roveré, persons responsible for the men and women focalari, began with the expression of Chiara, «the community spouse of the focolare» was a great stimulus for those present to find a totally new relationship with the focolare centers, highlighting the importance of making the unity grow which is an

indispensable aspect.

and with inculturation as its style, was an immense gift. We were struck above all by the people, being able to meet them and to share in the experiences of people from many Countries, also with the leaders of the local communities, who were full of life and enthusiasm. The members of the Council helped us to organize the meeting, contributing through their ideas, prayers, their presence; some, in particular prepared the interventions for the congress. Someone observed that this meeting was a work of the Center, not only by those of us who are responsible for this aspect of witness and irradiation.

The participants were 250 persons from 44 Countries: Africa (9), Latin America (5), North America (2), India, Indonesia, Middle East (5, including those from Syria), Europe (20), a big number from Italy.



Oceania. Futuna



Africa. Togo

One can feel that the communities are very much alive there where the Ideal of unity has arrived more recently. It was very beautiful to see how many communities practiced the communion of goods in order to pay for the travel and expenses of their «leaders». There were many experiences on how the modern means of



America Latina. Terra del Fuoco (Cile)

communication are being used to keep in contact with one another. In many communities the importance of the support of the priests and religious of the Movement can be felt (Africa, certain parts of Europe, Brazil) that create opportunities to meet, provide suitable venues, and many activities are promoted together.

In some Zones and small zones a certain stagnation is felt, and so we asked ourselves how to overcome this. The life of the branches requires energy and strength, therefore at times it becomes difficult to find moments to meet as a community.

The meeting was above all a great experience of communion: the groups were formed by people who spoke the same language, but who were coming from different small zones. The Italians too appreciated the possibility of sharing with the other small zones, because there is a lot of variety in Italy, where there are more than 400 local communities.

There was a great joy from beginning to end: in the corridors, during lunch, in the meetings of all kinds.

Emmaus and Jesús said: «Do not be afraid even if you are few» was very reassuring. Someone commented: «Their words gave us much freedom and responsibility, they also gave us much peace».

In the answers to the questions Emmaus and Jesús touched on many topics. Here are some points. From Africa Emmaus told them that she understood three things: how much we can go ahead with the Word of life (there are very active communities that nourish themselves only with this); how important the relationship with the

focolare center is, even if it may be far away; and that we must carry the local situation together, just the branches by themselves will not be able to do this.

It is the word «local» that distinguishes the communities, which is the fact of being the leaven of unity in that place in the most diverse ways.

The «leaders» must not imprison themselves within certain schemes. The local community exists if there is reciprocal love. We must free ourselves from the thought that this is another activity «to do». «*That all may be one*» is achieved from person to person, it is done locally, by taking care of those who live near us there where we are.

There is a trinitarian relationship between the community and the branches. The branch



Italia. Puglia

does not live for itself and the movement themselves find their incarnation in the local.

Emmaus encouraged everyone to make their own the initiatives of the youth and to involve them in their programmes. With regards to the fear expressed by some on the fact that, in working with other groups, we may lose our identity, Emmaus and Jesús affirmed that in the relationship with the other we find our own identity.

There were many positive comments. Here is one of them: «I came with many questions and doubts regarding the relationship between the local community, the focolare, the branches and movements. With Agnes and Flávio first and then



Oceania, Fiji

with Emmaus and Jesús they were all solved. I understood better that what is important is that the life must circulate, the trinitarian relationships and reciprocity must come first and foremost. The structures come after, or better still, they must disappear within the local community if there is the life, and if this life is abundant. This has simplified everything for me and has freed me from useless burdens. But I think that this is also a challenge which Jesus is calling us to meet».

Gloria Duarte, Tim King

From the community in Syria In spite of the war

**While the attempts to stop the conflict seem useless,
the Ideal of unity keeps alive the residues of hope for peace**

As we know Syria today is living in a state of «dirty» war, and war always brings with it violence, destruction and death. We live there in those conditions where humanity has been erased, especially in Aleppo where missiles and bombs fall in an ever increasing number on neighborhoods, homes, schools, hospitals. There is no water and electricity, and even the basic commodities.

Many families have evacuated their homes and have sought refuge in other cities or have migrated abroad; everyday we greet relatives and friends who leave us for an unknown destination and future.

Our communities in Syria too have experienced these events, but starting from this painful reality we formed small groups to reunite the family of the Movement in the meetings of the local communities in five regions of the Country. In spite of the difficult circumstances of daily life and the uncertainties, we try to come together to prepare the meetings and to live the commandment of love with the presence of Jesus in the midst, with whom we work and



we prepare ourselves to bring to the others the light and peace that He has brought in us and to give it to all our brothers whom we meet in the communities. We do this in many ways: through our smile, the simplicity of our warm welcome, the spirit of love, the encouraging news of the Movement in the world and our local news. Or we do this also through our experiences and the witness of faith in the presence of God in our life and in His providence, striving to discern the will of God and living well the present moment. We are nourished by our participation in the Mass and we help one another also through simple collective games.

On special occasions and during the feast days our communities in the three main cities usually turn attention to those among us whom we know are most in need. In Damascus we visited the families in their homes and got to know their needs from up close.

Both in Kfarbo and also in Damasco and Aleppo, we tried also to provide the basic commodities, such as gasoline for the heating system, the LED lighting to illuminate some of their homes, foodstuff; we were able to repair some homes, to share some money, thanks also to the communion of goods of the whole Movement in the world that continues to send us assistance.

Almost all the members of the local communities, young and adults, have participated in these activities and we have experienced together the joy of giving and sharing.

We have continued the relationship with these families by visiting them and giving them regular assistance.

We were able to do everything guided by the spirit of the Movement that has grown in us and among us with the help and the support of the men and women focalinari present respectively in Damascus and in Aleppo, who give us and continue to give us strong support and the continuous presence of Mary, comforting and encouraging, and of the Risen Jesus who has won over death.

We are grateful to Chiara, her experience during the war has helped us to live in these conditions that are so similar to those in the

beginning of the Movement. We are grateful to the focalinari and the focalinaria who have not abandoned us during the war - like many others have done - but have remained with us in spite of all the difficulties, continuing to support us to persevere in faith and in hope. As an ulterior confirmation of this were the visits from the Center



by the persons responsible, such as Agostino Spolti, of the gen3 Center, and the visit of Arlette Samman and Philippe Ehrenzeller, responsible for the Zone of the Middle East, while many other inhabitants were leaving the Country. They came to Syria with simplicity because they feel that we are their brothers and sisters and because they would like to know our situation and to encourage us to continue to sow love in this bloodied land, hoping to gather love and peace one day. They also met all the local communities and shared with them their experiences which made us feel that we are an important part of the Movement, which is always close beside us.

Lina Loutfi, leader of the local community of Damascus

Luglio 2016. La comunità della Siria in Mariapoli



Seminarians in Loppiano

The gift of unity

26 seminarians from four continents met in the Little City from July 2 to 15 for an experience of family around the Word of God

The *input* to start: «Unity is a gift of the mercy of God». There is much to be explored in these words of Pope Francis, so much to understand, so much to live!

From the Bible the course was set: if the attempt at «unity» of Babel ended in confusion because it was without God, the unity at Pentecost, a gift of the Spirit, safeguards the diversity and works wonders. It is this unity-gift which, guided by the Jesus, aims at the concreteness of life and of relationships. Loppiano once again is the ideal context for this because in contact with its inhabitants one can grasp the characteristic of the daily trinitarian relationships that are conceived and lived here. The life of the Gospel, in its extraordinary and yet simple characteristic is what one of the seminarians said that he discovered here.

Nevertheless one is able to experience first-hand also how much culture and history carry some weight, sometimes of prejudices,

that impede the welcoming of the other. Seminarians from Haiti and the Dominican Republic explained how their peoples share the same Caribbean island, but the unity is only territorial, so much so that the misunderstandings and judgements prevail. The initial tension among them, gradually dissolved, when they discovered that they have many things in common and everyday there were many opportunities to recognize each other as brothers and to live reciprocal love. Yes, with mercy unity is possible and diversity is a gift.

From the sharing of the experiences of two focolares of Loppiano, what was highlighted is another profound truth: mercy must be exercised everyday, being able to see the other always with new eyes.

In short, a well-rounded Christian life is what counts the most and is what must come first even before one's own election to the priestly ministry.

prepared by the gens Center





Families

Pathways of Light

arms that welcome
and gather

In Loppiano a new edition of the course for married couples who are passing through difficult moments. The therapy of reciprocal love takes on the wounds of the families of our times and triggers unexpected processes of reconciliation among the couples

From 2009, the first year after which it was repeated annually, the course «For-Courses of Light» is envisioned and prepared for couples who are passing through difficult moments and who, in some cases, have already the separation papers in hand or who have been separated in the preceding months or years. From these courses some couples, grateful for the graces they have received and their consequent reconciliation, have decided to share their time, in close collaboration with experts, journeying together with the couple participating in the ongoing course. Thus a close-knit team, made up of a sexologist, a psychotherapist, a priest and five married couples, welcomed – from June 18 to 25 – the 13 couples who this year participated in the course, the majority of whom are facing serious difficulties, two are already separated, others, even if they are still living together, are already leading separate lives.

It was not a course «for» but a course «with»; because everyone, professors and learners, did the exercises proposed. The reply of the participants soon came: «Sharing together with other couple who have had our same problems helped us very much: we were not alone to face

our situation which in the beginning we were even too embarrassed to reveal».

The characteristic of the course was always reciprocal love. Everyone: experts, accompanying couples and the participants joined in to share one's own experience without hiding the small and big difficulties that are met along the way and communicating how they try to overcome them.

The course was developed along two lines: spirituality and psychology of the couple. The themes tackled were on self-awareness, diversity, conflict, acceptance, communication, man-woman differences, sexuality and forgiveness. Everything was done through head-on interventions, moments of dialogue, practical exercises. The moments of relax were also important: excursions in the surrounding areas and an evening of dancing with the aim of allowing the couples to rediscover each other.

The evening with the Gen Verde was a strong moment. The couples unanimously took as their own the song of the band *Crediamo nel noi* (*We believe in us*).

The instruments of the collective spirituality were an excellent combination to the topics

and the specialized indications, because they were like pearls to improve the relationship as a couple even for those who knew little about the Movement.

In a moment of sharing, someone confessed that, during the trip to Loppiano, he felt like going down from the car and going home, but as soon as he arrived here he received a hug.

Yes, because for these wounded families «arms that embrace and gather» are necessary, so as to embrace the wounds and gather the broken pieces brought about by pain and betrayal. But one must also allow himself to be embraced and allow the pieces to be gathered.

In these days we learned that the destination is not important, rather it is the journey that one takes in order to be able to reach it. These couple all want to do this.

The strong presence of love among the experts and the couple in the organizing team, was that «something more» which was felt because «it is a body that acts», as one of them said. «Here we found God», a phrase often heard. «We experienced His presence».

But not everything was easy: in the days that followed, for some there were repeated quarrels, with the temptation to find excuses to stop loving.

Through the exercises proposed some found once again the respect for their partner

and asked them for forgiveness in public.

What emerged was the beauty and the joy of having found brothers and sisters, knowing that certain challenges cannot be overcome alone.

The environment of Loppiano, its citizens encountered during the Mass, the surrounding nature, the silence, encouraged the journey of reconciliation. Different people said that they have not found the solution, but they will bring home the instruments to be able to find it and apply it to their life.

The Mass with the renewal of the marriage vows was a sacred and solemn moment. Tears of suffering, but also of joy.

We can say that during the course this year we also witnessed miracles.

Often the two people flourish again and can go ahead by themselves, and at times that particular wound can be identified and has to be addressed, also with an eventual and adequate psychological support.

For others it was like rekindling the light of their relationship, understanding the importance of giving space to the other and of finding the harmony again.

Many said that they found a «spiritual home» and that now «we are a big family of which you are a part».

Adriana and Francesco Scariolo

Carmen Hernández, untiring proclaimer of the Word

Carmen Hernández, who began with Kiko Argüello and Fr. Mario Pezzi the Neocatechumenal Way, died in Madrid (Spain) on July 19, in her family residence. The words of Pope Francis were moving during the occasion of her demise: he called her a woman «animated by a sincere love for the Church» for whom she gave her life. At the funeral liturgical service, presided by the archbishop of Madrid, Mons. Osoro Sierra, surrounded by numerous prelates among whom was Card.

Rylko, president of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Jesús Moran also concelebrated, to bear witness to the communion and affection that links to Focolare to The Way, a fruitful and enlightened ecclesial reality based on the Word, Liturgy, the Community. In the message of condolence that Emmaus sent to Kiko, she wrote among other things: «Jesus must have welcomed her with much love as a reward for her life that was totally given to Him in the ardent and untiring proclamation of His Word».



Carmen con Kiko Argüello

Together for Europe a gift of God for the world

In Germany an event that opened up new wayd for a common journey. A two-day congress with 1.700 representatives from 32 Countries and a public manifestation with 5000 participants. The messages of Pope Francis and of the Patriarch Bartholomew I

«These Christians can no longer be separated – they are united». It was not just Cardinal Reinhard Marx who was moved by the atmosphere among the 5,000 present at the concluding public Manifestation on July 2 of «Together for Europe» in Munich (Germany).

They came after a two-day Congress with a programme that was very intense, with the participation of 1,700 representatives, Christians from 200 Movements and Communities coming from 32 Countries. They gave a visible public witness of reconcilitation and of the journey taken together among the different Churches. The media of various countries gave the event a wide coverage, even outside of Europe. In

Germany, the main television station also gave a report on this.

Pope Francis and the Patriarch Bartholomew I sent two video messages. «Together for Europe is a cohesive force with a clear objective of transforming the basci Christian values into concrete answers to the challenges of a continent in crisis», the Pope said. «There has probably never been such a need and a call to reunite ourselves, to be together and to act in solidarity», affirmed the Patriarch Bartholomew, underlining that Christians are called to manifest the fundamental principle of the Church, which is communion. The Lutheran bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, looking at the crowd gathered in the square, commented: «I don't need to give





Alcuni del Comitato di orientamento al Congresso

a message on unity, because in you I see unity in front of me».

The same reality was grasped by the President of the Focolare Movement, Emmaus Maria Voce: «I spoke in Italian and my words were then translated into German. Nonetheless, I had the impression that everyone understood Italian – there was no linguistic barrier!». She added: «My theme was: "Unity is possible". But there was no need to convince the public of this, because I could feel the presence of Jesus in the midst among the people present in the square. I saw their faithfulness, their perseverance, not allowing themselves to be discouraged by the rain, standing for four hours and with many youth interspersed among them, without isolating themselves. Normally it is the music that draws the crowd in a square and during the speeches concentration usually dwindles. Here the people were concentrating even during the more demanding talks!».

What happened from June 30 to July 2 in Munich? What was the novelty in the journey of «Together for Europe» of Communities and Movements from different Churches, which began in 1999, after the signing of the Joint Declaration on the doctrine of Justification, and which now has organized this fourth European Manifestation, after Stuttgart 2004 and 2007, and Brussels 2012?

In these days Europe was on the lips of everyone. The media were intent on analyzing and commenting on «Brexit». Why precisely in

this moment 5,000 Christians were talking about «Together for Europe» captured the attention of the media as never before. And what was rather peculiar, which has never happened before in Germany: none of the many articles written on the event – in the ecclesial and non-ecclesial world – carried a negative comment in this regard. Gérard Testard of Efesia commented during the evaluation meeting of the international Steering Committee: «The Manifestation in Stachus Square was a new step in going out in public. "Together for Europe of



Il card. Marx ed il vescovo evangelico Bedford-Strohm

our Communities is not an end in itself, but it is for society, for the world». Sr. Anna-Maria aus der Wiesche, Christusbruderschaft Selbitz said: «Our "Together for Europe is a gift of God for the world, and with it God consoles the world."»

This was underlined during the Congress also by Michael Hochschild, sociologist and professor of post-modern thought at the Time-Lab of Paris: «We are living a profound crisis of modern society's system. The operating system of society is no longer functioning. You as Movements are creating the hope and trust which is necessary in the future». He then exhorted: «But to do this you must consider yourselves and to show with greater decisiveness that you are "moulding" forces of the cultural panorama. You must become "socio-civil Movements"». This is the challenge launched by Hochschild.

Herbert Lauenroth, expert in intercultural at the Ecumenical Center of Ottmaring (Augsburg), interpreted the present situation of Europe as a reaction of fear and of insecurity caused by a sense of existential suffocation. A situation which, at the same time, also represents a challenge: «It may be precisely fear of the future that forces us to do everything we can to make it better». He continued saying that, through the encounter with the other abysses that society is facing, we come to understand that a new direction based on faith is possible. This could be the basis for a new, necessary culture of hope and trust in Europe.

Aside from the few representatives of Bavaria and of the Trentine region, there were no politicians present. This fact was seen as an ulterior sign that the Movements must commit themselves more in the civil world. The fact that the day of the public Manifestation on July 2, also coincided with the feast day of the Visitation – «he has overturned the powerful from their thrones, and raised up the humble» (Lk 1,52) – seemed like a sign that from Heaven that we had to move in this direction.

One could feel a certain prophetic certainty of the beginning of a new epoch of Ecumenism. The two highest representatives of the two great Churches in Germany, Cardinal Reinhard Marx and the Evangelical bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, were a clear sign of this, giving a luminous testimony of friendship. From the media in Germany, the new Movements and Communities were considered for the first time as part of the Church and precursors of unity.

The communion between East and West was strengthened. There were many groups from Eastern Europe, both in the Congress and at the Manifestation. They were the ones who profoundly moved the crowd with their experiences on reconciliation in political life, for

example between Germany and Russia. Sergej Altuchov promised to bring the «key of reconciliation», that each one received at the conclusion of the event, to his President Putin.

The strong contribution of the youth was also something new, and not just onstage. 1,500 youth of «Holy Spirit Night» participated in the event in the square and their presence gave much hope for the future. During the evening concert, enriched by meditative moments, one could see the typical way of praying and praising God of the free Churches, a style that must always more be harmonized with the other notes in a wider symphony.

The future pathways for the common journey were mapped out: aside from a greater commitment in and for the world, the friendly dialogue must continue to develop, also with Eastern Europe. A greater number of Orthodox participation would be necessary in «Together for Europe», so as to better highlight the aspect of a trinitarian God. The central message of «Together for Europe» must be better elaborated: «We can learn from the others that which we have to announce to them» said Herbert Lauenroth. Thomas Roemer, YMCA, member of the Steering Committee said: «It is through the other that I become myself. We don't want to level out everything. Unity yes, but not uniformity. We need the different identities so as to bring them all together at the center, at the heart».

Beatrix Ledergerber-Baumer



Mpu Twenty years of a politics for unity

A seminar to look ahead towards the solid foundation of the «Charter of the Mpu».
New, interesting synergies.



content and the other inundations to which politics must serve as an active and adequate background to the new challenges.

The Charter of the Mpu was promulgated, written after a participatory process, that gathered and focused its attention on the indications personally handwritten by Chiara in 1962 for the St. Catherine Center and those writings given to the Mpu throughout the span of more than ten years. It is made up of two parts: 1) the commitment towards a politics for unity; 2) the transparency of the essential service structures which are the Mpu Centers.

The first steps were immediately taken to make it a reality. First and foremost the participated construction of the international Agenda which indicated the city as the primary venue of politics. Then the report of the international Center on what they have done in the last three years was presented. And finally the start of the capillary process that should lead to the renewal of the Mpu Centers on all levels and in three stages: diffused participation; synergy with the centers of the Focolare Movement; election of the president and co-president of each Mpu Center.

It is enough to watch any news broadcast on television to see that the world has lost peace. It is in a dark moment of history, but it is not the end of the world, it is the painful gestation period of a new era.

Without ceasing to welcome and to weep with those who are weeping, it is to this "new era" that we must set our gaze, our energies and a new creative politics.

For this reason the 20° anniversary of the Movement of politics for unity was not a celebration, but a formation to face such a challenge, a commitment to which the message of Maria Voce calls us.

At the seminar, of which a large part was broadcast through live streaming, the Centers of the Mpu were invited, some members of parliament, diplomats and youth: a variety of faiths, languages and political cultures. This was interwoven with the V Dialogue, offering us a wealth of



The message of Maria Voce

My warmest greetings to you and to those you represent, diverse peoples and cultures, but with a common dream of fraternity that Chiara Lubich made us contemplate as something real and for which we all work for.

Her ideal of unity, born during the second world war, appeared immediately in its social dimension, activating new resources to contribute to the healing and recomposing of a humanity broken into pieces by war and by violence, by hatred and injustice. From then on, in front of every new conflict, Chiara tenaciously proposed the evangelical logic of love, the culture of encounter, of dialogue, of legality, of human rights, to filter down in all the ambits of social life. This is the path that she continues to indicate to us even today as we face the many conflicts that bring great suffering to persons and peoples from all corners of the world.

If the members of our Movement are known as «apostles of dialogue», the same and even more must be said of those who adhere to the Movement of Politics for Unity.

Being well aware of the scenario of the great political challenges of today, national and international, you are gathered here also to solemnly ratify the commitment, twenty years after the birth of MPU, to spend your life for universal fraternity, substantiating your thoughts and your actions according to the guidelines contained in the Charter.

My wish for you is that, in collaboration with all those in the Focolare Movement who are involved in the dialogue with contemporary culture according to the various disciplines and in synergy with the New Humanity Movement and the Youth for a United World, that your commitment can bear witness to the lofty vocation of politics as the «love of all loves» and the dream of a united world can one day become a reality.

Be certain of my closeness and support, together with the whole Movement.



The presence of representatives of New Humanity, of the Youth for a united world and of Sophia was not just an honour for the Mpu, but the greatest confirmation of a stronger synergy, that is already in action and which will go ahead and grow from this moment onwards.

The prospects for the Schools of Mpu for the youth and their experiences were quite interesting. We would like to cite those presented by of some members of parliament: the first a Korean, Buddhist, who would like to deepen the bond between the teachings of Buddha and the politics of unity; the second from two representatives of the Democratic Republic of Congo, shaken by the turbulence of the postponement of the elections, both of whom are committed to transparency and democracy: "We come from two different political parties and everything points to our division. But we remain united for the good of our Country."

Letizia De Torre, Miguel Aguado



Temporary Focolares

Life that grows

Just like in 2015 (see Mariapolis august-september) this year too in different parts of the world, for a week or an entire month, the «temporary focolares» came to life, composed of focolarini or focolarine, often together with persons of the other vocations of the Movement.

Taking advantage of the vacation, they went to places far away to meet the communities there and to make a strong experience of unity and irradiation of the Ideal with them. Due to space constraints we must limit ourselves to citing just some of the many 2016 temporary focolares that were realized from the North to the South of the world.

The temporary focolare realized in Chad was truly multi-faceted: Nicole, focolarina in Yaoundé (Camerun), Chris, focolarino in Douala, Gery and Elvis, gen2 and Chantal, adherent, married, and which from July 3 to 17 was able to travel because of the generous contribution of their respective local communities who provided for what was lacking for the trip.

The Mariapolis was held last year in N'Djamena, and it was there that the focolarine and the focolarini of Camerun realized that they could not abandon these different communities, which were born thanks to the men and women religious who at present have been transferred elsewhere. In Moundou, where the temporary focolare was set-up, from July 3 to 10, their first visitor was Mons. Joachim Kouraleyo (Bishop friend), who was happy about this initiative because, he said: «The Movement gives the possibility of discovering what is essential in the Christian faith». The focolare then transferred to Pala (10-11 July) and from July 12 to 17 in N'Djamena.

In each of these places the meetings with the youth, families, groups, were very, very fruitful. The experiences of the people who participated were very touching: a father of a family whose marriage was saved thanks to the Ideal; a nun who, sent by her Bishop for a period of time in Fontem because she was thinking of leaving her congregation,



Ciad. Il vescovo di Moundou con Chris e Nicole



Ciad. A N'Djamena Costanza, un'aderente, con un giovane e con Elvis gen2 del Cameroun



Gabon. Hervé, Gustavo e Kevin accolti a Libreville

rediscovered her vocation there; a elderly gentleman who decided that he could not die unless he first transmitted that Ideal that has illuminated his life. And so he did everything possible to reconnect with the Movement since he had lost all contact due to the many wars that he lived through.

In Gabon, in equatorial Africa

To welcome Hervé, a focolarino from Burundi, Gustavo, Argentinian focolarino and Kevin, gen of Camerun, in **Libreville** (capital of Gabon), were Augustin and Jeanne, a family-focolare who had moved from Congo to gabon for the Movement. The live in a house provided for by the archbishop Mons. Basile Mvé Engone, friend of the Movement, who together with the community consider this family as a true focolare. After receiving his blessing, our three went to **Port Gentil**, welcomed by Bea and Evariste, leaders of the local community, and stayed in a small apartment - as guests of the Salesian sisters -which from July 7 to 14 became the focolare, or rather the home of everyone. They had just arrived and were organizing themselves to do some grocery shopping when the persons of the community began to arrive with sacks of food, drinks, water and dinner that was ready to be shared by everyone all together, thus immediately creating the atmosphere of fraternity that was truly special. They began with

the visit to Bishop E. C. Ogbonna Managwu who welcomed them with cordiality and gave them his blessing. During that week the door of the focolare was always open and the visits came one after another. They were showered with invitations to lunch or dinner, which gave them the possibility if getting to

know the various components of a community that is very much alive, united and with the desire to go ahead helping one another concretely. «The characteristic of these days - Hervé wrote - was living in the midst of the people, helping them to clean the house, lighting the cooking fires using wood, preparing the meal, washing dishes. We received so much love, much more than what we have tried to give».

From July 14 to 16, a surprise trip to the hinterlands of the Country, to **Lambaréné**, in the equatorial forest: a total immersion in village life. Riding on a canoe, they traverse the Ogooué river, in contact with a life that is devoid of all comforts, but largely compensated by an exuberant and healthy nature. The village chiefs welcome them as a «presence of God and a blessing for their families».

In northern Europe: in the islands of Lofoten (Norway)

It was Fr. Gunther - parish priest of Harstad (Norway), where there is the only Catholic parish in the northern part of the isle of Lofoten - who asked René (Nuldi), Swiss focolarino priest in the Roman Mariapolis, if he could come again this year. Not just for a vacation, but to bring the spirit of the Focolare in that land of dispersion which is greatly secularized. And also so that he could act as a substitute while Fr. Gunther went to Ottmaring to know more about the priests' focolare. And so from May

13 to June 7, his rectory was transformed into a temporary focolare .

Aside from Nuldi, there was also Christian, a Swiss focolarino from the Zone of Italy, and for a few days two focolarine of Oslo: Elma and Letizia also went to Harstad. The first contacts were with the Catholics (1,06% of the population), among whom were numerous immigrants - Filipinos, Poles, Eritreians, Vietnamese, etc. - who find a warm welcome and good jobs in Norway. «We held meetings and catechism classes for teens - they told us - reaching even the farthest communities by ferry: a unique opportunity to establish deeper relationships and to talk of the Movement. An example is the family of German doctors who have been Harstand for 10 years, or with a Croatian lady, a catholic, who with her Norwegian companion invited us to lunch in their *hütte* (cabin) in the middle of a birchwood forest.

In a trip of seven hours by *hurtigruten* (the famous postal ship that plies the fjords) Nuldi and Christian went to Tromsø, the northernmost prelature of the world and to which Harstad also belongs. Here the bishop Mons. Berislav Gric welcomed them with great gratitude, encouraging them to come back as often as possible. Nuldi also went to Kiruna, in Sweden, passing through the land of the «Troll» near the Finnish border, to celebrate mass in a



Ad Harstad, con le focolarine

convent of contemplative sisters: a good occasion to make known the spirituality of unity 2,000 kilometers away from the nearest focolare center. «In Norway - Nuldi and Christian said - the periphery which Pope Francis talks about is not so much an existential one but rather a geographical one. To reach a Catholic church one must travel many kilometers. At the liturgical celebrations, you will meet also persons of other Churches or religions, such as the two Druze Syrian refugees, who were very impressed by the Ideal that we shared. «The encounter with these two young people - Nuldi underlined - was enough to convince us that it was worth it to have come this far and possibly to come back in the future».

In fact, just after some weeks, other two focolarini from Stockholm (Pierluigi and Patrick) with Vicente from the focolare of Bilbao, went to Harstad from July 6 to 28, to start another temporary focolare. Fr. Gunther could not believe it that during the Sunday masses it was the very same focolarini who explained the Gospel through the «art of loving», and who would also mingle with the parishioners during the traditional «coffee and biscuits for everyone» offered after the mass, and who would also accompany him to distribute the packages of basic commodities to the poor and who during the week would animate the meetings with the families and the youth. They even organized together an excursion on July 25 where the whole parish participated.

prepared by Anna Friso



Christian e Nuldi con il vescovo di Tromsø Berislav Gric davanti all'isola di Sommarøy (a nord della Norvegia)

In Brazil

«Live this dream!»

At the 13° Forum of the Teens for Unity in Northeast Brazil, the general practice for a more fraternal world, starting from the true relationships among the participants

Gather together 250 adolescents from five States of the Brazilian Northeast, let them invade the Mariapolis Santa Maria for five days, give them a theme: «United World: Live this dream». And then enjoy the exuberant vitality, the contagious joy but also the trust and the reciprocal welcome that generates a never before seen communion lived and the depth of many inner steps taken.

This is what happened at the end of June, at the 13° Forum of the Teens for Unity, which was as usual, organized and directed by the teens themselves. «A more fraternal world» is the dream indicated by the teens, who committed themselves to give life to a workshop of fraternity in spite of their differences, and to show that a more just, supportive and harmonious society is possible.

«The Forum always renews me... it gives me the certainty that in spite of what is happening in the world there are people who fight for an ideal that will never pass away: love». This is Marina expressing herself, but it is also the same for many others who come into contact with this experience for the first time. Day by day, true relationships are being born among everyone.



The programme? The morning includes intensive debates, also with «experts», on social relationships, ethics, politics, economy, with ideas and experiences of how to change the world, starting from oneself and one's own environment. In the afternoon they roll up their sleeves and go to the orphanage for children and in homes for the elderly: «We all felt special whether we had to paint or wash the floors, play with the children or talk with the elderly. It was as if we were finding new ways to build a united world».

The evening was the moment to dig deep, with reflections of a spiritual nature which often led to making decisive steps. Like when they spoke on forgiveness. returning from the Forum a fifteen year old girl wrote: «My father abandoned my mother and us children. Years ago he tried to look for me, but I did not want to meet him. Now I asked my mother to telephone him. He told me that he was unhappy about what he had done. I spoke to him of forgiveness and that everyone must be forgiven, and of how I have learned to love and to see Jesus in everyone».

As you can imagine, theatre, music, dances, in an explosive kaleidoscope of life and joy spiced up the Forum. In the midst of tears and hugs the last day left us speechless and beyond words; you could read in their eyes the commitment to try to make this dream built together a reality. We'll see each other in the next appointment for Forum 2017!

prepared by Renata Maciel, Vera Araújo



The feast of the Assumption has just been celebrated, and once more we would like to remember the Heavenly mariapolis, recently enriched by the sons and daughters of Chiara: Bruno Venturini, four other focolarine and focolarini and many from all the branches of the Movement

Bruno Venturini

Testimony of mercy

Focolarino of the early times, a true man of God. These are just two of the many characteristics that reveal the person of Bruno Venturini who took off for Heaven on August 1, at 90 years old, to meet with the large group of pioneers who with Chiara Lubich formed the Work of

Mary since its birth. His story is fascinating. In 1949 Graziella De Luca – among the very first companions of Chiara – went to his city Pistoia to meet Pasquale Foresi and, and so he too was invited to meet her, to «talk about the Gospel». He was just 23 years old then. His father was a non-believer, but Bruno received his formation «in the shadow of the bell tower», moved by the strong desire, even then unfulfilled, to see in the Church the enthusiasm of the first Christians. After listening to the experience of the first focolare he thought: «Very beautiful, but too beautiful to be true». The following evening Graziella returned and, even more impressed by her sharing of the Gospel lived, he left the meeting hall looking around him «to see a brother in each one he met». The words of that young girl brought a revolution in him. From a person who was «awkward, closed, and not concrete at



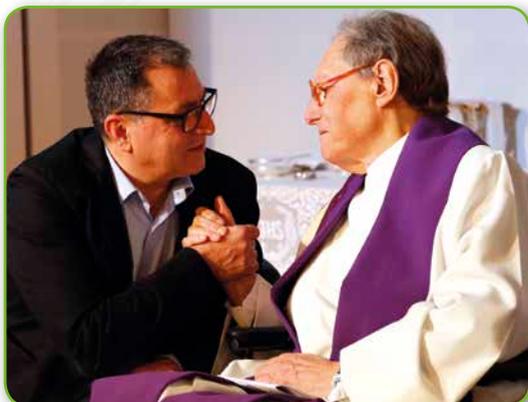
all» (these are his words), Bruno learned to open himself up to the neighbour beside him, and thus became a living testimony of the love of God for all those he met.

From the time that Graziella came to visit, a group of young people who wanted to live the Gospel was born in his

city. Some time passed and in nearby Florence, with Silvana Veronesi - the youngest among Chiara's companions - the focolare center was opened. Bruno was a frequent visitor, often accompanied by other youth who, touched by his witness, wanted to deepen the spirituality of Chiara.

In '52 he left everything to enter the focolare. Throughout the years he would stay in Florence, Rome, Castelli romani, Turin, Palermo and then Milan, where he remained for 11 years as co-responsible for the Movement of Northwest Italy. They were intense years, wherein he built important relationships with many, with the trust of a father and the delicateness of a mother. Bonds which, in most of the cases, have always remained, even when Bruno was transferred elsewhere. The people in fact were drawn to this person who knew how to listen to accompany, encourage, correct at the same time allowing the maximum freedom. And to those who would tell him that he had a particular gift of bringing souls to God, he declared that he had no special strategy except for the desire to build true relationships.

In '78 he is called to the Center of the Movement. After finishing his studies of Theology he was ordained a priest. For more than 30 years, many of which were spent working with Giosi Guella (one of the first focolarine), he was entrusted with the aspect of economy and work, experiencing daily the interventions of Divine Providence which





- according to him - came directly from the hands of God who is Love. In all these years he gave to the Movement his specific gift of how to live evangelical poverty, his being detached from all certainty, except from eternal life, the hundredfold here on earth of houses, brothers, goods. And above all to perceive the wealth of God within his soul. During his many trips, Bruno brought the message of poverty that is born from communion, first of all of spiritual goods to all the Zones. He possessed a transparency, nourished by his constant closeness to Chiara as a member of the General Council of the Movement and as the priest who celebrated Mass everyday in her private chapel.

Even after he had concluded his many responsibilities (2008), Bruno never stopped loving in a simple and authentic way, bringing light to all those he met through his smile and his serenity. «I feel – he said speaking to some young focolarini – that I have nothing to teach anyone. Rather, I have much to learn from everyone, even from a gen3 or a gen4». And in another occasion: «If I look at my life, there were difficult moment, certainly ... but I never doubted the love of God, I never lost the certainty in the choice that I made».

The consonance of his life with the Word of life that Chiara gave him is significant: «He who perseveres up to the end, will be saved» (Mt 24,13). From an interview in 2015: «This summer I experienced a physical, psychological breakdown, it was as if these almost 90 years of mine were highlighted and I felt all its weight. And so I told myself: "You no longer have the strength of before, you no longer have the abilities... It's ok, that's life! Go ahead!" I felt that in this losing everything, what Jesus had always asked me was becoming a reality: to lose. Finally I was able to tell Jesus that Yes which I had promised him 60 years ago. I realized that it was not necessary to do

anything special, but just "to be", to do my part, to live moment by moment accepting everything. Because the more "we are not", the more "we are"».

In his video-message on April 24 of this year: «I can no longer make it with regards to my strength, but I am happy. In this new adventure I live the present moment and there is nothing lacking. I only want one thing: to put Jesus on the midst with each one of you, to be a reciprocal gift and for humanity around us. For me I see no other medicine: to build the family more and more. In the past years – many years! – I have had a bit of experience and now I can still relive all those years, because I feel their essentiality, their validity. I am with you, with each one of you. Every cross is mine. And I entrust also mine, so that I may be able to carry it up to the end, to live it the way God wants».



Jesùs Morán, since he was not able to be present at his funeral, wrote: «Bruno communicated God with all his life, because he did not know any other way to be in this world unless he was love and out of love. In front of Bruno it is difficult not to acknowledge the strong witness of a personal, true, concrete and pure sanctity in life and in death». And Emmaus, when she shared the news to the whole Movement about his «departure» wrote: «Bruno was for many people, a true witness of the infinite Mercy of God, which we now will certainly experience in its fullness».

It is not possible to express the hundreds of people of every age, Country and religious conviction who sent their condolences, grateful to

Bruno for the adventure of having been accompanied and loved as «only children». In him they recall the friend, the teacher, the travel companion who up to the end lived with serenity and simplicity his marvelous adventure as a Christian and a focolarino.

Hannelore Mai

Pioneer of the Iron Curtain

Born in East Germany, in 1970 Hannelore began to attend the gatherings of the Movement which, during those times, because of the regime, were held in private. She had the gift of personally knowing Natalia Dallapiccola, the first companion of Chiara, and she felt the call to give herself to God as a focolarina. Her husband Franz-Josef also shared this choice with her thus forming, with their four children, a splendid family-focolare. She was a pediatric nurse, and Hannelore committed herself strongly in the development of the Movement, sharing her time also in the parish and supporting some social projects.



In the '80s she had a serious illness but which she was able to overcome. In April '90 she participated for the first time in the school of the married focolarini at the Center: «I cannot find the words to thank you enough - she shared to Chiara. I was able to touch the presence of Jesus and to see heaven open up; I want to live always with this fire, so that everyone can feel the infinite love of God».

In 2010 a new appointment once again with her illness. Hannelore says her Yes and the union with God in her becomes more and more tangible. On June 15 she wrote to her focolare: «I thought about my life and I saw that it was rich and full. Now I am living this final stage asking God to help me to be able to live it well and in the fullness of love. I am very grateful for the "precious pearl" of the Ideal that has penetrated and formed my entire life. I want to offer

everything for "that a; may be one", starting from the daily relationships in the family and with the persons who come to visit me». After a few days, on June 26, Franz Josef wrote: «Today Hannelore reached the goal of her Holy Journey. She gently fell asleep and now she has found her well-deserved peace».



Alfonso Hidalgo Martin

«Your word is a lamp for my steps, light for my journey» [Ps 118 (119),105]

Resident of Las Palmas (in the Canary Islands, Spain), ever since he was young Alfonso received a solid Christian formation. Married to Maria Ester – with whom he had seven children, among whom is Juan Alfonso who is now a married focolarino – when he met the Movement he felt a strong attraction to give himself to God in the focolare, but it was 2,000 kilometers from his city. This is how his adventure to sanctity began,

finding thousands of ways to maintain a frequent contact with the focolare and to build the Movement in his own environment.

From 1987 onwards he began to experience serious health issues. Before undergoing a heart operation he wrote: «I feel attracted to that total obedience of Jesus to the father and to those two loves: Jesus Forsaken and Mary Desolate». Alfonso remained faithful to this proposal throughout his illness up to the end, accepting with serenity his frailties and recognizing in them the face of Jesus Forsaken to whom he had consecrated his life.

Some focolarini who knew him when he was a gen shared: «Thank you for the love that you gave us, nourishing us, taking care of us and helping us to grow in the ideal. His life and his concrete experiences taught us how to live. If today we are the children of Chiara it is because we were formed by him».

He peacefully left this world on June 8 at the age of 78, continuing to repeat up to the last moments: «What matters is God».

Jorge Affanni

«Our joy is only the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ» (cf. Gal 6,14)



Born in Buenos Aires (Argentina), as soon as he graduated in Medicine Jorge received a scholarship for a doctorate in Pisa (Italy). with his wife Pina they left for Italy. One Sunday, to shield their daughter from the rain, they bought the magazine *Città Nuova*, at the church door, since it was just the

right size to cover her pram. Arriving home they used it to clean their shoes. In the afternoon they thought of taking a glance at it and were touched by its contents. Tracing the address of the nearest focolare (Rome) and, fascinated by the story of the Movement, they join the community of Pisa. When they returned to Argentina Jorge participated in the Mariapolis and soon after he felt the call to become a married focolarino.

A researcher in Neuroscience, he completed his formation in Oxford, Cambridge and in other universities in Europe. he held conferences in America, Japan, Russia, in the Vatican, where he had a personal encounter with John Paul II. In his scientific researches he is always attentive to safeguarding the good of the person. His students bear witness to his great cordiality and his passion to make them valid professionals. He collaborated with the Center of the Movement as an extern of the Abbà School, and in the Zone, he was involved in interreligious and ecumenical dialogue. Among his four children one is a married focolarina and two are Volunteers.

Lately Jorge was passing through a period of immobility, but he continued to live in constant communion with the Movement. In 2013 his wife Pina died and Jorge suffered a lot. In 2016 he had to undergo a delicate surgical operation. Aware of the risks, he gathered his family and entrusted his daughters with the task of maintaining unity always. He did not survive the surgery. On July 31, at 84 years old, this extraordinary man, a great scientist, a simple focolarino, returned to the House of the Father.

Michael Luther

«The Kingdom of God is in our midst» (Lk 17,21)



Married focolarino of Hannover (Germany), while he was biking with his friend, he suddenly collapsed and died. He was only 50 years old. As a child Michael lived the experience of the Ideal together with his three brothers, among whom is Thomas Roggenkamp, now a focolarino in Argentina.

Father of three children (Anne, Tom and Pia), together with his wife Claudia, Michael they dedicated themselves to accompanying other families. The formula that they practiced to create communion is so attractive that the number of participants was continuously increasing, drawing the interest also of people who were not in the Movement. In focolare he was always happy, essential, a valid contribution to the life of Jesus in the midst. His experiences were concrete, authentic and constructive.

He was the administrative director of a company which installed hydroelectric power plants, a responsibility which he carried out with great competence and dedication and which was not an obstacle for him in the life of the Movement and for the many interests he had in other fields. Michael, because of his profundity and his ability to grasp the beautiful aspect of life, leaves a luminous example of a vigorous and creative life, decisively oriented towards «that all may be one».

Catherine Achara Phongphit Buathong

«There is no greater love than he who gives his life for his friends» (Jn 15,13)



Voluntear of the Zone of Bangkok (Thailand), on July 23, at the age of 63, Achara left us for Heaven, accompanied by her family (including her sister

Paviss, focolarina) and the choral prayers at a distance of the community. Eversince she was a child she had a big heart and a particular attention for the needs of the others. She met the Ideal at 17 and she immediately lived it in the family and with her colleagues as work, loving everyone without distinction.

In 1978 Achara – a name confirmed by Chiara which means «Like an angel» – married a Buddhist man and they had two children. For her, being a Volunteer meant putting God in the first place. She wrote: «God is the center of my life and not anything else. I chose a job that will allow me to have more holidays even if the pay is lower. In this way I can have more time to work for God».

In 2000 she was asked to be the delegate of the women Volunteers of the Zone. Even if she was timid and humble, she accepted this, certain of God's love and of the grace of Jesus in the midst. She wrote: «God does not need my intelligence, or my ability, or my skills: he wants my heart». Due to her different responsibilities (family, work, the branch) she began to feel a certain tiredness at times, and even discouraged «but in embracing Jesus Forsaken – she shared – every emptiness is filled and I find the strength to go ahead». She left for the Heavenly Mariapolis on a Saturday, the day of the Madonna: «Yes, certainly – Emmaus underlined – she was welcomed by her, by Chiara and all our people in the Heavenly Mariapolis with much celebration».

Veronika Semmler

Fr. Luis Lei Xavier

He fully realized his mission

Priest focolarino of the diocese of Macau (China), Fr. Luis met the Ideal while he was still in the seminary and as a priest he participated in the Priests' Schools first in Frascati and then in Tagaytay.

He passed through all the stages of the «*via Mariae*» (Way of Mary) – even those of the trials – without ever stopping to irradiate the Ideal around him, starting with his family. In the diocese, he had different responsibilities, as the parish priest of the Cathedral and, lately as the vicar general.



Tecris, focolarina at the international Center of the focolarine in Rome, to whom he had given the Ideal, wrote: «The love and esteem that Fr. Luis had for the focolarine and the focolarini was always great. He would invent jobs for them when needed and when anyone would go to Macau, he made them rest, buying groceries and cooking for them himself». Even as his illness progressed and worsened, he prepared small gifts to celebrate the Lunar New Year for the focolarine of the Gen Verde who were coming to his city, just a few hours before he died, on February 17 at the age of 67.

Many said that «he was someone who has realized fully his mission here on earth». One of his sisters who is now in the focolare in Lisbon wrote: «I feel privileged to have a brother like him. I am certain that even now, Fr. Luis will continue to work for the Movement, generating many vocations for the Church».

Eddie Huesh

Malia Ofa Musulamu

The Pact, foundation of her life

Malia was among the first young girls from the island of Wallis-Futuna (Oceania) to meet the Movement: in 1976, precisely on her island of (Futuna), the first Mariapolis was held. Soon after she married Kapeliele and in 1983 they are one of the three couples who attended the first Loreto School in Loppiano. They remained for almost a year: an important formative experience that made them grasp profoundly the reality of Jesus Forsaken. Upon their return, she became a Volunteer, and Malia strived to live the Ideal with all of her being, supporting all those who shared the Ideal with her, opening her small house for the meetings and especially to house the focolarine. Everyone felt concretely loved and welcomed by her.

A few years ago she had a serious illness, but this did not stop her from offering hospitality and helping to organize the meetings of the





Anthony Hsueh

«I want what God wants»

Anthony, born in Shanghai (China) and who grew up in Hong Kong, moved to Montreal (Canada) after high school to attend the university. He met the Ideal of unity when his brother Eddie (at present co-responsible of the Zone of Hong Kong) left to attend the School of Loppiano. In the Movement, Anthony found his spiritual family and even if the focolare in Toronto was 600 km. away, he maintained a constant contact with them. After his studies as a dentist he decided to move to Toronto for work but also to be closer to the focolarini.

Soon he became a Volunteer of God. A generous supporter of the Movement, he accompanied the focolarini in their trips to various parts of the province. In 2002 he became the delegate for the Men Volunteers of Canada and Haiti, and remained so up to September 2014. He carried out this role with discretion and in the spirit of service, giving himself silently and without measure. For everyone, Anthony was a friend, a true brother, a model of faithfulness, together with a simplicity that excluded any form of pride. Because of his profound spirituality and his marked love for the poor (children, migrants) whom he treated free of charge, he was someone that could always be counted on.

The evening before his «departuren» – on June 5, at 69 years old – the focolarini went to visit him in

Movement. In the final months she was admitted to a hospital in Noumea (New Caledonia) and the community lives a strong experience of unity and reciprocal love with her, which continued and intensified when she was later brought back home. Everyone was edified by her happiness and gratitude to God and to Chiara for having received the gift of the Ideal.

On June 7, at the age of 57 and in great serenity, she left for Heaven. At the funeral, with the church full of people from the village, the Pact of reciprocal love was read, it was the foundation of her life.

Lucia Compostela

the hospital. He was weak, but he gathered all his energy to welcome them and «Jesus who was present among them». In a feeble voice he confirmed what he had tried to bear witness to all his life: «I want what God wants!».

Jacques Maillet

Marie Stossich

The telephone operator of the queen

Volunteer of Tasmania (Australia), at 16 years old she left her parent's house to become a telephone operator, a job that Marie performed so well that she was chosen as the telephone operator of Queen Elizabeth when she came to visit Australia. During that time she met Matteo, who later became her husband and who would help her to discover the Catholic faith. Together, they bought a grocery store: Marie was happy because this gave her the chance to interact with many people. When Matteo got seriously sick Marie met the Movement: a light in that moment of great trial that eventually led to Matteo's death.



Sustained by the love for Jesus Forsaken Marie became a pillar of the community in Launceston: her house was the center of the life and activities of the Movement in Tasmania, which she brought ahead in unity with the focolarini of Melbourne. Her simplicity, her love and her sense of humour were contagious. Unity with her was instantaneous. Her faithfulness to Jesus Forsaken sustained her in the harsh trial of the loss of one of her children.

In 2012 she was struck with Alzheimer's disease and she had to go to a hospice. Her children and the community continued to visit her with great love. Her faculties were gradually diminishing, but every time that someone said the name Chiara, her face lit up with a big smile. On May 25, at the age of 85, Marie concluded her Holy Journey.

Lucy Inocencio



Gianmario Mandorlini

Anchored in God and open to humanity

A nurse at the psychiatric hospital of Macerata (Italy), Gianmario saw that some of his co-workers were particularly sensitive to environmental problems. He discovered that they were members of the Focolare Movement and he immediately joins them in planning projects, over and beyond their working hours, to bring out some of the patients so as to remove them from isolation. Gradually the quality of life of the patients began to improve, anticipating, in a certain sense, the psychiatric reform that would eventually be enforced throughout the national territory.

He became a Volunteer and he involved himself in the different activities of the Movement,

especially in Operation Africa. He founded a consumer cooperative, he got involved in the labour union becoming part of the provincial administration. Together with his wife Rita, they offered their house as a collection point and storage area for clothes for the poor. On the occasion of the earthquake of 1980 he went to Campania to help in an evacuation center. In his life of living the Gospel a time of trial also came: the illness and death of two of his children. Harsh moments during which, in the midst of this torment, Gianmario is able to say his «yes» once again to God Love, experiencing a particular union of his soul with the redemptive mystery of Jesus.

In February, an unexpected illness, which in less than a month consumed his body and prepared him, in an intimate communion with Jesus Forsaken, for his encounter with the Father which happened on April 6 at 77 years old. He left a luminous trail of humility and simplicity, the example of a man who knew how to live profoundly anchored in Gos and totally open to humanity.

Silvio Berti

Neiva Strapasson

«Our home is Heaven» (cf. Phil 3,20)

Neiva met the Ideal when she was 20 years old. She was one of the gen from south Brazil who in 1974, returning by bus from a congress, experience a serious accident wherein six of them, from the city of Pelotas, died. The impact, in all senses, was very strong, but just like the other gen who survived, Neiva too continued to believe in the immense love of God. With great generosity she welcomed in her home the first focolarine who brought the Ideal in those frontier lands and thanks also to her witness, a flourishing community was born in Rio Grande, the cradle of many vocations in the Movement.

Even after her marriage she continued to follow the youth, couples, priests, helping them to find, or rediscover, the way that God had prepared for them. She actively participated in the activities of the parish, finally taking on the responsibility, in agreement with the Bishop, of the pastoral care - which no one dared to do - of



the prostitutes in the city. She had four children and one of them welcomed the call to follow Jesus in contemplative life.

In her final years, she was diagnosed with a serious illness. In saying her Yes, she

asked Jesus: «not to leave until I am first purified of everything». The focolarine testified: «We accompanied her, going through her calvary together, edified in seeing how she elevated all those beside her». On July 13, at the age of 69, Neiva left this world. Forseeing this moment, she wrote: «How beautiful that day will be when I meet You! How enchanting to think of what God has prepared for someone who has ardently desired to love him here on earth! I want my funeral to be a celebration, an evangelization, a witness of someone who believes in the infinite love of God».

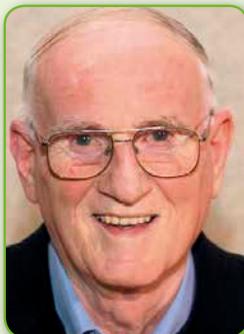
Nicri Souza

Fr. Firmo Gandossi

«*Mia madre e i miei fratelli sono coloro che ascoltano la Parola di Dio e la mettono in pratica*» (Lc 8,21)

I suoi compagni di focolare ricordano d. Firmo, sacerdote focolarino di Brescia (Italia), come un prete tutto di un pezzo, innamorato della Chiesa e dell'Opera che ha servito con grande generosità.

Nel '70 è alla scuola sacerdotale di Frascati, infiammato dall'Ideale e sempre in donazione. Parroco in diverse comunità della sua diocesi, irradia in modo



schietto e autentico il carisma. Vivendo con equilibrio il suo ministero, fa conoscere il Movimento a tante persone, con un'attenzione particolare per i giovani nella ricerca della loro vocazione, che sa seguire con passione e distacco.

Dà un contributo per un intero anno al Centro sacerdotale e per due estati nel focolare di Casa Abbà, rivelandosi «campione» dell'amore reciproco e verso tutti. I suoi ultimi anni li trascorre a vita comune con un altro sacerdote focolarino. Nel suo ultimo incontro di focolare con un filo di voce lascia il suo testamento: «Teniamo Gesù in mezzo, è l'unica cosa che conta». Il 17 marzo, all'età di 84 anni, il Padre lo ha chiamato a Sè.

d. Piero Prandelli

Maria Dwerstseg

A convincing life born from a relationship with Jesus



Among the first Volunteers of Münster (Germany) Maria welcomed with seriousness and enthusiasm the new lifestyle that she discovered in the '60s when she met the Focolare Movement. With her husband Ludwig they adopted two children.

She was asked to take up the responsibility for a nucleus, a task that she performed with great love, with a balanced life according to the seven Aspects.

Maria drew strength from a living relationships with Jesus, nourished by the sacraments and the unity with the Movement. In her town, Nordwalde, she gave a substantial contribution in the parish and created fraternal relationships, inviting many people to live the Word.

«We will be surprised – she often said – of the great things that God will do through the Ideal. We will see it only in heaven!». Up to the final weeks of her life, the Volunteers went to her for their meditation, around her bed, reading the writings of Chiara and keeping her updated on the new things in the Movement. She left for Heaven on February 22, at the age of 88. Her funeral was a liturgy of Resurrection.

Margareta Gehlmann

Due to space constraints, we can only mention some of the Heavenly Mariapolites, while in the **Notiziario online** (www.focolare.org/notiziariomariapoli) you will also find the profiles of **Laura Torbol** and **Antonietta Strusi Stradella** (Italy), **Marineide (Máride) Alves Dantas** (Brazil), **Floriana di Silvio Galelli** (Loppiano), Volunteers; **Gino Gasparini**, **Raffaele Zeni** and **Enrico Cascapera** (Italy), Volunteers; **Alfonso Cipriani** (Italy) and **Giuliana Calcinai Reggioli** (Loppiano), New families members. The complete telegrams of Emmaus and various other profiles that have reached us will also be eventually available.

Our relatives

These who passed on to the Next life: **Emmanuel, father of Tchilalo Azia**, focolarina at the Mariapolis Victoria (Ivory Coast); **Giovanna, mother of Gigi Novello**, focolarino in Loppiano; **Salvatore, father of Luisa Alivesi**, married focolarina in Alghero (Italy); **Adolph, father of Brigitte and Marianne Sass**, focolarine respectively in Loppiano and in Hamburg (Germany); **Maria Eduina, mother of Marisa De Meneses Sequeira**, focolarina in Montet; **Migliela Munoz, mother of Pili Alvaro**, focolarina in Loppiano and of **Mari Carmen**, Volunteer of Valencia (Spain); **Alessandro, brother of Flavio Pezzina**, focolarino in Loppiano; **Gelsomina, mother of Giuseppina (Donata) Paris**, focolarina at the Roman Mariapolis; **Gian Carlo, father of Maria Grazia Berti**, focolarina in Florence (Italy); **Josef, father of Brigitte (Diria) Stutz** and **Antonio, father of Irma Pezzotti**, focolarine in Baar (Switzerland); **Lourdes, mother of Sonia (Soni) Vargas**, focolarina in Buenos Aires; **Andrea, brother of Maria Bencivenni**, focolarina in Catania (Italy).

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